

The Indigenous Small Peoples of the Russian Arctic: Gender Inequality

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Abstract

The article deals with contemporary aspects of gender inequality on the example of indigenous small peoples of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, substantiate its main tendencies and develop directions for achieving gender equality in aboriginal society. Historical analysis of the origins of gender inequality among indigenous small peoples was conducted. In the course of the study, such methods as analysis and synthesis were used to generalise gender inequality; a historical method for understanding its origin; statistical methods for determining modern aspects of inequalities; the logical method was used for making conclusions. The natural and economic circumstances of regions of the Russian Arctic in the context of their influence on gender inequality were provided. The traditional social status and the role of women in the Russian Arctic was studied. The novelty of this study lies in the fact that the topic of gender inequality in the Russian Arctic was practically never discussed before. The survey showed that in indigenous people their mentality and their commitment to traditional nature management play an important role, which, according to the opinion of many aboriginal women, need more support at the state and regional levels, development of folk crafts, the creation of jobs and protection of this territory. The methods of achieving gender equality and improving the status of women of small indigenous peoples of the Russian Arctic were suggested. The conclusions stated what steps need to be taken to overcome gender inequality for women, what should be noted first and what is the key to achieving gender equality.

Keywords: Gender Inequality, Russian Arctic, Traditions, Indigenous People, The Role of Women.

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Introduction

The United Nations Millennium Declaration of 8 September 2000, identified the fundamental values, principles, objectives essential to international relations in the XXI century. The primary role in it is assigned to freedom and equality as fundamental values of continued functioning and development of the world's global peace communities (Berkalov et al., 2016; Kataeva et al., 2016). It is known that the world is bipolar, i.e. everything is divided into male and female. Proceeding from this, many millenniums of the culture of many peoples were formed taking into account the differences between the sexes, influencing the features of the development of civilisation, countries and continents. However, the development of the society under the influence of scientific and technological progress and, in consequence, the transition to a globalised world expanded the rights and freedoms of men and women in most countries. Freedom, equality, solidarity, social justice, tolerance became fundamental; they were, are and will be a pillar of further prosperity in the context of globalisation.

In turn, the UN Millennium Summit of 2000 expanded the capabilities of women, which are identified in paragraph 20 of the Declaration as one of the factors stimulating the truly sustainable development of society; equal rights and opportunities for men and women were also guaranteed. The introduction of "Gender and Development" (GAD) program (2000 year) has changed the approach to existing problems of gender inequality. The program laid the conditions for giving women the opportunity to engage in both the planning of social development and policy of gender change in society. Thus, it allowed considering the role of a woman in society as an active bearer of changes, rather than a passive recipient of assistance (Kolesnik and Pavlova, 2017). At the same time, in Russian society gender inequality is manifested everywhere in latent or explicit discrimination (Kolesnik and Goreva, 2016; Krinitcyna, 2016), for example, through gender segmentation and asymmetry

of the labour market, undervaluation of the contribution of women to the real sector of the national economy. Concerning indigenous small peoples of the Russian Arctic, it is gender inequality that remains the basis of their way of life. Despite this, gradual integration of indigenous peoples into the political, economic and cultural space of the titular nation corrects the role and significance of women (Akhmetshin et al., 2018).

Indigenous and small peoples are more often than other groups of the population subjected to stigmatisation, the humiliation of people's discrimination by ethnicity. Discrimination becomes even more complex when a gender component is added to it. Women of indigenous peoples very often face discrimination, as it occurs within their national communities and from outside from the dominant population. Moreover, they also face inequalities within their own families. The gender issue is practically ignored in the process of solving a large number of socio-economic problems of small indigenous peoples of the Russian Arctic zone. However, the full development of this complex region is impossible without taking into account the existing problem and its concealment. Thus, in the process of research, the authors set the task to identify contemporary aspects of gender inequality on the example of indigenous small peoples of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation (from now on referred to as the Russian Arctic), substantiate its main tendencies and develop directions for achieving gender equality in aboriginal society.

To isolate the main factors of inequality inherent in the indigenous population both in historical retrospect and in modern society and highlight the most important areas for achieving gender equality in the societies of indigenous small peoples of the Arctic by the analysis of gender inequality in indigenous small peoples of the Russian Arctic. The goal of the research is to identify trends in gender inequality among indigenous peoples of the Russian Arctic, its genesis, characteristics and

highlight the most significant areas for achieving gender equality.

Methodology

In the process of developing this issue, we used such methods of scientific research as:

- analysis and synthesis making it possible to identify and generalise the aspects of gender inequality in the aboriginal society of the Russian Arctic;
- historical method served as a basis for understanding the origins of gender inequality among indigenous small peoples;
- using statistical and interviewing methods, we have identified modern aspects of gender inequality;
- conclusion and directions for achieving gender equality in the aboriginal society were formulated using the logical method.

Results and Discussion

The notion of “gender” (from English gender “genus”, “sex” and Latin genus – “genus”) reflects various approaches to its understanding and interpretation in various sociocultural communities and nations. In Russian practice, this notion reflects a certain social status, which determines individual opportunities that are somehow realised (or disclosed) in the sphere of education, professional activity, access to power, sexuality, family roles and reproductive behaviour. It is this understanding that is one of the basic dimensions of the social structure of Russian society. Social status is determined by the framework of cultural space, traditions, beliefs, religious dogmas of a given society (Nikulina et al., 2016). That is why the social gender structure is not the same for different social classes, ethnoses and religious groups. It is gender inequality that characterises the social structure of society, in which social groups are endowed with differences stemming from their gender and significantly influencing their equal access to social opportunities.

As an integral indicator, gender inequality is manifested in reproductive health, the

opportunity of empowerment; this problem is most acute in the sphere of labour realisation and the labour market. In turn, the feminist theory treats gender inequality based on the difference and inequality of the social status of women - access to material resources, lower social status than one of the men, less access to leadership and exercise of power, unequal opportunities in realising the need of self-realisation, etc. The origins of gender inequality are based on the organisation of a society based on the masculine culture and male dominance.

Since 2010 gender inequality is determined by the Gender Inequality Index, which reflects gender inequalities in the opportunities of gender gains, reproductive health, empowerment, as well as the labour market, according to the rating, Russia in 2016 had the 75th place out of 152 countries (the index was 0.691), while in 2015 it was at the 54th place (index - 0.276), and in 2014 – at the 52nd (index - 0.314). Such a rapid decline of the index over the past few years indicates a rapid deterioration in the status of women compared with men in almost all sectors of the national economy of Russia, its political and social life.

At the same time, the importance of the Russian Arctic is difficult to overestimate: it is not only the main source of mineral and biological resources, strategic resource base but also has geopolitical importance. This region gives Russia about 11% of the national income and about 20% of GDP (data of 2016) with 10th place in the world rating by the size of GDP (data of 2015). At the same time the total GDP of such near-Arctic countries as the USA, Canada, Norway, Denmark (Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Sweden, Finland and Iceland in 2013 was \$22.4 trillion (16.7 trillion of which is US GDP) or 29.6% of the world's total GDP (\$75.6 trillion) by nominal value.

The Russian Arctic includes: Murmansk region, Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, municipal formation of the urban district of Vorkuta (Komi Republic), as well as the urban district of Norilsk, the Taimyr

and Turukhansk districts of Krasnoyarsk Krai, a number of territories of Arkhangelsk Oblast, some of the northern uluses of Yakutia, lands and islands in the Arctic Ocean. On the territory of about 9 million sq. Km there are more than 2.4 million people, which is 1.7% of the total Russian population (data of 2014) (Petrov, 2013). In the Russian Arctic, there are about 257,895 people (according to the 2010 census) of indigenous small peoples; the increase is 2.2% compared with the 2002 census.

According to our research the largest part of the indigenous population is in the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, and it is 33.5%, the second one is in the municipal formations of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) – 22.72%, the third place is occupied by Nenets Autonomous Okrug with 17.9%, and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug takes the fourth place with 7.89% of the total population of the Russian Arctic; the smallest part of the indigenous population is observed in some municipal formations of the Arkhangelsk Oblast – 0.07%. The proportion of small indigenous peoples is about 3.42% of the total population of the Russian Arctic.

In the Russian Federation, the state policy towards indigenous small peoples of the North is largely aimed at solving the issues of preserving the cultural and natural heritage, which is reflected in the Federal law No. 104 “On the general principles of the organisation of communities of indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation” from July 20, 2000, and in the Strategy of the development of the Russian Arctic and ensuring national security for the Period to 2020. The role and significance, the social status of the women's part of small peoples are not discussed at all as a rule, unless we take into account the problems raised related to the decrease in the number of indigenous people and the increase of the life expectancy of indigenous small peoples of the North. It must be emphasised that men and women equally bear traditions and culture, but the contribution of women is significantly greater because it is then in the current structure of the society, who have the

responsibilities from cooking, making clothes, caring of livestock to raising children.

The traditional social status and the role of women in the Russian Arctic have changed since the XVIII-XIX centuries to this day. Despite this, there are significant gender stereotypes in the culture of the aboriginal population of Arctic, according to which a woman has a much lower status than men, which is a part of the traditional way of life. In 1833, F. Belyavsky in his work “Journey to the Arctic Ocean” raised the question of the status of a woman in the aboriginal population for the first time describing the customs of the Samoyedic peoples. He noted that “women are not only considered among people but even considered to be unclean beasts - so women are in greater disdain in these people than anywhere else; such an attitude forces them to buy wives for themselves as slaves and treats them in a barbarous way” (Pushkareva, 2000: 29). In the works of K.D. Nosilov “On Novaya Zemlya. Sketches and drafts” (1903), V. Zuev “Description of the heterodox peoples of Ostyaks and Samoyeds living in the Siberian province in the Berezovsky district” (Serpivo, 2016: 6) the authors describe the position of the Samoyed woman as extremely degraded, which lies in the restriction of her actions by a number of prohibitions, in property injustice, in peculiarities of the division of labour, in which women are required to perform the majority of household work, in polygamy. In traditional society, a Nenets woman had an extremely low status.

Over time gender inequality prevalent among women of northern peoples before the XXI century has been transformed under the influence of external factors, and at present other discriminatory processes are manifested reducing the role and status of women (Serpivo, 2016,; Silin, 2011). After analysing the authors concluded that these processes in the aboriginal society are grouped mainly around inequalities in the sphere of work and income.

The development of industrial production in the regions of the North, Siberia and the Far East had a negative impact on the traditional

way of indigenous small peoples of the Russian Arctic (Sulyandziga, 2010). The rejection of large land plots for industrial facilities violated the ecological balance and negatively affected the traditional nature management, which became unprofitable. Many representatives of indigenous small peoples are not ready for such changes, and therefore they are difficult to adapt to the rapid social and economic changes.

The majority of the indigenous population lives in rural areas (76.8%) and is involved in traditional activities for this area: cattle breeding, reindeer herding, fur farming, applied arts, hunting, and fishing, sea mammal hunting, gathering and processing of products. The proportion of women ranges from 47.5% to 53.7% depending on ethnos. About 45% conduct a nomadic way of life traditional for these people. Thus, adherence to the traditional way of life preserves the traditional way, beliefs and the centuries-old distribution of social roles between men and women. Women of small peoples of the Russian Arctic provide the family life: from cooking, making clothes, caring for livestock to raising children. At the same time the woman makes a significant contribution to the life of the family, she is humiliated.

On one hand, adherence to traditional nature management, and on the other the lack of the necessary knowledge and skills to work in the

oil and gas industry, lead to the fact that unemployment among representatives of indigenous small peoples of the Russian Arctic is 1.5-2 times higher than the average one for Russia, which leads to even greater competition in the labour market and the presence of conditions for discrimination against different categories of citizens. From 2010 to 2014, the unemployment rate increased in Arkhangelsk Oblast and Murmansk Oblast, in Chukotka and decreased in the republics of Komi, Karelia, Sakha (Yakutia) and especially in the “hydrocarbon” territories of Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Khanty-Mansy Autonomous Okrug, and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (Serpivo, 2016; Buley et al., 2016).

As an example, let us look at the situation on the labour market of Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (YNAO). According to official data, the unemployment rate in the district in 2015 was 0.73% and 0.79% in 2016, while among the aboriginal population this rate is up to 12.4%, 5.2% of which are women aged from 15 to 64 years old. Figure 1 presents data of official statistics for 2013 on employment in YNAO of indigenous people, including women. Thus, the largest number of aboriginal women is employed in education, health and social services, wholesale and retail trade, repair, construction, public administration, ensuring military security and mandatory social security.

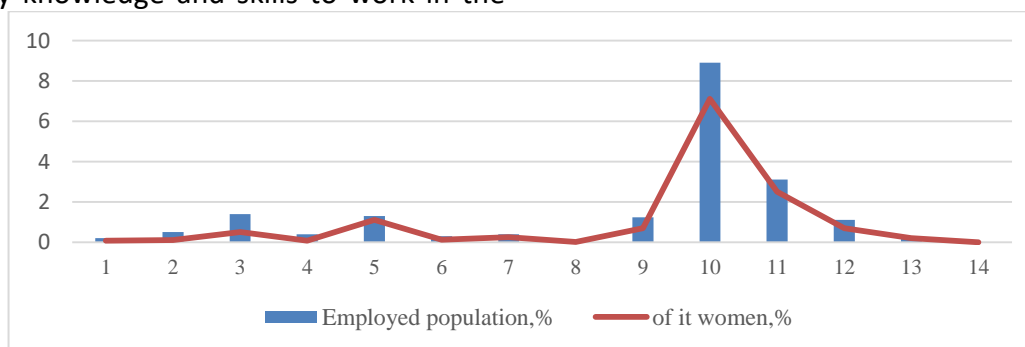


Figure 1: Employed Population of the Small Indigenous Peoples of YNAO at the age of 15-64 years, including Women, % (Federal State Statistics Service, 2017)

(where: 1 – mining, 2 – processing industries, 3 – production and distribution of electricity, gas and water, 4 – construction, 5 – wholesale and retail trade, repairs, 6 – transportation and communications, 7 – financial activities, 8 – operations with real estate, renting and provision of services, 9 – public administration and ensuring military security, 10 – education, 11 – health and social services, 12 – provision of other communal, social and personal services, 13 – provision of household services, 14 – activities of extraterritorial organisations)

Only 0.2% of the aboriginal population of YNAO is employed in the mining industry. Industry companies do not employ representatives of

indigenous peoples “even at posts requiring no education” (Revich, 2017). Large corporations, such as PJSC Gazprom, just declare the

obligations of employment of the local population, including the indigenous one (Revich, 2017; Russian Arctic..., 2016; Tishkov et al., 2016).

It should be noted that in YNAO representatives of indigenous peoples mainly occupy positions requiring no qualifications and education (handymen, cleaners, watchmen, etc.), they also work in a preschool and school institutions, medical institutions and medical centres, houses of culture, rural administrations and other budgetary structures. Thus, this structure of employment does not provide a high level of wages. Moreover, 70 individual entrepreneurs and 13 private enterprises of other management forms are registered in YNAO, providing more than 20% of the total volume of agricultural products produced in the region; it is mostly reindeer and fishery products, in production of which mainly men are involved, the proportion of women is about 26%.

In another subject of the Russian Arctic – Murmansk Oblast – the unemployment rate of the indigenous people was about 5.8% in 2016, of which female unemployment was more than half. As one of the most vulnerable groups of the population, they have the most acute manifestations of such negative trends as mass unemployment and very low levels of income and quality of life, which lead to a high mortality rate far exceeding the average regional one and marginalisation of both men and women. According to the results of the research conducted by the CPP KSC RAS, the poverty rate of indigenous peoples in Murmansk Oblast is about 30%. According to the information of the Public Organization of the Saami of Murmansk Oblast (POSOMO), there is a tendency in the region to oust representatives of indigenous peoples from all branches of the regional economy; it also concerns the traditional nature management, in which indigenous peoples are usually involved (Silagadze, 2017).

It should be noted that similar tendencies in the sphere of employment of representatives of indigenous peoples are to some extent

manifested in other subjects within the Russian Arctic. In our opinion, it is primarily due to the low competitiveness of the majority of representatives of this population group. At the same time, our research also showed that the able-bodied indigenous population works at large enterprises operating in the territory of their residence and can be involved in their activities. Young people, both young men and women, most do not seek to engage in traditional activities but want to work in regions, where natural resources are mined (Zuikova and Eruslanova, 2010).

Indicative here is Canada's policy towards representatives of indigenous peoples, which is built not only on the development of the labour potential of indigenous communities but also on the development and support of indigenous enterprises based on agreements with large mining companies. The scope of activities of these companies includes “food production, provision of public services, maintenance, construction, basic and auxiliary operations in mining, telecommunications, various kinds of transport, etc.” (Petrov, 2013: 169), in which about 65% of indigenous small peoples are employed. Such interaction led to the development of entrepreneurship, increased employment and lower unemployment among the aboriginal population; it was positively reflected in the increase of their income level; a significant part of them get secondary vocational and higher education.

The low level of well-being of indigenous peoples is due, firstly, problems of employment at the place of residence (mainly indigenous people live in rural areas, which are in crisis and generate no revenue), secondly, peculiarities of their way of life (the majority of the population leads the traditional way of life), based on the traditional nature management, thirdly, employment in the public sector (teachers, doctors, salesmen), generating a small but steady income, fourthly, reluctance of oil and gas companies to recruit representatives of indigenous peoples (due to lack of education, work experience, etc.) (Buley et al., 2016).

In 2015, according to the level of money incomes of the population of the Russian Federation, Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug and Chukotka Autonomous Okrug held 1, 2 and 3 places respectively, in other subjects within the Russian Arctic the level of incomes of the population was much lower. Thus, cash incomes per capita in 2016 in Nenets Autonomous Okrug amounted up to 70,203 rubles, in Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug – 62,822 rubles, in Chukotka Autonomous Okrug – 56,974 rubles. At the same time the level of income, for example, in Murmansk Oblast was 36,149 rubles. On average, over the last three years, the growth of the level of cash income per capita in the subjects of the Russian Arctic was 7.3%, which was lower than the official level of recorded inflation. The decrease of the level of income was naturally reflected in consumer spending and their quality: in the structure of monetary incomes, expenditures

increase or may decrease slightly due to the quantity and quality of the purchased products. Based on this negative trend, it is possible to forecast the deterioration of the financial situation of the most representatives of indigenous peoples of the Russian Arctic. Taking into account that, for example, in “sovkhoz” herds female reindeer herders have 0.25-0.5% of the rate, their financial situation is very low, which indicates gender inequality in income level and deepening of gender segregation (Naumenkova, 2015).

In order to assess gender inequality, we surveyed aboriginal women of Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (Figure 2). The survey involved women aged from 16 to 65 years, united by us in clusters by employment in various sectors of the regional economy, planning further development of their working career, social status, education level and income.

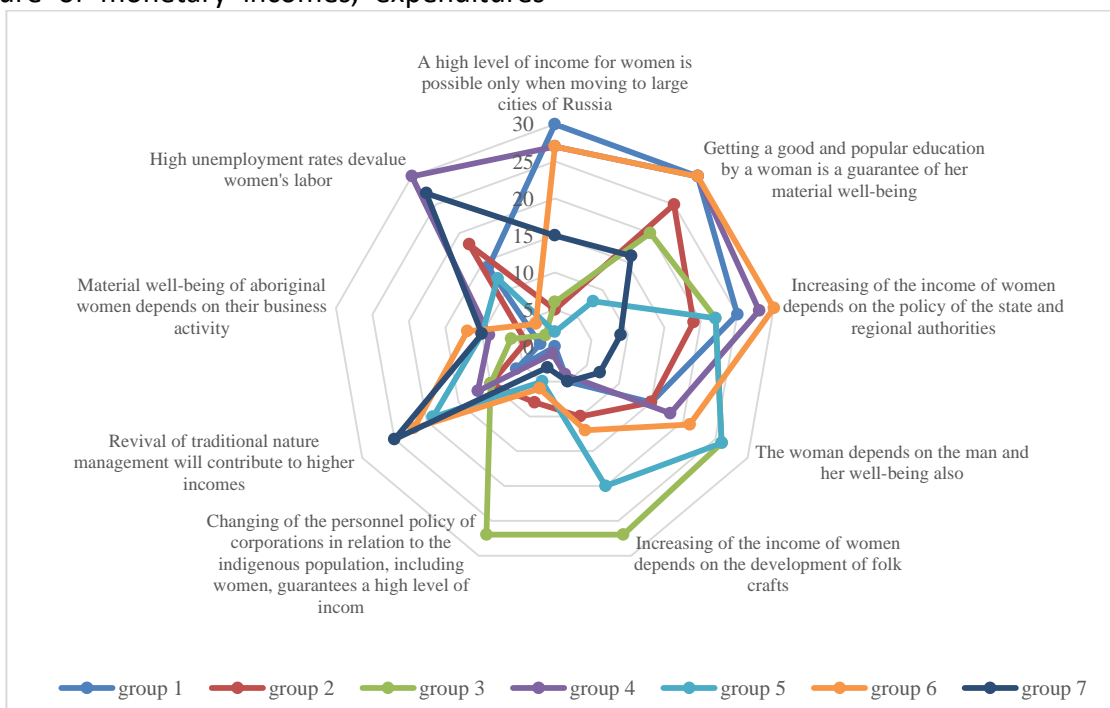


Figure 2: Gender Inequality and Conditions for Achieving Equality from the Perspective of Women of Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Arctic

Source: According to the Results of the Survey in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug

Thus, the survey showed that in indigenous people their mentality and their commitment to traditional nature management play an important role, which, according to the opinion of many aboriginal women, need more support at the state and regional levels, development of

folk crafts, the creation of jobs and protection of this territory. This complex will contribute to raising the level and quality of their life in the harsh conditions of the Arctic zone. In turn, fishing, hunting, reindeer herding for many women does not look attractive and promising

because of low payment levels, insignificant labour opportunities in these industries and also because of the hard nature of this work. Therefore, many of them believe that only changing their place of residence, receiving a good education will help raise the level of income and status in society. An insignificant part of respondents believe that their level of well-being depends on changing of stereotypes in the formation of the personnel policy of oil and gas corporations; gender equality in an aboriginal society can also be achieved by self-realisation in business.

These and other measures will create conditions for achieving gender equality, levelling gender stereotypes and gender discrimination among indigenous small peoples of the Russian Arctic by providing “equal access, opportunities, responsibilities and participation of men and women in all spheres of public and private life” (Kolesnik and Pavlova, 2017: 28).

Conclusions

Thus, in modern Russian society, the problems of gender inequality are most sharply manifested in such a heterogeneous society as indigenous small peoples living in the Arctic zone. This problem is not solved by measures implemented by the state and regional authorities aimed at supporting the region and its indigenous people. Support basically consists in granting by bodies of state power and bodies of local self-government of targeted financing of regional and local programs of preservation and development of the traditional way of life and managing; of conclusion with the communities of contracts for performance of works and provision of services; of targeted training of personnel in the professions necessary for communities for self-government and traditional management, etc. At the same time, aspects of gender inequality in them are not taken into account and are not regulated. In turn, according to forecasts, further development of the northern territories for mining of natural resources may promote further deterioration of the level of

well-being of the entire indigenous population. In order to achieve gender equality and improve the status of women of small indigenous peoples of the Russian Arctic, it is necessary:

First, to create conditions for the development of the traditional sector of economy for the indigenous population, in which women will be able to realize their knowledge, skills and habits inherent in the characteristics of traditional farming and education, taking into account the preservation of ethnic identity.

Second, to develop ecological and ethnographic tourism in the Arctic zone, which would promote the revival of folk crafts, traditional production, production of souvenirs and other products. This would serve as a condition for “integrating” of women's business into the economy of the Russian Arctic, raising their status, material interest in labour in the ancestral legal territory of residence.

Third, for those Indigenous people who seek self-realization in the wage labour, it is necessary to develop a mechanism of introducing quotas, reducing taxes for oil and gas companies using their labour. It will make possible to reduce unemployment among the entire indigenous population of the Russian Arctic, and among their women.

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