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Introduction

Proton-conductive coordination polymer glass for solid-state anhydrous proton batteries[†]

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Designing solid-state electrolytes for proton batteries at moderate temperatures is challenging as most solid-state proton conductors suffer from poor moldability and thermal stability. Crystal–glass transformation of coordination polymers (CPs) and metal–organic frameworks (MOFs) *via* melt-quenching offers diverse accessibility to unique properties as well as processing abilities. Here, we synthesized a glassy-state CP, $[Zn_3(H_2PO_4)_6(H_2O)_3](1,2,3$ -benzotriazole), that exhibited a low melting temperature (114 °C) and a high anhydrous single-ion proton conductivity (8.0 × 10⁻³ S cm⁻¹ at 120 °C). Converting crystalline CPs to their glassy-state counterparts *via* melt-quenching not only initiated an isotropic disordered domain that enhanced H⁺ dynamics, but also generated an immersive interface that was beneficial for solid electrolyte applications. Finally, we demonstrated the first example of a rechargeable all-solid-state H⁺ battery utilizing the new glassy-state CP, which exhibited a wide operating-temperature range of 25 to 110 °C.

The proton (H^+) has a diameter of 0.84 fm and is easily localized in the solid state.¹ Fast-moving protons in solids are difficult to achieve, whereas solid-state H^+ conductors are widely used in various electrochemical applications, including fuel cells, electrochemical catalysis, and sensors.² Proton batteries are a new class of secondary batteries employing protons instead of metal ions as charge carriers.^{3,4} They consist of faradaic electrodes and acidic electrolytes. Since the H^+ charge radius is significantly smaller than that of other ions, faster ion migration and negligible volume changes upon H^+ insertion/desertion are expected. Additionally, replacing high-cost Li⁺ with cheaper and more abundant H^+ provides a promising platform for environmentally benign and intrinsically safe energy storage.^{5–7} Redoxactive organic molecules, such as quinone-functionalized conductive polymers,^{4,8} and metal oxides, including MoO₃, WO₃, and H_xIrO₄, are available as H^+ electrodes.^{9–11} Though proton batteries show a smaller specific capacity with a limited number of applications, as compared to their metallic counterparts, diffusion-free charge transport *via* the Grotthuss mechanism in a defective, Prussian blue analog establishes a high-rate capability (380 A g⁻¹) and extends cycling stability to over 0.5 million charge–discharge cycles, which is a unique advantage of aqueous proton batteries.^{6,12,13} In spite of various choices of electrodes, electrolytes are mostly limited to aqueous H₂SO₄ or H₃PO₄, which dictates the operating-temperature window and selection of usable electrodes.^{8,13–15}

Safely extending the operating-temperature window to \sim 100 °C is essential for H⁺ batteries to tolerate internal/external heat generation so that they can be used in various hightemperature applications, such as rescue/inspection robots, space exploration, and measure-while-drilling (MWD) equipment in the oil and gas industries.16 As employing a conventional aqueous electrolyte is not possible at these high temperatures, solid-state H⁺ batteries with anhydrous solid electrolytes would be more suitable. There are no reports of solid-state H⁺ batteries working near or above 100 °C due to the difficulties in achieving high anhydrous H⁺ conductivity, hightemperature stability, and moldability required for H⁺ conductors.17 Apart from achieving a high H⁺ conductivity value (near 10^{-2} S cm⁻¹), high thermal/chemical stability, processing ability, and ion selectivity are also needed to expand the practicality of solid-state electrolytes. Single-ion conductivity in



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solid-state electrolytes is a core factor that promotes chargetransport efficiency and prevents anion polarization.^{18,19} Discontinuities along the electrode–electrolyte interfaces and grain boundaries are primary bottlenecks for efficient utilization of solid electrolytes.^{17,20,21} H⁺ conductivity at the grain boundary of most crystalline compounds requires a higher migration activation energy than that required by H⁺ conductivity through the bulk crystal (grain boundaries contribute up to 40–50% of the overall resistance for Li⁺ conductors).^{22–25}

Coordination polymers (CPs) and metal–organic frameworks (MOFs) exhibiting high H⁺ conductivity over a wide temperature regime (~200 °C) represent a new class of solid-state H⁺ conductors.^{26–29} Despite their remarkable H⁺ conductivity, their crystalline nature hinders their processing ability, thus limiting their practicality.³⁰ The glassy state of CP/MOFs is a strong platform to tackle these issues, and there have been increasing numbers of glassy-state CPs recently made from crystallinestate CPs.^{31–34} Some of these glassy-state CPs show anhydrous H⁺ conductivity superior to that of their crystalline counterparts by several orders of magnitude.^{35,36} Moreover, the vitrifying/ melting behavior provides these CPs with processing capabilities and forms a grain-boundary free monolith and a flawless heterogeneous interface.^{31–34,37–41}

To address this issue, we have developed a new H⁺-conductive CP glass suitable for high-temperature anhydrous solidstate H⁺ batteries. By optimizing the pK_a value of the component with 1,2,3-benzotriazole (BTA, pK_a 1.6) and the extended hydrogen-bonding network in Zn²⁺-based CPs, the material demonstrated high anhydrous H⁺ conductivity (8.0 × 10^{-3} S cm⁻¹ at 120 °C), relatively low melting point (114 °C), and mechanical softness (42.8 Pa s at 120 °C), which are suitable for electrolytes. The structure and properties were characterized by single-crystal X-ray diffraction (SC-XRD), thermal gravimetric analysis (TGA), differential scanning calorimetry (DSC), dynamic mechanical analysis (DMA), impedance spectroscopy, electromotive force measurements, and solid-state NMR. We also demonstrated a full-cell evaluation of the anhydrous solidstate H⁺ batteries at 25, 100, and 110 °C.

Results and discussion

Crystal structure of [Zn₃(H₂PO₄)₆(H₂O)₃](BTA) (1a)

Zinc oxide, phosphoric acid, and BTA were subjected to mechanical milling to form the CP (1a) as a white crystalline powder. SC-XRD analysis of 1a provided its chemical formula, $[Zn_3(H_2PO_4)_6(H_2O)_3](BTA)$, and it was found to exist as a onedimensional (1D) chain along the a-axis (Fig. 1). Three crystallographically independent octahedral Zn²⁺ ions were identified, each with six bridging H₂PO₄⁻ anions and one water molecule coordinated to them (Fig. 1A). BTA was stacked in a 1D fashion along the a-axis and surrounded by six chains of ZnO₆ octahedra, which orderly arranged in the bc plane due to hydrogenbonding interactions (Fig. 1B and C). Furthermore, 1a is an isostructure of previously reported $[Zn_{3}(H_{2}PO_{4})_{6}(-$ H₂O)₃](benzimidazole),³⁸ and it is expected that the dynamics of the phosphates bridging the Zn²⁺ ions (through a single

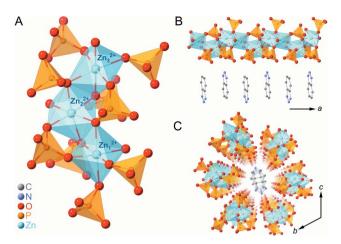


Fig. 1 (A) Local coordination geometry in **1a**. (B) Crystal structure of the one-dimensional (1D) chain along the *a*-axis. (C) Packing structure of **1a** on the *bc*-plane. Zn, P, O, C, and N atoms are represented by light blue, orange, red, grey, and blue spheres, respectively. H atoms are omitted for clarity.

bridging oxygen atom (μ_2)) and the non-coordinating BTA could facilitate an anhydrous H⁺ migration.^{2,38,42,43}

The gram-scale synthesis of 1a was feasible via mechanical milling for 1 h followed by vacuum drying for 3.5 h to remove excess water molecules. Powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD) of 1a (Fig. S1[†]) demonstrated a pattern identical to the simulated SC-XRD pattern. The absence of residual free phosphoric acid in 1a was confirmed using both inductively coupled plasma emission spectroscopy (ICP-ES) and ³¹P magic-angle spinning (MAS) solid-state NMR (Fig. S2[†]).⁴⁴ A P to Zn ratio (1:1.97) slightly lower than the theoretical ratio (1:2) suggested the presence of a small amount of structural defects. All peaks in ³¹P NMR were located in the range of orthophosphate, suggesting that no condensation occurs during the mechanical synthesis.45-47 TGA of 1a showed a gradual weight loss due to the release of coordinated water at 100 °C (Fig. S4†). The total weight loss of dehydrated 1a is equivalent to the release of three coordinated water molecules (5.7 wt%). This dehydrated state is henceforth denoted as 1. A reversible structural change between 1a and 1 upon water adsorption and desorption was observed by PXRD (Fig. S5[†]).⁴⁸⁻⁵⁰ The release of each water molecule from the octahedral (Oh) coordination sphere caused the 1D chain structure to deform around the Zn²⁺ ion. Under ambient air, 1 converted to 1a by capturing atmospheric moisture.38

Crystal melting and glass formation

Differential thermal analysis of **1a** by TGA (Fig. S4†) showed two endothermic peaks due to the release of coordinated water and crystal-to-liquid transformation and only the latter peak was observed in **1**. DSC of **1** (Fig. 2A) showed an endothermic peak with an onset melting point (T_m) of 114 °C. Two minor endothermic peaks before that of the T_m were assigned to the dehydration of adsorbed water during the measurement setup.³³ The T_m of **1** was 50 °C lower than that of the isostructure, [Zn₃(H₂PO₄)₆(H₂O)₃](benzimidazole), as BTA exhibits

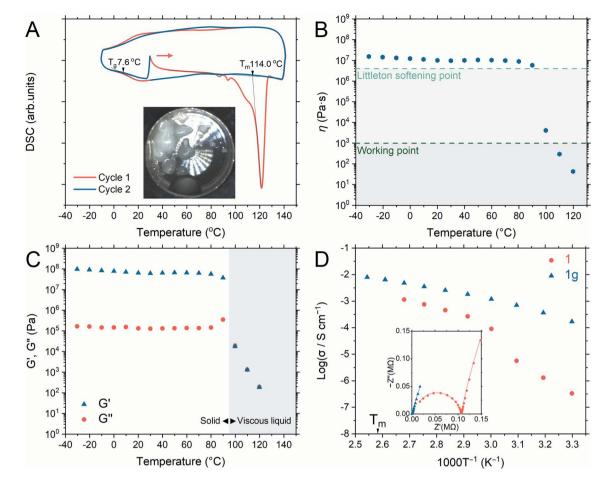


Fig. 2 (A) First- (blue) and second-cycle (red) DSC profiles of 1 from -10 to 140 °C (begin with a heating step from 30 °C). The inset shows a photo of **1m** at 140 °C. (B) Temperature-dependent viscosity of **1g**. (C) DMA of **1g** from -30 to 120 °C (heating rate of 2 °C min⁻¹). The storage (G') and loss (G'') moduli were marked as (\blacktriangle) and (\bigcirc), respectively. (D) Arrhenius plots of the anhydrous conductivity of **1**(\bigcirc) and **1g**(\bigstar) under an Ar atmosphere. The inset shows the Nyquist plot of **1**(\bigcirc) and **1g**(\bigstar) at 50 °C.

lower $T_{\rm m}$ and $pK_{\rm a}$ values than those of benzimidazole.^{31,33} Additionally, no significant weight loss was seen at 120 °C after 12 h, confirming a stable liquid state (Fig. S6†). The liquid/ molten state of **1** is henceforth referred to as **1m**. The first cooling process in DSC confirmed the vitrification of **1m** to a glassy state of **1** (denoted as **1g**) that demonstrated a glass transition temperature ($T_{\rm g}$) of 7.6 °C, exhibiting no Bragg diffraction, and was categorized as melt-quenched glass (MGQ) (Fig. S7†).³⁴

DMA and viscosity evaluation of **1g** further determined its processing ability, where its viscosity (Fig. 2B) was observed above the Littleton softening point ($10^{6.6}$ Pa s) from -30 to $90 \,^{\circ}$ C until it sharply decreased below the working point regime (10^3 Pa s) above 100 $^{\circ}$ C. The working point defines the viscosity regime in which the viscosity of a substance is equivalent to that of soda–lime–silica glass above 1100 $^{\circ}$ C (suitable for industrial forming processes).⁵¹ The storage modulus (G') dominated the loss modulus (G'') from -30 to 90 $^{\circ}$ C, verifying the solid character of **1g** (Fig. 2C). Immediate reduction of G' at 100 $^{\circ}$ C represents the softening of **1g**, and the G'/G'' crossover indicates the range in which **1g** starts to behave like a viscous liquid.^{31,52}

Anhydrous H⁺ conductivity

We measured the H⁺ conductivity of **1** and **1g** via variabletemperature alternating current (AC) impedance under an Ar atmosphere to exclude the influence of water molecules (Fig. 2D and S9[†]). The Nyquist plots were fitted with a single impedance response corresponding to the bulk resistance without the grain-boundary region.^{52,53} The conductivity of **1** was measured from 30 to 100 °C, where the crystalline phase of 1 was preserved. We observed conductivity values of 3.3 \times 10^{-7} S cm⁻¹ and 9.0 × 10^{-5} S cm⁻¹ at 30 and 60 °C, respectively. The conductivity value increased rapidly upon heating, reaching 1.2×10^{-3} S cm⁻¹ at 100 °C. The activation energy of 1 from 30 to 60 °C was 1.22 eV. Above 60 °C, the Arrhenius plot flattened and the activation energy reduced to 0.57 eV. Utilizing BTA with its low pK_a in 1 provided higher conductivity values than those of the isostructure $[Zn_3(H_2PO_4)_6](HBim)$ at 30 °C (1.2 × $10^{-7} \text{ S cm}^{-1}$) and 60 °C (1.5 × $10^{-5} \text{ S cm}^{-1}$).³⁸

To highlight the advantage of glass transformation on ionic conductivity, we prepared a monolith (**1g**) *via* melt-quenching directly into the electrochemical cell for impedance analysis. Upon the crystalline-to-glassy state transformation, only the

bulk impedance response pattern was obtained (Fig. S9[†]) and it was identical to that of 1a in the higher temperature range. The Arrhenius plot (Fig. 2D) shows two different activation energy regimes: 0.59 eV between 30 and 60 °C and 0.39 eV from 60 to 120 °C. At 30 °C, 1g exhibited a conductivity value of 3.3 \times $10^{-4}~{
m S~cm^{-1}}$, which increased to $4.9 \times 10^{-3}~{
m S~cm^{-1}}$ and $6.5 \times$ 10⁻³ S cm⁻¹ at 100 and 110 °C, respectively. A conductivity value of 8.0 \times 10⁻³ was achieved at 120 °C (molten state, 1m). Longterm conductivity retention was also evaluated. After 12 h, less than 4% and 10% loss in conductivity was observed at 100 and 120 °C, respectively (Fig. S10[†]). The contribution of the ions of interest to the total current can be distinguished via the H⁺ transport number (transference number) measurements.52,54 The transport numbers of most aqueous and ionic liquid electrolytes are lower than 0.6.54-56 The transport number of **1m** was elucidated via electromotive force (EMF) measurements, which were conducted for different hydrogen partial pressure $(-\ln(P_1/P_1))$ P_2) values of 0.22, 0.51, 0.69, 0.92, and 1.61) at 120 °C (Fig. S11[†]).⁵⁷ According to eqn S1 (ESI),[†] the H⁺ transference number of **1g** is 1.0, indicating an ideal single-ion H⁺ conductivity. The absence of anion mobility suggests that the coordination networks are retained even in the molten state.31,58

Proton dynamics in 1 and 1g

The H⁺ conductivity would be dominated by either the phosphate or BTA dynamics; therefore, we utilized variable-temperature ¹H MAS solid-state NMR to study their mobilities (Fig. 3). The peaks from 8.1–8.5 and 5.8–6.1 ppm were assigned to the phosphate and BTA H⁺, respectively.^{44,52} The substantial narrowing and intensifying of the peaks between 50 and 75 °C suggested a significant increase in both the phosphate and BTA dynamics. The molecular motion of BTA initiates at the temperature above 50 °C as the BTA peaks are barely distinguishable at 25 and 50 °C (Fig. 3A).³⁸ The H⁺ mobilities of **1g** and **1** were compared at 25 and 50 °C as well as at 50 and 75 °C,

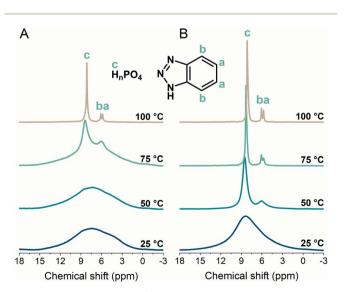


Fig. 3 Variable-temperature 1 H magic-angle spinning (MAS) solidstate NMR spectra (MAS 8 kHz) of (A) 1 and (B) 1g from 25 to 100 °C.

where the narrower and more intense peaks of **1g** demonstrated its higher H⁺ mobility than that of **1** (Fig. 3B). This higher degree of H⁺ mobility was promoted by a disordered structure formed in **1g**. Furthermore, the BTA dynamics were observable in **1g** even at temperatures lower than 60 °C, which agrees with the impedance response and lower activation energy of **1g**. Additionally, hydrogen-bond formations are indicated by downfield shifts.⁵⁹

Electrode-electrolyte interface

Discontinuities along the heterogeneous interface inhibit practical applications of solid-state electrolytes.17 Therefore, we are interested in the H⁺-conductivity integration and moldability of 1g as a grain boundary-free immersive solid electrolyte (Fig. 4A). Additionally, the lower $T_{\rm m}$ of 1 would prevent the anode/cathode materials from degrading during the fabrication process.^{8,9,12,13} A carbon fiber (CF) electrode was pressed to 1m at 120 °C and quenched to room temperature to provide the electrode-electrolyte interface (CF-1g). Cross-sectional scanning electron microscopy (SEM) images of CF-1g were collected (Fig. 4B, S12A, and B⁺), where neither a distinguishable solidelectrolyte interface nor grain boundaries were observed.60 Optimum contact between the CF layer and 1g domain was achieved as 1m can penetrate the CF, generating a fully immersed environment. Fig. 4C shows a cross-sectional SEM reference image of the pristine CF. Energy-dispersive X-ray (EDX) mapping (Fig. 4D-G) further elucidated the position of the CF electrode (intense C) with homogeneously distributed Zn, P, and O signals. To amplify the benefits of melt-quenching glass, we re-examined the morphological alteration of CF-1g after recrystallization. 1g undergoes the recrystallization process upon humidity exposure and transforms back to 1a. As confirmed by PXRD (Fig. S13[†]), atmospheric humidity (65% relative humidity) at room temperature (25 °C) is sufficient for the recrystallization to occur within 4 h. Fig. S12C and D⁺ revealed grain boundaries and fractures formed throughout the recrystallized 1g matrix, especially in the region where the CF and 1g co-exist.

Solid-state H⁺ battery under anhydrous conditions

Adequately high H⁺ conductivity, single-ion conductivity, low processing temperatures, and thermal/electrochemical stabilities motivated us to apply 1g as a solid electrolyte for H^+ batteries. MoO₃ and Cu^{II}[Fe^{III}(CN)₆]_{2/3}·4H₂O (CuFe-TBA) were selected as a model cathode and anode, respectively.^{10,12} As a reference, we also evaluated a full-cell configuration in 2 M H₂SO₄ solution at 25 °C. It exhibited a discharge capacity of 35.8 mA h g^{-1} at 100 mA g^{-1} (Fig. S14†). The specific capacity was calculated based on the cathode mass. The distance between the electrodes was ca. 1 cm.¹² The solid-state H⁺ battery was prepared by immersing both electrodes (1 cm separations) in 1m at 120 °C under an Ar atmosphere, where subsequent quenching to room temperature gave the 1g electrolyte. Fig. 4H and S15A[†] show the charge-discharge profiles (from 0 to 1.2 V) and rate performance evaluation of solid-state H⁺ batteries under an Ar atmosphere utilizing the 1g electrolyte at 25 °C. The

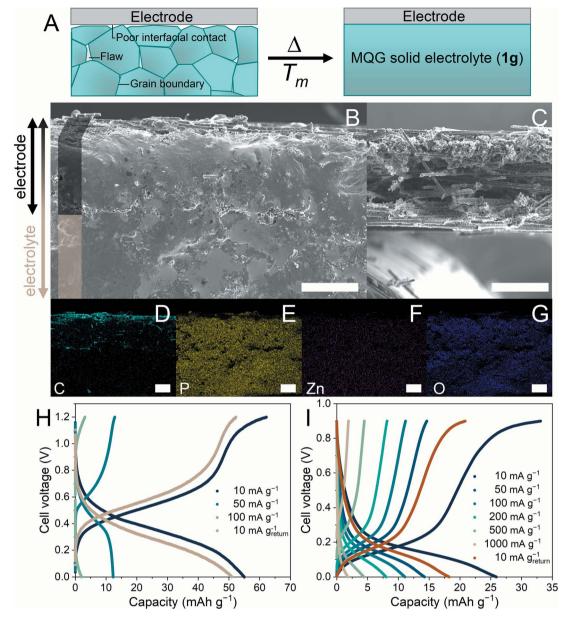


Fig. 4 (A) Schematic representation of the interfaces/flaws within the polycrystalline solid electrolyte (left) and MQG solid electrolyte proposed in this work (**1g**). Cross-sectional scanning electron microscopy (SEM) images (×150 magnification) of (B) the electrode–solid-state electrolyte interface (**CF–1g**) and (C) **CF** electrode. Scale bar = 150 μ m. Energy-dispersive X-ray (EDX) mapping for (D) C, (E) P, (F) Zn, and (G) O. Scale bar = 100 μ m. Full-cell charge–discharge profiles utilizing **1g** as a solid-state electrolyte at (H) 25 °C and (I) 100 °C.

highest discharge capacity was 55.4 mA h g⁻¹ at 10 mA g⁻¹. Another advantage the **1g**-electrolyte system has over the aqueous system is its large operating-temperature range. The elevated-temperature H⁺ battery was evaluated at 100 and 110 °C under an Ar atmosphere (Fig. 4I and S15C†) and the redox potentials of both electrodes reduced, corresponding to the change in free energy.^{61,62} As shown in Fig. S15B and D,† rate performances improved significantly as the ionic conductivity of **1g** was enhanced.² In a high-temperature regime, electrodes would show an excessive self-discharge as well as a thermal structural distortion limiting the protonation/deprotonation processes, causing a net loss of capacity. For instance, in a Liion battery, capacity fading was observed in Li₃V₂(PO₄)₃ as elevated temperature promotes a larger structural distortion between Li₃V₂(PO₄)₃ and V₂(PO₄)₃ limiting the re-insertion of Li⁺.⁶³ Additionally, 76% of the original capacity was retained after 1000 cycles of the charge–discharge process at 110 °C (Fig. S16†). We also attempted to demonstrate a solid-state H⁺ battery using crystalline **1** with a similar configuration and an identical anode and cathode. However, charging and discharging processes were not possible at 25 °C nor under lowcurrent (10 mA g⁻¹) conditions, even though the thickness of this electrolyte was ten times smaller than that of the **1g** electrolyte. This emphasizes the importance of interface engineering that endows soft glass materials with high H⁺ conductivity and moldability.^{17,20,21}

Conclusions

We synthesized a new H⁺ conductive CP, $[Zn_3(H_2PO_4)_6(-H_2O)_3](BTA)$, where the dehydrated state (1) integrated promising anhydrous H⁺ conductivity (1.2×10^{-3} S cm⁻¹ at 100 °C) and relatively low melting point (114 °C). The melt-quenched glass of **1** (**1g**) enhanced the H⁺ dynamics of both phosphate and BTA, resulting in a H⁺ conductivity value of 8.0 × 10^{-3} S cm⁻¹, a H⁺ transference number of 1.0, and a viscosity of 42.8 Pa s at 120 °C. The coexistence of high conductivity, transport number, and moldability of **1g**, as well as its flawless interface, encouraged us to implement it in solid-state H⁺ battery applications. A solid-state H⁺ battery with an operating temperature range above room temperature (25–110 °C) was demonstrated for the first time. The tuning capability of the CP glass H⁺ conductivity, working temperature, and softness could provide H⁺ batteries with wider applications.

Author contributions

S. H. designed the project, and N. M. and A. Y. synthesized the compounds. S. K. collected and analyzed solid-state NMR measurements. N. M. collected and analyzed SC-XRD, PXRD, TGA, SEM, DSC, ICP-ES, DMA, FTIR, conductivity and transport number measurements and battery evaluation. S. H. and N. M. wrote the paper.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

Acknowledgements

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