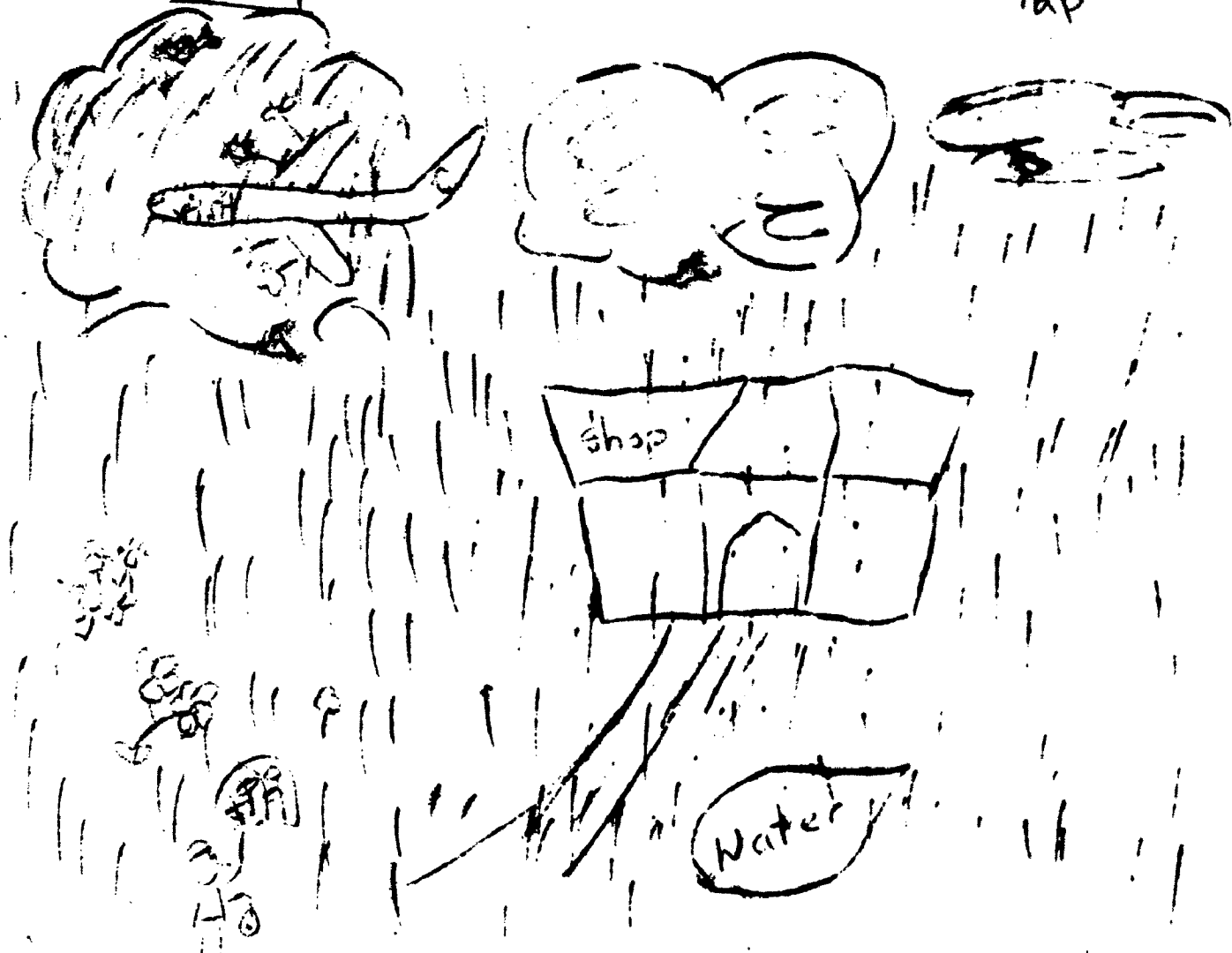


17 JUL 1974

A.I.S.



the wet Maningrida Vol. 3  
 drawing by Laurie Grack 3. Mirage Issue 6  
 November 23rd 1973

### THE WEATHER.....

The weather to date has been raining. I think the rain has been a bit heavy. It appears that we have had about 18" of the stuff.

Some people are happy with this much water around, after all, the geese are still flying around. Some people are very sad. As you may have noticed, there has not been any mail at the Post Office lately. No, there is not a Postal Strike. The planes can't land. The population of Maningrida has remained stable over the past week. It may remain that way for a long time.

If you want to get out of the place, ask the Groote Eylandt Charter Pilot, he may be able to arrange something. Of course, you will have to wait until the clouds roll away, and the water stops falling from the sky. When that happens, you will have a good trip.

Condor has the right answer. They will be getting out of the place their own way, if the weather doesn't help them. They will go out in pairs, in the helicopter.

Congratulations to Connair. This must be the first time that the fault is not theirs. Perhaps Mother Fate wanted Ivan to stay in this beautiful place for a long time, to get experience in looking after himself, a cat and a dog.

The school children have their own thoughts on the weather, This is what the Grade 3 children think of the rain. Their "Odes to Rain."

"CALLING TO RAIN"

Oh rain you wet our house !  
Oh rain you wet our dress !  
Oh rain I'm so angry at you !  
You are a nuisance !!!!!  
Rain go to Darwin...do not come back here.  
Oh rain; you are stopped now.

Cecilie Marwuljula.

+ + + +

"CALLING TORAIN"

Oh rain, stop pouring at the Maningrida  
Oh rain, don't wet my dress  
Oh rain I'm angry at you, rain  
Oh rain don't wet me all over.  
Oh rain don't wet my home.

Lynne Ngalmiranka.

+ + + +

"OH RAIN"

Oh Rain, stop falling in our house;  
Water,  
Oh Rain, stop wetting us we are cold;  
Pouring,  
Oh Rain stop pouring at us like a river,  
Oh Rain stop pouring at Maningrida.  
Oh Rain! Stop the rain someone!  
Oh Rain Stop and go to Daiwn  
and do not come back here  
Oh Rain stop I am angry  
Oh Rain stop the rain wetting our dressese and still  
and still more dresses  
Oh Rain stop it somone, we are very cold.

Margaret Jingarabura.

+ + + +

"OH RAIN"

OH Rain go away come another day,  
You angry rain go to different Place !  
Someone stop it, the rain Please !

Dale Yauwanbula.

+ + + +

"CALLING TO RAIN"

Last nighth there was a big Rain storm.  
Oh, stop the Rain someone!  
I am angry at the Rain. Oh stop it!  
The house is wet we will go to another camp.

Graham Namiyilg.

+ + + +

ADULT LIBRARY BOOK BORROWERS.

PLEASE RETURN ALL BOOKS BORROWED FROM THE RESOURCE CENTRE BY  
27TH NOVEMBER NEXT AS THE LIBRARY WILL THEN CLOSE FOR 1973.  
SHOULD YOU WISH TO BORROW BOOKS OVER THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS, PLEASE

CONTACT DARWIN PUBLIC LIBRARY AND THEY CAN PUT YOU ON THEIR CO  
COUNTRY BORROWERS LISTS.

Patricia Christopher.  
(Adult Library Officer)

+ + + +

N.A.C.C. ELECTIONS

- \* Saturday 24th November. (this Saturday)
- \* At School Resource Centrg.
- \* From 8' o'clock morning - till 6 o'clock evening.
- \* Maningrida and area is in AREA 2 (N.T.)
- \* There are 5 men to choose from :-

1. Dirdi, Ronald Bunnungurri - Oenpelli N.T.
2. Gwadbu, John - Goulburn Is. N.T.
3. Mangiru, Moses Mandjaraba - Oenpelli N.T.
4. Nanarolgi, Thompson - Murgarella N.T.
5. Wagbara, Samuel - Goulburn Is. N.T.

(all details from N.A.C.C. information sheets)

- \* Aboriginal voters must be 18 years or older. People not on the roll already can enrol on Saturday, 24th November - and then vote.

M. UIBO - Presiding Officer  
D. UIBO - Poll Clerk

+ + + +

A FISHING STORY.

Last year at Maganara when there was no rain me and my friend Carol went down the beach. Then Carol said "Hey" Rose we will go and get an iron we will make it into an iron canoe so that we'll go to the deep sea then I said asright we will do that then we make it into a Canoe then we started paddle to the deep sea also we got the flower drum and a fishing line too off we went to the deep sea so we caught too many fish we saw an island we're that sea dragon live then we went back to our own home then we make a big, big fire then we put some fish into a fire it was lovely then we ate half of them we take them to our father they were very proud of us they thought we were lost then when the sun goes down we go to sleep forever. then my friend said to me at last Goodbye friend Rose. then I say Goodbye friend Carol. then we went to sleep.

Rose Lainba Lainba.

+ + + +

MY DARWIN ADVENTURE BY TREVOR MARLWILDA

On Friday two weeks ago my Father and I went to Darwin for a holerday. We went to Kormilda to see my sisters and give them some pocket money. We waited for Nym to get the Toyota he came to Baptist Hostel and Nym came and he said to us you want to come to Maningrida and my father and I said yes so we got our case and got on the truck. We stopped at Humpty Doo all the men got off the truck and went in the pub for a drink. Then we went to the Alligator River but the water was to high so we had to go to Banyili I saw Christopher Fry and Lindsay at Banyili. Then we went to the Bulman and we got bogged in the mud but that was alright because the Toyota has a winch when I got back to Maningrida I was happy.

+ + + +

DECENTRALISATION TRENDS AMONG ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES.

Dr. H. C. Coombs.

It seems agreed that before white settlement the basic hunting and foraging groups of Aborigines moved on a generally seasonally determined pattern largely within the land of the clans to which their members belonged and of those with whom they had close language, marital, totemic or other family or ceremonial relationships. At the same time more extensive movement must have been common.

After the entry of whites into their environment, they tended to be attracted to supply sources of food and tobacco. These attractions were, of course, quickly reinforced by the changes in the natural environment brought about by the white man's cattle and other domesticated animals as well as by the white man himself, which reduced the Aborigines' capacity to live off the land.

With the coming of missions, and even more with the establishment of Government settlements, the position changed. Access to the same basic rations was offered - indeed the range and quality of goods and services offered was greatly extended - medical care, education, improved housing and, in due course, money. But the obligations for which these multiple benefits were in effect being traded were markedly more comprehensive than in the past. While the basic objective of the missionaries was the spiritual conversion of Aborigines, they sought too, consciously and unconsciously, a change in the basic pattern of life and in the values which motivated Aboriginal society to something much more closely resembling our own. Governments' settlements, guided by official policies first of "protection" and then of "assimilation", served as instruments of these policies and the benefits they offered Aborigines aimed to produce the social changes by which these policies were to be made effective.

Missions and settlements tended to bring together multi-clan and often multi-language group communities. Such communities were, if maintained beyond the time appropriate to some special and short-term purpose, alien to the Aboriginal way and created significant stresses among the groups forming them.

It is not surprising, therefore, that group withdrawals from Mission and settlement communities, and more frequently talk of such withdrawals, have been commonplace in such communities. Talk was more common than effective action. Dependence on the goods and services of the white settlement was real and had increased over the years. Bureaucratic resistance to withdrawal, while usually passive, was real, and the fear of effective isolation from services to which the Aboriginal had become accustomed was usually enough to ensure that efforts to withdraw were abortive or, if made, were readily abandoned. This inability to act upon long-considered hopes often intensified previously-evident passivity and inertia among the Aborigines concerned.

Within recent years there has been increasing evidence of more urgent and effective desire and intention to withdraw.

There has been an increasing number of instances of smaller groups, usually from single clans or language groups, breaking away from larger aggregate communities to set themselves up at some distance as satellite communities on out-stations or new settlements. In this paper I intend to review briefly some developments in four places which I have recently visited.

**MANINGRIDA**

Maningrida is a relatively young community, established in 1957 and has attracted and encouraged Aborigines to move to it from surrounding region, from Darwin, from Mainuru, Banyili and from missions. There have always been, and there continue to be Aborigines in their own bush country around the settlement, and movement between the settlement and the bush continues to be common.

It is not surprising, therefore, that there have developed around Maningrida at varying distances up to 50-60 miles a number of decentralised communities.

The decentralised communities are provided with minimum facilities by visits from the settlement superintendent. He delivers and cashes Social Service cheques, sells basic food, tobacco, beer and other stores, and picks up artifacts for sale at the settlement. The communities differ in the degree of communication between them and Maningrida, in their reliance on the resources of the bush, in the extent of European-style economic activity, and in the sophistication of services such as education and health which they receive.

At one extreme there is Ngarraitj, the home of a small group of 30 people - largely the extended family of one man, a traditional bark painter of great distinction. This man and his family have suffered tragically during earlier periods of residence at Oenpelli and Maningrida and have almost completely withdrawn from contact with all but a few trusted persons.

Their way of life is essentially traditional, self-contained and independent. Paintings and artifacts are exchanged (often without personal contact) for essential and limited stores but the group ranges widely and traditional hunting and gathering provides much of their food supply especially in the Wet. It is unlikely that the group would accept services which involved the continued presence of white Australians: there is no school or resident medical personnel.

The camp is beautifully kept - consisting of a number of huts mainly of bush materials modified somewhat in design and structure by white influences. The camp is set among trees at the foot of a sandstone escarpment among which are ledges and overhangs which have for generations been used to record paintings - many of them of the Mimi spirits which Aborigines believe inhabit this rock country. Even passing contact with this group has a powerful impact. There is no doubt of the richness of the life this environment provides for these people nor of the absoluteness with which they reject the values which motivate our own existence. There is a gentle and mystic quality in which at the one time makes them seem infinitely vulnerable and yet spiritually indestructible.

A more economically complex community exists at Kupangur, a beach settlement near the mouth of the Blyth River. Here about 50 people live in camp structures among the sand hills along the beach. These are sea-going people and fish and shellfish abound as well as wallabies, geese, turtles and a variety of fruits, berries, roots, etc. They are the traditional makers of dugout sailing canoes and the craft of making them is maintained both for their own benefit and to meet an interesting demand from museums and similar institutions.

So far economic activity is largely directed at internal needs except for the export of craft products of high quality produced by men and women. At times fish, crabs etc. have been supplied to Maningrida and, given cold-storage facilities and improved transport, there would be scope for this to be expanded, certainly to a degree which would amply cover their present needs of white man's stores. There is here no lack of economic potential. Turtle and crocodile farming appear highly suitable. The problem for the community again, may well be to hold the balance between increasing affluence and the desire for independence and simplicity.

This community is more "services"-conscious than that at Ngarraitj and some interesting experiments are being tried. A young man - educated but not trained as a teacher - is attempting bilingual teaching after a few weeks' training with the Supervisor of this program in Darwin, aided by Maningrida. This development is in response to requests from the community after its return that their children should be enabled to continue their education but that it should be within their own community and more consistent with their own Aboriginal way.

Similarly, a young woman who has worked in a settlement hospital dispenses simple "first aid" with guidance from a nurse on periodical visits from Maningrida.

This community gives the impression of great awareness of the choices inherent in their preference for life at Kupangur rather than at Maningrida, and their gropings for Aboriginal style services rather than those involving the presence and influence of white auth-

criticisms suggest that they realise how easy it is for the quality of the life they have chosen to be impaired - even by components which in themselves seem beneficial.

#### PITJANTJAHARA COUNTRY

The country through which the road west of Amata passes is of great religious significance to Aborigines. Through it their totemic ancestors travelled, and the landscape is rich in sites bearing physical evidence of episodes in their journeying and marking their living presence to this day. Aborigines fear greatly the desecration which white Australian presence can bring to these sites. They see the road, which passes uncomfortably close to sites of special significance, as a source of continuing danger of such intrusion.

Towards the end of 1971 a group of Aborigines from Amata set up a permanent camp 120 miles to the west of Puta Puta, strategically placed to enable the residents to care for rock arrangements, for an important centre for increase ceremonies, and for other sites linked with events on the ancestral journeys.

The move appears to involve some sacrifices by the Aborigines concerned. The camp is on a bare open plain giving an extended view of the road. It consists of traditional style wiltjas, sometimes reinforced with tarpaulins or galvanised iron. Water is carried from a hand pump by the road a quarter of a mile away and firewood from more than half a mile. A truck visits the camp from Amata on pension day bringing pension cheques, and stores. Hunting and gathering is probably an important source of protein food. The group income averages \$10 per week per head and there is a cash-flow back to the Amata community in fulfilment of family obligations particularly to children and grand-children.

Most of the residents are older men and their families, including owners of myths, ceremonies and country associated with the Kangaroo totem. Official policy discourages taking emphasis children to the camp because of the emphasis it places on schooling, but children are often there nonetheless. It is clear that many more younger people would be involved if this were practicable without serious loss of other benefits.

Since the establishment of the Puta Puta camp, an additional camp has been set up at another strategic point on the road where in the past a bore had inadvertently been sunk through a ceremonially important hillock. In addition, the communities involved have sought official help to enable them to establish a series of such camps on the Puta Puta model.

Primarily these moves are designed to establish an "Aboriginal presence" at key points along the road as a protection against intrusion and damage. Other reasons, to which greater emphasis was given in other communities, were referred to in passing. But in discussion and in the program arranged by the Aborigines for us, overwhelming emphasis was placed on this protective aspect of their motivation.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The examples above are designed to demonstrate by conviction that the decentralisation trend is an Aboriginal response to the problems which contact with white society has created for them; an attempt to evolve a life style which combines what they wish to retain of the Aboriginal way of life with the desired goods and services of the white man's civilisation: an attempt to build their relationships with us into patterns comprehensible to them in terms of the mutual obligations which underlie their own social relationships.

The reasons offered by Aborigines for their desire to move away may not always be significant. It is, even for people like ourselves for whom self-analysis has become almost pathological, difficult to be aware of the motivations which impel us to action - especially where such action is a response to total complex situations. Furthermore, Aborigines know how important it is that what they propose should appear reasonable to white administrators, and their justification is often framed to conform to what, in their judgement, will receive white approval.

Nevertheless, there are persistent and recurring themes in Aboriginal comment which are almost certainly relevant. These themes can be grouped thus:

- \* anxieties about relations with the land
- \* questions of social cohesion and control and
- \* concern about black-white contacts.

The desire to decentralise into smaller and more homogeneous communities seems to be a genuine Aboriginal response to the complex problems created for them by contact with our society. I believe, therefore, that where it emerges with sufficient clarity and determination it should be supported by the governments. It is, however, important that evidence of the clarity of the desire and of the determination to make it effective should be expected.

The Aboriginal way and the European-style social and economic system are coherent systems exercising profound and pervasive influence on the values and patterns of behaviour of those who live within them. It would be self-delusion to imagine that Aboriginal communities could become integrated within the general Australian economic system and retain their distinctive Aboriginal character. One does not have to be a Marxist to acknowledge the power of economic systems of production and distribution to mould social motivations and behaviour. If Aboriginals organise themselves for economic purposes on European lines they will inevitably come to think and behave like we do - individually, competitively, acquisitively and aggressively. It seems to me basically because they do not share the values which justify this behaviour that many are seeking to escape into smaller communities. And yet it is clear that some access to the goods and services which our system produces has been a pre-requisite of the establishment or maintenance of many of these communities. There is a dilemma here - for the Aboriginals and for those who wish to help them. Some outright support (such as that from Social Services) is the right of all eligible Australians. There are some forms of production which may be compatible with the Aboriginal ways and it would be wise to help Aboriginals to pursue them. But there are many forms of activity of which this cannot be true. There may even be a level of income beyond which its management in accordance with Aboriginal tradition becomes unlikely. Beyond a certain point Aboriginals will need to choose between the values and opportunities of their own way and the different values and opportunities of our society. It is important that Aboriginals should be aware of this choice and make it freely and consciously. It would be unwise to encourage expectations that not merely the best but all of both worlds are available for the asking.

There are, however, other reasons why governments should approach this trend sympathetically. At least in Central Australia the ecological impact of large communities is destructive.

It may well be wise, therefore, to go slowly with social and economic changes which impose a sedentary way of life on desert Aboriginal people to the extent that such sedentary ways are inevitable, the social and monetary costs of ecological protection should be accepted. Probably every desert community should have its tree nursery and planting program and the ecological impact of every economic venture should be considered before it is established.

Decision-making processes within Aboriginal society are ill-adapted to large and socially-complex communities. In such communities this deficiency often faces administrators with the apparent dilemma of either allowing Aboriginals to fail to cope with the problems about which decisions are called for or of making paternalistic decisions themselves. It is understandable that Aboriginals should be given time to adapt their processes to new tasks, but unwillingness to risk Aboriginal failure or ineffectiveness has generally resulted in the alienation of the Aboriginals concerned from decisions taken on their behalf and a further weakening of their capacity. One of the encouraging aspects of many of the decentralised communities I have seen is the apparent decisiveness of what might be called their "house-keeping". The tidiness, the air of purpose, contrast sharply with the lethargy which characterises most Reserve settlement. Within smaller

communities, Aborigines will have, without encroaching upon their autonomy and self-determination, the opportunity to adapt their social machinery to new and more complex tasks.

Perhaps most important from the point of view of government is the effect of such communities on the role of the central settlements which service them. The staffs of these settlements, at least in relation to the decentralised communities, will lose their supervisory function - their role as the instruments of white policy or doctrine. They will become instead reservoirs of skills and other resources upon which the communities can call as they feel the need. Hopefully this will make possible a professional client-specialist relationship between them and Aborigines which would meet more adequately the Aborigines' need and be less derogatory to the dignity of both parties than the relationship now prevalent.

The most difficult problems of such communities from the point of view of government are those of reconciling self-determination for the Aborigines with help to enable them to obtain access to essential stores and services upon which they have come to depend without imposing on them excessive economic dependence. It would serve little long-term purpose if we free Aborigines from the bonds of bureaucratic paternalism and at the same time make them wholly dependent upon financial subvention from the community. Apart from the ever-present risk of white "back-lash", dependence is insidious, in the long run impossible to disguise, and in due course destructive. As we are now trying to do in social affairs, the objective must be to make the economic condition of Aborigines reflect their own aspirations, efforts and capacities.

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THIS ARTICLE FEATURES EXTRACTS FROM A PAPER DELIVERED BY DR. COOMBS, CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, TO THE ANZAAS CONFERENCE IN PERTH THIS YEAR.

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#### GORDON SWEENEY SCHOOL NOTES.

The last day of school for this year is Friday 7th December.

School Staff recommence on Thursday 31st January, 1974.

Pupils recommence on Monday, 4th February, 1974.

#### Staff Vacancies -

1. Full time qualified teachers for pre-school, infant, primary and possibly secondary.
2. Part time temporary, relieving, qualified teacher.

If any Maningrida residents, being qualified teachers, are interested in the above, I would be grateful if you could immediately come and discuss any possibilities with me now. The establishment for this school, for 1974, is being planned by the Department of Education at this very moment, and I will need to notify them without delay.

Thank you

David Hassall  
(Headmaster)

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#### COMMUNITY HALL

The Progress Association has asked the Y.M.C.A. to accept responsibility for the Town Hall, this includes any person or organisation wishing to use the Hall.

Please approach the Mr. Binder if you or your organisation require use of the Hall, at any time.

Thank you

G. Bagshaw.



**Maningrida Mirage**

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"Maningrida Mirage Volume 3 Issue 6" November 23rd, 1973.

Maningrida Mirage NT Maningrida Community

(r000005900888\_v3iss6\_a.pdf)

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