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## Victim or Actors: The Typology of Indonesian Woman Journalists

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to present a typology of woman journalists in media organizations. It utilizes qualitative research method based on in depth interviews with a number of women journalists in the Province of Lampung. Generally, journalist profession is regarded as a man's world. The nature of work in journalism is considered a competition, especially perceived by male journalists. Equality of rights and obligations is also given a positive value by journalists. Likewise, the appreciation of the voice of women in determining institutional policies is a concrete form of institutional recognition of women's own presence. In the context of gender relations, women journalists reported experiencing the patriarchal environment in which they work in. So much so, that even some women journalists adopted patriarchal values at work. In the context of democratization of gender-based media, the typology of women journalists makes it possible for activism efforts. Literatures also reported low participation of women in media institutions, discriminative patterns of relationships, patriarchal environment, low gender awareness as well as gender-sensitive journalistic work. The study found that female journalists are divided into two typologies, which are: hegemonised women journalists and women journalists as actors of resistance. Hegemony and resistance occur at three levels: gender awareness, media institutions and media routine, as well as context of extra media and patriarchal ideology.

**Keywords:** *Woman journalist, gender awareness, institutions and media routine, patriarchal and extra media, hegemony and resistance.*

### INTRODUCTION

Barbara Reynolds quoted in Allan (2001) challenged, "How can you have a democracy and a free press, when 95 percent of all the decisions made in the media are made by white males?" One of the problems faced by contemporary women's movements is that they are not only dealing with objective reality. The objective reality in question is discrimination in parliament, division of labor, lack of participation, sexual violence in public places, etc. They also face symbolic segregation and marginalization, as a result of the growth of mass communications today (Kaul, 2012).

It is noteworthy that segregation and marginalization symbolically, which then produce stereotypes on women does not just appear in a vacuum or social vacuum, but is rooted in context, while also providing a framework of discourse for the context itself (Jamial, 2006). Gender inequality, therefore, in addition to giving a social basis for injustice in the symbolic realm, but also that the symbolic sphere co-constructs objective injustice in society.

The cultural and historical reality, then trigger the growing awareness of feminism. Because it is based on different levels of awareness, perception and ideological basis, feminism is open to varying interpretations. Thus the meaning of feminism in the 17th

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century (when for the first time used) with current feminism may be different meanings (Bhasin & Khan, 1993).

It is therefore only fair if feminism is divided into many variants with different main issues each. The variants include: liberal feminist, feminist Marxist, socialist feminist, radical feminist, and Muslim feminist (Fakih, 1996). Seeing the breadth of the ideological spectrum and the central themes of each variant, it is no wonder that there is often a polemic between feminists themselves about the foundations, substances, and crucial goals of the feminist struggle. But the variant's distinctions continue to put forth the purpose of feminism which is the achievement of equality, equality and worth and the right to choose and manage life and body both in the household, and outside the home (Bhasin & Khan 1993).

Mass media is an inherent part of the external sector of the household (public). Therefore in this context, the feminism of these variants agrees that they are entitled to be treated equally by and in the media. The rights demand also includes equal opportunities for each gender to manage, other than - of course - how the media displays it. Thus the feminist opposition to symbolic and historical abolition in the media is parallel to their struggle against all forms of discrimination and subordination of women.

How is actually a portrait of a woman as a journalist? The condition of women as journalists, actually can be viewed from two sides, which are the level of woman participations in media organisations, and how their conditions after being in media organisations. A study done by Abar et al. (1999c) concluded that the world of journalism is still considered as the world of men. This condition is embodied from the structural wall blocking the women, which is the existence of society views questioning whether or not a woman is allowed to enter the public sector. The other obstacle is the perception that journalism is man's job. Moreover, the interaction between a man and a woman journalists is coloured by a competition, especially as it is perceived by male journalists.

Women and men have different biological characteristics. Women go through biological processes such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and lactation. These biological characteristics impose judgment, and different treatment from the opposite sex. This is also observed in the workplace, including in news organizations, contributed by the perception that journalist profession belongs to men and not women. However, in reality, the existence of female journalists among male journalists is not an ordinary social reality. There are interesting things that can be asked and observed. For example, is local government policy gives space and rights to women journalists? Are there local opinion leaders, organizations or cultures supporting (or rejecting) women's rights in journalism?

Another study (Abar et al., 1999a) concluded that, first, the number of women journalists is around 5 to 15% from all leading daily press publishing journalists in Indonesia. This small number brings a consequence on the weakness of bargaining position and on its strategic role. Secondly, most of the women journalists are in the lower level in the hierarchical structure of editorial work of the press, which is as field reporters. There is only limited number of women who has been in the position as a managing editor, and that is often in a team with men. The third is the sexist editorial working division where women journalists are mostly placed on women-stereotyped reportages or issues that are considered soft, such as entertainment, culture, education, health, tourism, and others. Fourthly, the facilities and allowances received by women journalists are often more limited compared to male journalists. It is similar to the minimum facilities for women labours.

1 Relating to the context of gender relations, women journalists feel the patriarchal environment in their workplace. Some journalists adopted patriarchal values that make them accept their marginal status (Hardin & Shain, 2005). The study done by Abar et al. (1999b) concluded that gender awareness and sensitivity only penetrates into few women journalists, individually facing media institutions that are collectively controlled by male journalists. Most of women journalists see themselves similar to the stereotype that has been built by patriarchal structure. Television stations in Indonesia, for example, even though some have placed women in better editorial positions or hierarchy, these women reported that the authority given to them can not be used because structurally the policies are decided through meetings of institutions that are generally controlled by men (Soemandoyo, 1999).

The study conducted by Abar et al. (1999c) also concluded that women journalists who have motivation to be journalists are often fuelled by their dreams to defend the interest of women at the newsroom, who are still experiencing gender imbalance, in terms of very small number female representatives in the news organisations. Its implication is clear that media coverage becomes unfriendly toward women, especially toward women's movements. Similar is observed in media coverage on women's movements. A study done by Bronstein (2005) concluded that journalists still tend to describe the third wave feminist movement in a way that distorts identity and its objectives. This study also reveals that the third wave feminist movement is stated to be the opposite of the second wave feminist movement with a way that underestimates actors and accomplishments or achievements of the second wave feminist movement. The study done by Abar et al. (1999b) also concluded that the problems of woman in news organisations are only viewed from the perspective of woman in development, where a woman figure is viewed from her participation level in development process and her affinity with state bureaucracy.

Actually, what is wanted by women journalists is autonomy. A study done by Elmore (2005) concluded that women journalists want autonomy in work and demand work satisfaction from the autonomy. In female journalist realm, control and autonomy emerge as joint theme. Some female journalists perceive that they feel the existence of control and autonomy discrepancy as a journalist, and they want to have control more in different roles at work. At the same time, some female journalists feel that the lack of control in their jobs currently is expressed in an unpleasant way. This indication triggers the birth of initiation that democratisation is needed in media institutions through the means of media activism (Hackett, 2000; Carroll & Hackett, 2006).

These facts supports that women journalists are not solitary in building awareness, to express their views, as well as to respond to media dynamic and media extra. Media content produced also reflects women journalist, their plurality along with their relation with media and patriarchal ideology. Belief, views, and actions of women journalists form types of grouping (typology) of women journalists as social actors. Therefore, the one main question of this study is what are the typologies of women journalists exist in the context of gender relations in media organisations?

#### METHOD

This study used a qualitative research method. Qualitative method aims to understand certain phenomena holistically that are described and explained descriptively. Analysis of data is through data reduction (grouping similar data), interpretation and decision-making,

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and conclusions. The data source used is the result of in depth interview on 16 women journalists in a number of media organizations in the Province of Lampung. The focus of this study is the statements expressed containing attitude, knowledge, and experience related to gender role and social practice in media institutions from the social actors i.e themselves and other female journalists.

#### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As usual, efforts to understand women journalists are related to the media product that is produced and its relation to gender dynamics in media organizations. Gaye Tuchman, quoted in Anderson (1983) photographed that media product in this form is because of the existence of patriarchal ideology in macro aspect and gender imbalance in the area of media organizations. The basic assumption is that media product is the dynamic reflection of both aspects. However, the conception has not yet departed from the subject of women journalists and women's interest.

The initiative to formulate women journalist typology from a woman's point of view, has been done by Liesbeth van Zoonen (1991) photographing women in mass media by looking at the ideology variants that also affect the activism of women's movement in mass media. Feminist variants that are radical, liberal, and socialist have different patterns in their media activisms. However, the typology of van Zoonen taking from the ideological macro approach, ignoring individual specific portrait of women journalists who have unique ideological preference that is not always able to be categorized in certain feminist variants.

From all information given by women journalists, there are a number of information links that actually can be related one to another, so they form a specific type. These types are the abstractions from empirical data. Some types emerging from all informants are all the things related to their views related to the individual view and belief (gender awareness), routine and relation in organization (institution), and the last is their responses on patriarchal ideology and feminism contextually and media extra (context).

#### *Gender Awareness*

The society's view of the different functions, roles and responsibilities between men and women is the meaning of gender itself and contributes to socio-cultural construction of gender in society under mutual agreement. This construction goes through a long process and can change according to human development itself. Generally gender inequality in Indonesia is still very much influenced by subordination views, whereby there are certain groups being marginalized. Inevitably, certain types of work are directed only to men, although we know that the work is also capable of being done by women.

Women journalists (respondents) have their own pressures when they decide on how to perform or formulate their views and gender identity in the journalistic working world. This pressure may be caused by the absence of definition on how society perceive and expect women journalists to behave and perform, as well as the view of their world when conducting journalistic tasks. The implication that can be predicted is that the diversity of media products will cause difficulties to identify one single formula that could describe or justify woman ideology when responding a number of issues and events.

Several respondents reported a number of instances where patriarchal rules are apparent and discussions on gender awareness are left only as an academic terminology. It was observed that women journalists (the respondents), for example, still reproduce and conformed the view that men are much more superior compared to women. They are

supported by the empirical basis that is absorbed continuously and respondents reported feeling comfort when men took over their tasks so that they can be free from the jobs that drain energy and time. It is noted even that some respondents are convinced that they cannot work alone without men's support. Journalist world is still recognized by these respondents as the world of males who are physically able to work twenty-four hours without feeling tired or distracted by family and household matters, which is often deemed as a woman's business.

This is the reason why women journalists have very high expectations on domestic realm rather than public realm. Being a journalist seems to 'almost' fulfill social association and expectations for women to return to their traditional 'job' which is to take care of the household and family. Respondents feel enough or satisfied to only perform the work and do not feel the need to make it as a form of sociological activity in order to serve information needs that are wanted by public. The respondents reported that journalist profession itself contrasts them with their normal lives. They feel that journalist profession actually keeps away from their private life. The unclear use of time and high work rhythm are among the reasons for them to make it only as a 'temporary stop-by' place for them before continuing with a "normal life" that is expected to be undertaken in later times.

Most of them even reported feeling sad on the poor understanding and sensitivity of gender issues at work. The world view is not directed to the difference of social attributions between man and woman. Often time respondents felt that they have to adhere to the status quo because that is what is expected and felt more comfortable. Moreover, it is reported that at work surroundings do not have the understanding of issues related to feminism, as well as the terminology itself. Feminism is viewed more as 'womanhood image' that is common from a man's view, which is often relates to beautiful and gentle manner. This typical view is far from the imagination of academics who see feminism as the way of thinking, paradigm, or a movement, and as a method to understand the reality of gender relation.

However, respondents reported that there are also a number of journalists who have good gender understanding and sensitivity at work. As a matter of fact, it was observed that some respondent produces contradictive ideas. Not all of journalists accepted the idea of patriarchal in their journalistic work. There are some of them who rejected, while some of them negotiated it.

Those who holds this stance posits that women have special superiority compared to men. They believe that women are able to use their multi-perspective ability when viewing a problem. Men is said to be single focus, while women are more complex. The mind of a woman 'has many branches'. It makes women journalists richer in producing news materials. This view rejects to reproduce the patriarchal view that women are emotional and not rational. They realise the complexity of events because of the sensibility skills that they have.

On top of that, it is mentioned by the respondents that women journalists can be more honest in writing news about women by using their feelings without judgement by the existence of gender difference in opinion. Gender identity is not as the formulation of patriarchal, but a historical formulation in space and time of view and values believed by women journalists. It is the belief about equality of rights and obligations between man and woman.

*Media Institutions and Routine*

Media organisation is a medium of repression on one side and a fight on the other side. The strong business interest in media organisation can cause the presence of excluded party in the arena, but on the other side there is one that is stronger because of it. This is even more apparent if gender becomes the base of its analysis. The women journalists have variety of responses on this issue, but they are united by an idea that it is problematic.

This strong tendency is alongside the inability of women journalists to push for their interests, which often worsen the condition. Respondents reported struggles to create special space in the newspapers for women/female issues. Women's interests must be negotiated with the media economic interest. More often than not, space to discuss female issues are limited and deemed unprofitable because they wouldn't 'sell'. Its implication is that media products are unfriendly with women's point of view. The respondents also reported that they reproduced patriarchal views more because of this media economic interest.

However, uncovering these gender struggles in the media barely scratches the surface of the real problem. It was observed that these women are themselves conditioned to believe that news is an objective product that is neutral and natural. Women journalists ignore the fight to produce news as a woman's symbolic representation. Women journalists very rigidly emphasise on the fact that in order to be considered newsworthy, raw materials (in this case women issues) in journalistic reporting must really exist, objective, and can be measured. This awareness shows that social fact is a natural thing, without the intervention of social actors, as well as the matter of media position in society. This surfacing view believes that journalists or their media must be separated from external interests. The position as such is very typical in normative journalism theory that very much emphasises on impartiality of media towards the interests outside of media.

However, those views are not monolithic. There is a unique matter in their view that if the one that is prioritised as a normative aspect of journalism is impartial, their view then follows, but if the thing referred is a normative aspect of individual's ethical choice, respondents' perception is varied, and most likely is different from journalism normative dimensions.

In the subject of subjective value involvement, there is also a dubious view whether they are really objective in reporting an event. There are journalists who realised that actually journalists do not express the values they believe at all. This was observed when women journalists are asked to comment on pornography as a fact. Women journalists indicated in their responses that they must take an active part to protect readers from pornography products.

In terms of their views on the reportage, some affirmed that as a social actor, a journalist always uses his/her awareness and experience in building a journalistic report. Women journalists tend to affirm their tendency not to be separated from the values they believe in. Therefore, in this context, women journalists realised that they have a choice to determine the final result of a journalistic process, and producing news product in the media.

It can be seen from their social practices in journalistic working process. There is a tendency that they use their authority to freely use a woman's point of view because they believe that news are not only natural products. They believe that they are able to build issues that support women's rights and reinforcement. Women journalists also believe in the concept of gender language equity. The events that become the reference of news must

be built by using the principle of equity in language. Women journalists realise that language aspect is not only a formal aspect, well and correctly, but also practically is used in certain social contexts. Language lives in a space that affects it. This tendency appears when they report a case involving women as the victims.

Other surfacing social practice is negative attribution given by women journalists toward the strong business interest in media organisations. The surfacing views implied that there is a 'difficult' negotiation between journalist's individual interest and business interest of the media company. This is often because it involves employee's welfare, therefore all means are allowed. They pay attention to the narrow public interest of information because it is controlled by financial sponsors (i.e: advertisements) that are considered giving 'life' to media organisations.

On the other side, respondents gave positive attribution on the ability of certain sides of organisational policies that are considered attentive towards gender equality. The equality in rights and obligations is given positive value by journalists, as well as appreciation on women's voice in determining institutional and editorial policies. These recognitions are a concrete form of institution's recognition on women journalists and their presence in the organisation.

#### Context

Media and journalists cannot be separated, but can be discussed from any point of view. Media can contribute positively or negatively towards the society and its region. For example in Somalia, the media has contributed negatively, fueling hostilities and conflict. The concept of journalism development, evolution and relevance grew especially with newly independent nations in Asia and Africa since the 1960s (Ahmed, 2016). In Indonesia, the problems of journalists and the media also cannot be separated, including the dominant patriarchal culture. Patriarchy culture can affect the values adopted by the community.

The main aspect of a lasting patriarchal culture is because the existing worldview reproduce the narrative that supports it. Worldview is reproduced because of the internalisation, not only by men, but also by women. Therefore a woman will continue feeling that she deserves to practice her traditional roles and that by performing such roles, she will feel accepted in society, and feeling comfortable in this condition. Patriarchal appears in the face of family and society, and is determinant toward the continuity of its career and job. A number of women journalists always consider this when being asked about their thoughts in terms of continuing of their job in the future.

The culture of society is created. So is the gender conflict and struggles in Indonesia. This is a crystallization of what is happening in society. For example, the concept of beauty, sometimes also perceived differently by men and women (Kartika, 2016). Another example is language and narrative, which was created by society and crystallized for the benefit of the dominant. In the structure of society, men are often perceived more dominant against women, the language describing them as one to defend the situation (Kartika, 2014). At the roots, culture of language and patriarchy in society arose in family upbringing and institutionalization. In the end, it will also affect the activities of Indonesian women, including women journalists.

In such condition, women journalists seem to feel no need to ask series of justifications behind the social practices that they undertake. Feminism, for example, in the view of several respondents, is only a partial symptoms of Western society, and is not



suitable for Eastern culture. These Western and Eastern categories eventually obscure the feminism essence that gives a different understanding and action frameworks for fair social processes.

However, on other continuum, it can be observed that some respondents regard feminism as fluid, critized and modified. Some journalists clearly see feminism as a fighting tool. They feel that there are needs that must be fought for. Women journalists in general felt that there are unfair social processes, not only to them as news producers, but also as women who act as sources of news. They even see that their roles as symbolic product producers in the culture really affect in planting affimative ideology or negation toward the gender inequity. They believe that there must be education process for most of women, and mass media is the one that can be relied on and they want to be part of it.

There are women journalists who felt that they do not need to absorb feminism in their liberal idea, but realised that at the historical level, the inequity exists. Although they see that feminism is a partial symptom of Western society, they do not entirely ignore the segregation towards women. These respondents do not use feminism in their dictions, but finds other ideology structure that is felt more comprehensive because it is related to tradition, religion, and civilisation. For example, some might find their knowledge framework in Islam.

Some journalists really realised their identity as Muslims. The religion that is felt dogmatic, is actually emerged in its praxis face. They use Islam as a worldview and as the action base. They feel that Islam has arranged all matters on man and woman relations. Islam meant here is certainly not Islam as an institution, but Islam as the one believed and practiced by a number of women journalists.

Based on the classification, in general, there are two types of journalists, which are type of hegemonised actor women journalists and resistant actor women journalists. In the context of gender-based social practice, hegemonised actor women journalists are the result from a number of actions absorbing and reproducing patriarchal narratives, weak in gender awareness and feminism, and powerless in pushing women's interests in media organizations. Meanwhile, resistant actor women journalists are the result of a number of actions rejecting patriarchal narratives, believing that journalism as gender identity representation, and believing that feminism is a fighting tool. Table 1 summarizes findings of this study according to the typology identified:

Table 1: Identification of Women Journalists Typology.

Level	Social Practice of Women Journalists	
	<i>Hegemonised Actor</i>	<i>Resistant Actor</i>
<b>Gender Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Men are perceived to have biological and intellectual superiority</li> <li>- Expectation of domestic world is more dominant than public world</li> <li>- The low of understanding and gender awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Having perception that writing is a process and product of gender identity representation</li> <li>- Having view that women have emotional and intellectual complexity so the potential is embodied in comprehensive new writing</li> </ul>
<b>Media Institutions and Media Routines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Women's weak ability in pushing their interests</li> <li>- Believing that media information is objective, neutral, and natural, not as a cultural event and symbolic representation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The use of gender perspective in journalistic work especially for cases concerning women</li> <li>- The use of languages that are gender sensitive</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Rejecting to introduce values believed to build argumentation of news to freely use a woman's point of view</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Believing and practicing that news reporting is the result construction, because it must be used in the context of gender language equality</li><li>- Criticising and giving negative attribution to excessive business interest done by media organisations</li><li>- Giving positive attribution on media organisation policies applying gender equality</li></ul>
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Internalisation and reproduction of patriarchal views</li><li>- Criticising feminism as partial phenomena in Western countries and is not suitable with eastern culture</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Criticism on feminism that tends to be liberal on the level of idea, but realising the existence of inequity on empirical historical level</li><li>- Believing other structures, besides feminism as liberator of women, which is Islam</li><li>- Admitting that feminism is a fighting tool for women</li></ul>

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This typology actually operates in dynamic social practice. In other words, the description in each level does not always work independently and exclusively. In its practice, hegemony and resistance range are in one link of social practice that is dynamic and flowing. It is most likely that a journalist is hegemonised at a certain level, but builds resistant strategy at another level. Even in certain conditions, some journalists experience and reproduce hegemony on one level, but on the other side, building resistance in other levels (Ashaf, 2015). In the context of media democratisation (democratisation referred is media democratization that is based on gender equity), activism practices practiced by women journalists eventually are not single and separated, but depended on the definition of the problem that is formulated to achieve media democratisation.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The general view of the position and role of women journalists and the implications that it generates is commonly concerned with how women become objects, both in journalistic work and in their representation in the organizational structure of the media. The main focus of this view is the dominance of patriarchal culture affecting the works of media organizations.

This culture is not only reflected in the internal media organizations, but also reproduced in the media-served society. As a business institution, the media generally also do not want to get out of the dominant value that already directs the social action of the community as media users. Ultimately, most of the media products are directed to serve those values, in this case are patriarchal values.

The tendency to ignore, even unconsciously institutionalize gender relations inequality (subordination), has unwittingly encouraged media to absorb patriarchy as a unit of value that benefits the media commercially. The tendency of the media to institutionalize a patriarchal dominant perspective can be traced via the low level of participation and the role of women in media institutions. As early barriers are already experienced by women in society, it further contributes towards the weakening of women's desire to work as

journalists. The situation is further exacerbated by the reduction of the roles of women journalists to express their values in the internal mechanisms of media work.

In other words, in addition to marginalizing in numbers, female journalists also assume ideological marginal positions. This context leads to situations in which women, in addition to the historical annihilation of their participation and role, also experience the symbolic abolition of their existence in the media representation (symbolic annihilation). Like a circuit, women are in an endless and cornered circle.

The dominant themes of women's study as journalists among others are those related to the low women's participation in media institutions, discriminatory relation pattern, patriarchal environment, the low gender awareness, and journalistic work that is sensitive to gender. However, there are other facts that actually exist in journalists who fully realise the condition, and identify the basic needs of what must be fulfilled. They want autonomy in journalistic work. It shows that the types of women who work in media organisations are not similar.

The institutionalized praxis in media institutions is deeply rooted in the patriarchal culture and individualized consciousness of women journalists. Within the span of individual, organizational and contextualized levels of patriarchal culture, women journalist praxis operates dynamically and fluidly. Like a continuum, on the one hand female journalists are trapped and at the same time reproduce the tendency of hegemonic patriarchal values. On the other hand, they resisted the narrative by initiating supportive media work and providing space for the democratization of gender-based media.

In the context of media activism, what women journalists in Indonesia aims to influence is the practice and content of mainstream media, by opening internal opposition voices in media institutions, monitoring media on how far the media structurally opens space for women initiation, as well as campaigning to change the specific aspects of representation that symbolically harm women (Ashaf, 2015).

In the context of gender-based media democratisation, typology of women journalists enables activism efforts, considering there are hegemonised types of journalists, there are also types of journalists who act as resistant actors who have gender awareness, aware in using gender point of view in their journalistic practices and understand the context including gender inequity in mass media. Therefore, its basic assumption is that the more woman journalists act as resistant actors, their media activism will also increase for achieving gender-based democratic media.

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#### BIODATA

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