



The Approaches and Challenges of The Pahang Council of Religion And Malay Custom (MUIP) in The Development of Da'wah Among Orang Asli Community In Jerantut: A Review

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Abstract

In terms of societal context, Malaysia is a country with a variety of races, beliefs, religions and cultures. One of the minority groups in Malaysia is the Orang Asli community. Many efforts are being undertaken by government departments such as the State Council of Religion and Malay Custom in the effort to convey da'wah among the Orang Asli community. Pahang is the largest and widest state in Peninsular Malaysia. From here, we can imagine that the efforts to carry out da'wah among Orang Asli especially in Pahang this is no easy feat. The implementation entails effective and organised activities and requires commitment from all parties. The study aims to explore the organisational management system of the Pahang Council of Religion and Malay Custom (MUIP) in implementing the da'wah agenda in Pahang, especially in the Jerantut district. The da'wah activities and approaches to this group were also analysed in this study. Furthermore, it aims to identify the challenges experienced by preachers to enhance the da'wah efforts to the Orang Asli community. This study is a qualitative research that uses interview methods by looking at views from the MUIP Da'wah Unit officers and Orang Asli community activists regarding the approaches used throughout the implementation of Dakwah activities to the Orang Asli community and the challenges. The outcomes from this study are expected to help government institutions to scrutinise and review the effectiveness of the activities undertaken as well as reduce the pressures experienced by those involved in developing the da'wah management system among Orang Asli community.

Keyword: da'wah, approach, challenge, government institution, Orang Asli development

Introduction

The da'wah-related programmes that are organised are very crucial in the effort to spread Islam to all mankind regardless of Muslims or non-Muslims. Those who are considered minorities in Malaysia such as Orang Asli community is not excluded. Hence, the essence of the programme is very important to provide understanding and knowledge to the Orang Asli community about



Islam. The programme implementation to deliver Islamic knowledge should also be balanced, perfect and appropriate for the Orang Asli understanding.

Apart from the programme implementation, preachers are also responsible to deliver Islamic teachings correctly and accurately to avoid doubt or misunderstandings that may lead to negative perceptions towards Islamic religion embraced by the followers. Therefore, it is necessary to diversify da'wah activities among Orang Asli community so that they can approach, get familiar with and understand Islam.

The implementation of da'wah activities requires detailed and organised planning to ensure success of such activities. The implementation of da'wah activity also requires support from various parties and commitment in carrying da'wah to the Orang Asli community. Pahang Council of Religion and Malay Custom (MUIP) is a body responsible in implementing and delivering dakwah to the Orang Asli community in Pahang, which includes Jerantut district.

To perfect the da'wah agenda, the preachers should adopt approaches which are deemed fit and do not violate the ethics and customs of those who are being preached. This approach is applied to ensure the success of activities being carried out. Therefore, MUIP should use suitable approaches to get closer and be familiar with the Orang Asli community.

In general, most of Orang Asli have lack of education and strongly adhere to the beliefs and traditions they have inherited from generation to generation. This is one of the obstacles to spread da'wah among them. In addition, their lifestyles that they prefer to stay in remote areas and difficult to approach are also making the efforts to approach them requires a lot of funding to ensure the efforts made are ongoing. They are timid to meet the outsiders. If the efforts combined are not carried out on a regular basis, the the chance of them converting to their original beliefs is high, they are even easily deceived by the efforts of other missionaries who invite them to embrace their religion.

Literature Review

Aisyah Jami'an in her Ph.D. thesis titled "Da'wah Programme and Improvement of Life Quality Among Orang Asli Reverts In Gombak (Program Dakwah Dan Peningkatan Kualiti Hidup Saudara Baru Orang Asli Di Gombak)" (2013) mentions that the da'wah programmes carried out are more focused on problem solving according to the current issues. The efforts to plan and organise such activities according to the targeted group requires ceaseless time, knowledge, and attention. The main aim of the da'wah programmes is to encourage Muslim individuals to make themselves better from day to day so that they can be excellent in many aspects of life. This is in line with the concept of Islamic da'wah, which is an activity, an effort to invoke, guide and advise the society in a systematic and wise manner.

According to Anuar Puteh, Ideris Endot, Sazliza Mat Isa, Mohamad Zulkifli Abdul Ghani, Ahmad Irdha Mokhtar and Noraini Zakaria (2015) in a study titled "PERKIM Activities in Pahang for Cambodian Reverts (Aktiviti PERKIM Pahang untuk Muallaf Masyarakat Kemboja)", the da'wah approaches implemented by PERKIM in Pahang via education and welfare. From these two approaches, da'wah through welfare is more emphasised, in which the activities carried out by the organisation are more in the forms of charity such as having religious classes, motivation



course for kids, advisory service, preachers training and many more. The da'wah is aimed to those who have yet to revert to Islam and those who have just embraced Islam.

Based on Ahmad Redzuwan Mohd Yunus, Razaleigh Muhamat@Kawangit and Mohd Hasimi Mahmud (2015) in the research titled "Islamic Appreciation among Orang Asli Reverts in Kampung Sungai Berua, Terengganu (Penghayatan Islam Saudara Baru Orang Asli Kampung Sungai Berua, Terengganu)", there is positive development of the Islamic values delivered by the preachers. However, it is saddening that they understand the meaning of Islamic values but when it comes to the implementation stage, it is still unsatisfactory. The da'wah approaches must be done using appropriate methods so that the Orang Asli community can receive the messages in a situation with their arms wide open.

Anuar Puteh, Razaleigh Muhamat@Kawangit and Rosmani Husin (2015) in their study on the "Implementation of Guidance Co-curriculum among Reverts in the Kelantan Department of Islamic Affairs (Pelaksanaan Kokurikulum Bimbingan Saudara Baru di Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Kelantan)" explained that the programmes implemented by the Reverts' Unit under the Kelantan Department of Islamic Affairs for new reverts in Kelantan are very effective and leave positive impact to them. The commitment of the Reverts' Unit (JHEAIK) in implementing such programmes are to enhance understanding of Islam among the new reverts.

Razaleigh Bin Muhamat@Kawangit in his research on "Da'wah to Orang Asli: An Experience of Islam (Dakwah Orang Asli: Suatu Pengalaman Pengislaman)" (2006) describes the implementation of da'wah activities to the Orang Asli community by hosting a feast with them. This is one of the da'wah methods applied by Rasulullah s.a.w. Another method is having a visit in the pursuit of building good relations and portray the message and beauty of Islam is very important in implementing da'wah methodology.

Looking at the need to understand the best approaches and challenges faced by the government institutions in delivering da'wah, the author felt the urge to come up with this article to further improve the da'wah organisation in the future.

Methodology

The design of this study is in the form of qualitative research with the aim to gain insights among the MUIP Dakwah unit officers and Orang Asli community activists regarding the approaches and challenges throughout the implementation of da'wah activities among the Orang Asli community. Hence, the author had conducted semi-structured interviews on the officers and Orang Asli community activists as the outcome of this research. The author is also directly involved throughout the da'wah programmes carried out by MUIP to evaluate the actual situations faced by the organisation. A total of five respondents were selected for the interview sessions to gain their views on the da'wah programme management. In this study, purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used, in which the author chose a respondent who has knowledge and skills related to the da'wah programmes conducted by MUIP among Orang Asli community. Then, the respondent was requested to suggest other respondents who can also provide valuable information for this study.



Results and Discussion

Da'wah Approaches Via Many Aspects

Pahang Council of Religion and Malay Custom (MUIP) has a significant role to spread Islam in Pahang, especially in Jerantut. The efforts cover various aspects including education, economy and social. Among the da'wah approaches adopted by MUIP are as follows:

Da'wah via Education

i) Fardhu Ain Classes

Every year, Pahang Council of Religion and Malay Custom gives allocation to the MUIP of Jerantut to conduct Fardhu Ain classes to the Orang Asli community. The class are handled by the Brigade Da'wah Teachers appointed by MUIP. Classes are run eight times in a month. Among the contents covered in Fardhu Ain classes include theory of prayer, ablution, tayammum, taharah and then followed by practical sessions of what being taught in theory.

Besides, Orang Asli community are taught to read 'Iqra to help them recite the Qur'an. The Brigade Da'wah Teachers do not only teach – they are also responsible in management of the dead in the event of death in the Orang Asli settlement.

ii) Management of the Dead Course

Management of the Dead Course is participated by Orang Asli community around Jerantut. In 2015, the MUIP branch in Jerantut organised this course on February 13, 2015, on Saturday at Sekolah Kebangsaan Sungai Kiol hall, Jerantut. The course participants are the residents of Orang Asli Sungai Berjuang, Kampung Orang Asli Paya Petai, Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Kol and Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Kiol. The total participants are 80. They were briefed and then exposed to the management of the dead. This course also prepares them to deal with death when it occurs in their village. This programme received encouraging feedback from the participants, who are the Orang Asli Muslims from the Orang Asli settlements in Jerantut.

Da'wah via Economy

i) Contribution to the Islamic Reverts

Pahang Council of Religion and Malay Custom (MUIP) provides funding as the contribution to those Orang Asli who embrace Islam. MUIP allocates five hundred ringgit per person. In 2014, MUIP allocated RM 112, 150.00 as an aid to the Orang Asli who had just become Muslims in Jerantut. Meanwhile in 2015, the allocation amounted to RM 118, 750.00.

ii) Monthly Aid for the Pooors

MUIP does not only allocate zakat to the Malay community, but it also provides the Monthly Aid for The Pooors to the Orang Asli community. This assistance is specialized for the poor people in terms of living cost. Besides the monthly aid, they also receive RM300 voucher for grocery expenses to cover the monthly aid.



iii) Contribution for Eid Mubarak

Every year, MUIP allocated contribution for Eid Mubarak to the Orang Asli community, especially the Muslims. This contribution is to ease their burden and help them to prepare for Eid Mubarak celebration. In 2014, MUIP allocated RM 100, 000.00 for Eid Mubarak contribution to Orang Asli community in Jerantut. Meanwhile in 2015, the allocation for Eid Mubarak contribution increased to RM 150, 000.00.

Da'wah via Social

i) Ihya Ramadan Programme

The Ihya Ramadhan program is held every year when it comes to Ramadan. The programme is held in Orang Asli settlements in Jerantut. In collaboration with the Islamic Religious Office of Jerantut and Orang Asli Community Activist (PMOA). This programme is intended to further strengthen the relationship between the Orang Asli community and religious officials involved. In addition, the programme is organised to provide exposure and celebrate the holy month of Ramadan. Among the activities covered in this programme is the breaking of fast ceremony as well as having Maghrib, Isya and Terawih prayers, followed by Eid Mubarak contribution to the reverts and the poor in Orang Asli community.

ii) Eid Mubarak Celebration Programme

The Eid Mubarak was held to celebrate the day that is regarded as the Victory Day for the Muslims. The programme aims to provide exposure and appreciate Islam in regards to Eid Mubarak. Besides, the programme also strengthens the relationship between Orang Asli community and Malay communities. In 2015, MUIP branch in Jerantut collaborated with the Islamic Religious Office of Jerantut, Orang Asli Community Activists under JAKIM and Muslim Welfare Organization Malaysia (PERKIM) of Jerantut to organise Eid Mubarak Celebration at Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Mai. The programme was held on August 6, 2015 and was inaugurated by Al-Fadhil Qadhi of Jerantut.

There are only 35 Orang Asli reverts in Sungai Mai, while the rest of them embrace animism. The programme also aims to make them familiar with the Islamic lifestyle by celebrating Eid Mubarak together. This programme received hearty response from all villagers in Kampung Sungai Mai, including the non-Muslims. They were served with lemang and rendang.

iii) Eid ul Adha Celebration Programme

Eid ul Adha Celebration Programme or Festival of Sacrifice is celebrated to commemorate the sacrifice of Prophets Abraham and Ismail in fulfilling the command of Allah. On October 8, 2014, the MUIP of Jerantut collaborated with the Islamic Religious Office of Jerantut and the Orang Asli Community Activists under JAKIM to organise Eid ul Adha Celebration at Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Kol, Damak Jerantut. RM 4,000.00 was allocated for the programme. They had gotong-royong to cook with the villagers. The programme had further strengthened the relationship between the villagers and the programme secretariats. In addition, the programme also provided a bit of exposure about the Eid ul Adha celebration.



v) Wedding Ceremony for Orang Asli Reverts

The Orang Asli Reverts Wedding Ceremony was held for Orang Asli couples who want to get into marriage. Among the objectives of this programme is to provide early exposure on the appreciation of Islam via marriage. Besides, this programme can also foster relationship between the religious officials and Orang Asli community. On April 29, 2014, the MUIP of Jerantut had organised a wedding ceremony at Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Berjuang. This programme celebrates 5 Orang Asli revert couples. Among the activities conducted is gotong-royong in cooking with the Kampung Sungai Berjuang Orang Asli community. In addition, there were visits to the villagers' homes.

Meanwhile in 2015, the wedding ceremony was held at Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Tiang. The programme was held from May 26 to May 27, 2015. The programme also celebrated 3 Orang Asli revert couples. The programme is well received among the Orang Asli communities including non-Muslims. On top of that, the programme also accompanied with feast to celebrate the couples and villagers. During the feast, there is an opportunity to communicate and convey da'wah to the Orang Asli community.

iv) Friendly Visit and Da'wah Programme

The Friendly Visit and Da'wah Programme is one of the da'wah efforts to foster relationship with the Orang Asli community and be closer to the Orang Asli community in the form of da'wah bil hal. According to Abdul Ghaffar Don (2009), the visits are the manifestation of Da'i's concern towards mad'u. The Orang Asli feel valued and being given attention to. According to Muhammad Razef (2016), this programme is not only focused on Muslims. Among the activities conducted in the programme were telematch, home-to-home visits, gotong-royong and so on.

On April 29, 2014, MUIP held a Da'wah Ziarah program as well as wedding ceremony at Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Berjuang, followed by Kampung Orang Asli in Sungai Kiol on March 6 to 8, 2015.

vi) Aqidah Enhancement Programme

According to Sheikh Ahmad Firdaus (2016), Aqidah Enhancement programme is aimed to strengthen the faith of the Orang Asli Muslim community. Besides, the programme also educates and train preachers among reverts themselves, especially Orang Asli.

In 2016, the MUIP of Jerantut held a one-day Aqidah Enhancement programme at Kampung Orang Asli. Among the activities conducted were exposure to the ways of ablution, prayers and so on. The program received encouraging response from the Sungai Berjuang villagers.

This Aqidah Enhancement programme is filled with Fardhu Ain classes for the practice of ablution, prayers, tayammum and so on. Besides, the villagers were involved in telematch and gotong-royong.

Challenges and Barriers For MUIP In Da'wah



As highlighted by Syed Abdulrahman Syed Husin (2008), the work of da'wah is no easy feat, because it involves the swith of belief and understanding of human life, which was mentioned by al-Bahi al-Khawli "to remove humans from an environment into another environment".

The implementation of da'wah requires a strong physical and mental force to face challenges and obstacles in da'wah. To convey da'wah to the Orang Asli community in Pahang, there will be many problems and obstacles. These obstacles can be categorised into two: internal barriers and external barriers.

Internal Barriers

i) The Attitude of the Preachers

Preachers need to be prepared in terms of mental and physical to face all the challenges and fulfill the expectations in delivering da'wah to the Orang Asli community. According to Syed Abdulrahman Syed Husin (2008), preachers are the main core in determining the success of da'wah and preachers also need to be equipped with knowledge, mental, physical and spiritual strength. It is concluded that the issues experienced by the preachers today are inadequate to the features described. Also, preachers are lacking in terms of methodological knowledge in delivering da'wah and effective communication skills. According to Syed Abdulrahman Syed Husin, this da'wah institutions in Malaysia are less focused on going out to preach the Orang Asli communities as they focus more on Muslim communities.

According to Muhammad Aidid Bin Hamzah (2016), JAKIM has introduced the Orang Asli Community Activists (PMOA) to guide and drive the Orang Asli community. According to him, PMOAs are still lacking in skills and knowledge. Besides, the PMOAs appointed are yet to be sufficient to empower the Orang Asli Special Initiative (DOA) in each Orang Asli village. According to Syed Abdulrahman Syed Husin (2008), Orang Asli activists are placed in each Orang Asli village to teach them many ways to further develop the community and provide religious teachings to those who have just embraced Islam. However, the positions are hard to be fulfilled because not many are willing to take the responsibility in dealing with these challenges.

The efforts of da'wah's will not come to fruition with only good and perfect content. The content should be integrated with the right delivery method or the way it is spread to the target (Ab Aziz Mohd Zin et al 2006).

ii) Limited financial source

Finance is a common issue in any da'wah organisations. The fund is very restricted, hence the organisations have to fork out their own money to organise a programme. In fact, each programme requires a great deal of budget.

According to Ahmad Farhanuddin Bahauddin (2016), limited funding does not affect the course of a programme but it is indeed a necessity in making da'wah to the Orang Asli community a success. For instance, the cost to organise a feast for the villagers is very high. In terms of psychology, having a feast for Orang Asli can attract them to join the programme. (Abdul Ghafar Hj Don 1998).



iii) Lack of human resource

To make a programme a success, this requires high amount of human resource in organising a programme. Lack of human resource does affect the course of a programme. According to Muhammad Khairol Bin Salim (2016), the human resource involves in da'wah is very few and limited. In each program organised by MUIP, many people are required to ensure success of a programme. MUIP has collaborated with the District Religious Office and the Orang Asli community activists to facilitate in organising a programme. In fact, there are a number of Da'wah and Muallaf units in each MUIP branch, in which only one person is placed in every district. In addition, they have to bear other duties.

Moreover, Dato Dr Abdullah Muhammad Zin (1996) stated that the lack of preachers is indeed due to the fact that not many people are interested and willing to sacrifice for the sake of da'wah, especially da'wah among the Orang Asli community. This is because not many are prepared to approach Orang Asli.

External Barriers

i) The Threat of Christianity

According to Othman Haji Ibrahim (1995), the Christian movements are mostly focused on the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia such as Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and others. Dato Dr Abdullah Muhammad Zin (1996) states that most of Orang Asli fall under the poverty line thus they are easily deceived by the material aspect. The Christian missionaries do offer food, money and so on. Researchers interviewed one of the Penderas villagers in Temerloh, the person had embraced Christianity due to the allowance being provided every time they attended religious events at the church. According to Muhammad Asri Abd Rahim (2016) who has been experienced for 7 years as the Orang Asli Community Activist (PMOA) Coordinator of the West Zone in Pahang to do da'wah among the Orang Asli community in Pahang, the threat of Christianity in Pahang is not as much the threat in Perak, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. In Pahang, especially in Jerantut, there is no church in the area. The missionaries only go to the Orang Asli villages to provide food, money, and does invite them to embrace Christianity. Kampung Sungai Mai and Kampung Paya Lintah are the places that the Christian missionaries are actively engaged in their activities with the villagers in Jerantut. They trigger and attract the villagers' attention by offering luxury and security to the Orang Asli community.

ii) Orang Asli Community Engagement

The involvement of the Orang Asli community in a programme is crucial to fulfill the da'wah missions. Their involvement provides an overview to what extent the programme is successful. According to Ab Aziz Mohd Zin et al. (2006), their participation is regarded as judge or evaluator in a programme implemented by da'wah institutions. However, besides performing their duties as judges and evaluators, they also act as the problem-solving agents in implementing the programme and da'wah efforts.

This happened to Rasulzaman Ramli (2016), who is the Brigade Da'wah Teacher appointed by the Mosque and Surau of Jerantut. He stated that Orang Asli participation in the Fardhu Ain classes which is conducted 8 times a month is disappointing. This is because the



Orang Asli think that classes are merely for learning purposes. Rasulzaman also realised the food is not provided for the participants who attend the fardhu ain class.

Besides, according to Muhammad Asri Abd Rahim (2016), when he went for a Da'wah Visit to an Orang Asli village in Pahang, the Tok Batin instigated the villagers to not to engage in the da'wah programmes.

iii) Remote location

This is the common challenge faced by preachers to approach the Orang Asli community in the remote areas. The risk of doing da'wah in this place is huge and high. According to Muhammad Razef bin Hussain (2016), he had been involved in conduction a programme for Orang Asli in Ulu Tembeling. The Orang Asli community in Ulu Tembeling gain access to other areas by using the boat to pass through Sungai Tembeling. On behalf of MUIP, the preachers use a 4-wheel drive to go through the hilly roads, which are uneven with thick forest. The time used to reach Kampung Sungai Kucing takes 3 hours. They are need to provide all necessities and have to allocate a lot for the success of this programme. Researchers in this study are also involved in the Islamic Card Cleaning programme held at Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Kucing, located by Sungai Ulu Tembeling. The journey takes 3 hours via 4-wheel draft, which is then followed by 30-minute boat ride to the village. There are some Orang Asli settlements that are unable to be accessed due to uneven road and the location is too far remote, which involves villages in Sungai Keniam, Ulu Sat, Sungai Tabong, Kuala Atok, Jeram Dedaei, Jeram Aur, and Sungai Yong.

Conclusion

Da'wah is a duty entrusted by Allah to His servants, to spread Islam among the mankind on this earth. A right approach in da'wah ensures a success of a programme. In addition, the renowned preachers who are equipped with communication skills and decent criteria can serve as the examples to the mad'u. Thus, da'wah can be well conveyed and makes it easier to be emulated by the Orang Asli community in particular. Allah has made man as the khalifah on this earth, mentioned Al-Baqarah verse 30;

Just think when your Lord said to the angels:37 *"Indeed I will make upon the earth a successive authority."* They said: *"Will You place on it one who will spread mischief and shed blood, while we celebrate Your glory and sanctify You?"*. He said: *"Indeed I know what you do not know."*

Therefore, it is important this study serve the interests of the da'wah organisation in delivering the messages deemed appropriate to the Orang Asli community, especially Non-Muslims. The approaches used in da'wah should be thorough and constantly reviewed to fit the targets of da'wah targets, thus making it a success.

In this study, the authors highlighted some suggestions for improvements in terms of da'wah approaches to the Orang Asli community. Various parties have to pay attention to the Orang Asli community in terms of education, social and welfare because these aspects are very important to ensure they are familiar with Islam and being attracted to this religion. Therefore, the researcher proposes some suggestions that are relevant and rational to improve the da'wah approaches among Orang Asli, especially Non-Muslims in Jerantut.



Recommendations to the Da'wah Organisations

The suggestions made are to address the challenges and issues faced by MUIP and other da'wah organisations in spreading the messages to the Orang Asli community in Jerantut. MUIP and da'wah organisations play a role to guide, attract and spread the messages to the Orang Asli community, not only to Non-Muslims but also to those who have embraced Islam. All views and programmes planned by the relevant parties should be supported, worked hand in hand and participated by all parties.

Furthermore, MUIP should increase the amount of people involved in da'wah. Lack of human resource can affect the running of a programme. Therefore, MUIP should increase the number officers or staffs in the Da'wah and Muallaf units to facilitate the management. Moreover, MUIP should also provide a specialised budgets for da'wah programmes among the Orang Asli communities. A sufficient financial fund does help to smooth da'wah programmes. In addition, Rasolzaman Ramli (2016) recommends MUIP to provide food for Orang Asli participants in fardhu ain classed to attract and increase attendance to the class.

The activities conducted via the programmes should be reviewed and have to be improved from time to time according to the current situation. Content is very important in spreading the messages to the Orang Asli community. Furthermore, Muhammad Aidid bin Hamzah (2016) advises the dakwah organisations especially in the da'wah of Orang Asli to coordinate their direction and mission so that they can work together and integrate their efforts for better impact.

Muhammad Razef (2016) also believes that each Orang Asli settlement should be monitored and given attention to. Small visits should be held to maintain the relationship between MUIP and Orang Asli villagers in particular.

Recommendations for the Preachers

The officers and preachers should have profound and detailed religious knowledge. In addition, the preachers appointed must also well-versed in matters related to Orang Asli community, especially when it comes to their culture, taboo and beliefs. Furthermore, preachers should polish their communication skills in spreading the messages to the Orang Asli community besides being mentally and physically strong.

In the meantime, preachers should also focus their attention and guide, educate and take care of the wellbeing of Orang Asli. In this way, it helps to build an outstanding and effective relationship especially between them and non-Muslims over there. Furthermore, this helps to attract non-Muslims to get closer with Islam.

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