A Tafseer Study on Qur’an Reading in the Tradition of the Banyumas Muslim Community of Indonesia

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Abstract: This paper examined the interpretation of ngaji (reading the Qur’an) in the traditions of Banyumas people. This research was conducted by a survey method through interactive interviews with several persons who read the Qur’an in Banyumas. The data were then analyzed by using the typology of worshipers. The results showed that reading the Qur’an has different interpretations depending on the communities views of how to read and the purpose of reading it. Reading the Qur’an in the Banyumas community is unique depending on the community traditions and social events and the interaction patterns of their daily life. Furthermore, reading the Qur’an is believed to be able to calm their soul, to become a medicine, to protect from the disturbances of other creatures, and to become a part of the rites of life (from birth to death). They obtained these beliefs from scholars, clerics, teachers, and from their social communication as well as from their own spiritual and empirical experiences. We concluded that reading the Qur’an for the Banyumas people tended to be “hoping for God’s grace” directly, in other words, they were being in the tujjār (merchant) type worshipers.

Keywords: tafseer, reading the Qur’an, tradition, Banyumas, Indonesia

A. INTRODUCTION

There are various interpretations from the community in reading the Qur’an as their holy book. Among the interpretations are: the Qur’an can ease the soul (Masduki, 2018), become a medicine not only psychologically but also
physically (Trilia, 2013), and protects oneself from the disturbance of spirits such as jinn (Mujahidin, 2016). In addition, the Qur’an is part of the rite of the life cycle (starting from womb, birth, to death) (Ridho, 2019). The common response and the interpretation of the Qur’an existing in the Muslim community temporally and spatially is called the living Qur’an.

The living Qur’an is not only a phenomenon in certain communities but there are also references to it in the Qur’an and/or Hadith. Among the functions of the Qur’an are as follows: the Qur’an as a guideline (QS al-Baqarah/2: 2 and 143), as a medicine (QS Yūnus/10:57, al-Isra’/17: 82, and Fuṣṣilat/41:44), as a recitation of dhikr, giving intercession on the Day of Judgment (Muslim), and a means to get closer to Allah (Al-Baqarah/2: 186). These functions of the Qur’an are believed and/or experienced by Muslims, either directly or indirectly.

In general, mengaji the Qur’an (reciting the Qur’an) is understood as an activity to read the Qur’an. In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, mengaji has 4 meanings, namely reading the Qur’an, learning to read Arabic, studying and learning (2012). In addition to this meaning, mengaji (reciting) the Qur’an in the context of the Banyumas community tradition is understood as reading the Qur’an in traditional activities such as selametan (an expression of gratitude), prayers for the dead person, and the practice of several other rituals. Reading the Qur’an, especially certain Surahs or verses such as Surah Al-Fāṭihah, Yāsin, and Al-Baqarah verse 225 in various ritual practices is believed to have direct benefits in life. That is why certain surahs and verses have a special position because they are part of several rituals.

So far, studies on the living Qur’an have tended to look at two things. First, the living Qur’an study that discusses certain cases in certain institutions such as “The Effect of Reading the Yasin Fadilah Reading on Community Behavior: Study of Living Quran at the Fatwa Foundation, Cirebon Regency” (Rahayu et al, 2019), “Yasinan Tradition (Living Qur’an Study at Ngalah Pasuruan Islamic Boarding School)” (Zainuddin et al., 2019), “The existence of the Qur’anic Center and Expectations as Locomotive for Living Qur’an at UIN Mataram” (Suriani, 2018), “The living Qur’an: A case study of the tradition of sema’an the Qur’an on Sabtu legi in the Sooko Ponorogo community” (Sudarmoko, 2016),” Readings of the Qur’an Selected Surahs at Daar Al-Furqon Islamic Boarding School Janggalan Kudus (Study Living Qur’an)” (Fauziah, 2014), and” The Meaning of Al-Quran Verses in Muja-
hadah: Study of Living Qur’an di PP Al-Munawwir Krapyak Al-Kandiyas Complex” (Muhtador, 2014). Second, the study of the living Qur’an as an approach which includes: Analysis of the Development of Research on Living the Qur’an and Hadith (Darmalaksana, 2019), Study of the Qur’an in Indonesia: From Text Study to Living Qur’an (Putra, 2018), Living the Qur’an as an Alternative Method in the Qur’an Study (Farhan, 2017), Living Qur’an: A New Approach in the Qur’an Study (Junaidi, 2015), Living Qur’an: A New Approach in the Qur’an Study, A Case Study at As-Siroj Al-Hasan Islamic Boarding School, Kalimukti Village, Pabelilan District, Cirebon Regency (Junaedi, 2015), and the Living the Qur’an (Ashima-Putra, 2012).

The above studies had the tendencies to view the living Qur’an as a single facet or as an approach. So, this study was aimed at an investigation of the views of the Banyumas Community on the living Qur’an involving many aspects that had been overlooked in the previous studies including cases and approaches.

B. THE METHODS AND THE THEORY OF WORSHIP TYPOLOGY

This research used a qualitative method which relied on primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained by direct observation in the field. The collected data were then grouped into three categories namely: reading Al-Quran as a deed, reading Al-Quran as a community tradition, and motivation to read Al-Quran. The data analysis was carried out in two methods. First, we followed the stages of Huberman (2000), which involved two stages of data processing and analysis. The first stage consisted of data reduction of the observation and interview, displaying the data in the form of a synopsis based on the themes of the field findings, and data verification. The second stage was the data analysis using the interpretation technique. Finally, the research findings were analyzed using the typological theory of worshipers.

Ibn Sina (1435H, III) mentioned three typologies of worshipers: ṭāḥid (a person practice zuhud by abstaining from worldly pleasures or leaving unimportant things), ‘ābid (person who is diligent in worship), and ṭārif (people who live in asceticism and diligently worship to go to the holy realm). The motivation to worship of ṭāḥid and is to get benefits in the form of rewards. The motivation for ṣāhib (slave) to worship is to fear torture, like a slave who does something because he is afraid of his master. As for the motivation to worship the latter group as people who are free and wise, ṭārif, because of
Allah alone, on the basis of love and gratitude for the gifts they have received. Furthermore, Shihab (2020) mentions one more type, namely the automatic-mechanical type, which is to perform worship automatically and without thinking and appreciation. The implementation is to carry out worship like a robot, without thinking and appreciating it. By quoting the opinion of the Caliph Abubakar Shiddiq, Imam Nawawi in Naṣāḥ al-‘Ibād (n.d) mentioned there are 3 groups of worshipers: in the first group are those who worship because they are afraid of Him. In the second group are those who worship because of expecting His grace. In the third group are those who worship out of love for Him. In summary, there are various typologies of worshipers: slaves who worship out of fear, businessmen who worship because they expect profit (reward), ‘ārif who worship out of gratitude for the gifts they have received. These three typologies will be used to analyze the Quran reading in the traditions or habits of Quran readers in Banyumas Regency.

C. READING THE QURAN AS A GOOD DEED

We found that reading certain Surahs or verses had been a habit of Muslim communities in Banyumas in general. Special surahs such as al-Kahfī, al-Sajdah, Yāsīn, al-Duḥān, al-Wāqi‘ah, and al-Mulk were read usually every Thursday night. Other special Surahs such as Surah al-Fātiḥah, al-Ḥasyr, al-Insyirāh, al-Fath, al-Kāfirūn, mu‘awwidzatain, and story-containing Surahs are also read in every event. In addition, certain verses of the beginning and the end of Surah al-Baqarah, verses of Kursī, as well as the verses contained in tahlīl. Regarding the Surah they read, they generally (20 out of 24 respondents) said Yāsīn in every event. Then, many of the Surahs al-Wāqi‘ah read it every day, some even read it seven (7) times each day (Interview with NF, 2017). Then, surah al-Fātiḥah was also read apart from sunnah and compulsory prayers (“Interview with Mt 2017), some read al-Insyirāh 3 times after maghrib and ‘isha’ prayers and several verses from surah al-Ḥasyrafter maghrib and dawn prayers. There were also people found who read surah al-Fātiḥah routinely 100 times daily, since 1984, with the following mechanism: after Fajr 30x, after dhuhur 25x, after ʿasyr 20 times, after maghrib 15x, and after ‘isha’ 10 x. so 100x. This was done because of obedience (ta’dhim) to their teacher (tarikat), KH. Mohammad Dimyati, Banten. In addition, the Surah contains a lot of fadōlah as found in the book Khazīnat al-Asrār. However, the Surah was read regularly because of their obedience (ta’dhim) to their teacher.
This last reading was conducted following the advice of his teacher who believed that “you are appropriate to practice this deed”, and this practice was believed to be able to give him immunity and powers (Interview with Htn, 2017).

It was found that the Banyumas muslim people interacted with the Quran for various reasons. Some respondents stated that reading Qur’an is a habit, for example reading the Surah *Yāsīn* every Thursday night, because of the virtue of the Surahs apart from being ordered by the teacher (*kiyai*), as stated by MR that reading certain Surahs was due to the *fadilah* (the virtue) although it was more because of appreciation from the *kiyai*, for example “If I want to enter the house, I read the Surah *al-Ikhlas*, then I get a certificate from the *kiyai* and will have a fortunate life in the future” (Interview with MR, 2017). The same thing was stated by Mt regarding why he read surah *al-Fāṭiḥah* 100 times every day (Interview with MT, 2017). Another reason was the Surah’s contents as stated by Mtj who answered “I read the verse *of Kursi, al-Nās, al-Kāfirūn, al ‘Alaq, al-Falaq, al-Nās*, and certain Surahs is because I am interested in the meaning” (Interview with MTJ, 2017).

Likewise, reading Surahs and/or certain verses of the Quran combined with *tayyibah* words. Furthermore, reading the verses combined with the *tayyibah* words, which is in addition to those contained in the “*tahfil*” readings, are the *wirid* readings after the *maktūbah* (mandatory) prayers, *Asmāul Ḥusnā*, and others.

The people of Banyumas interpreted the reading of the Surahs or verses and verses that were combined with the words of *tayyibah* in various ways. Some of them did these because of a tradition (habit), a certificate from a spiritual teacher or *kiyai*, and their virtue (Interview with MR 2017), could make them calm, healthy, give a sense of optimism (Interview with SS 2017), become a medicine, especially psychological, are a means of obtaining convenience and can even make people who steal confess their actions (Interview with CS 2017). So, reading is a form of effort that often results in unexpected results (Interview with MR 2017). Another meaning is that the Qur’an as a holy book must be studied (read), and reading is at least rewarded (Interview with WT 2017). The above meanings, if analyzed using three typologies, can be categorized as business people. Reading the reasons given by the Banyumas community regarding their interaction with the Qur’an as well as the data previously presented, if analyzed with three typologies of worshipers, it can
be explained as follows. In general, it can be included in the typology of business people, for example because of its importance and to make economic life easier. Business people see sustenance as coming from Allah and the way to achieve it is by practicing these Surahs. In addition, there are also those that can be categorized in the typology ‘ārif as those who read it are interested in their content. This type of person reads because they know the meaning of the Surah.

We found that the Banyumas people read certain Surahs and verses because of several things including the internalization of the virtues of the Surah and certain verses through religious teachings, such as Surah al-Wāqi‘ah, Mu‘awwidzatain, and al-Fātiḥah. Internalization of reading it in the family environment, educational institutions, and society, such as reading Surah Yāsīn and tahfīl every Thursday night, and internalizing it to respect and obey the orders of the teacher (kiyai), such as reading Surah al-Ikhlas three times each time, enter the house, and recite surah al-Fātiḥah 100 times every day.

The various internalizations took place for a long time so that they became a tradition carried out in the family environment, educational institutions, and society.

D. THE QURAN READING IN THE TRADITION OF MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN BANYUMAS

We found that there were several traditions of reading the Qur’an that had been carried out by the Banyumas Muslim community based on their ways, habits, and benefits. The tradition of reading the Qur’an was as follows.

1. Yasinan

Yasinan is a tradition of reading Surah Yasin together from the first to the last verse. This tradition is common among Nahdatul Ulama (NU). Surah Yasin is considered to have a specialty in the Banyumas community because it is considered to have advantages that can directly benefit it (interview with Ar 2017).

In practice, there are two concepts of the implementation of the Yasinan: First, the implementation of the Yasinan in conjunction with the tahfīl. In some societies reading Surah Yasin is accompanied by recitation of tahfīl (Safinah, 2019). In this implementation, reading Surah Yasin as part of tahfīl or sending prayers to others. Surah Yasin is read as a gift or as a prayer for salvation,
healing, or simply sending a prayer. This reading model is more prioritized on people who have passed away. In some communities, after this activity is completed, there is a meal together as a sense of gratitude. In this view, the child prays for the parents who have passed away. He invited many people to make it more impossible, at the same time as charity by giving charity to many people. This event is an important part of the social circle of the Banyumas people which is full of friendship and togetherness as a tradition. Reading Surah Yasin and tahfil is not only done in death rituals, but also in assemblies as an effort to make reading the Qur’an a tradition.

Second, we found that every Thursday night, Surah Yasin had been often read individually or in groups in Islamic boarding schools, mosques, and prayer rooms. Some people believe that by reading this Surah on Thursday night, their sins would be forgiven, their prayers would be answered, salvation in this world and the hereafter. The meaning of the word “Yasin and an” indicates that the recitation of Surah Yasin had been performed routinely. In addition, in the sense of the Banyumas language, the suffix “an” means that it is not performed by only one person, but by a group of people together (interview with Ar 2017). The habit of reading Surah Yasin is not an obligation. This was done because a group of people felt there are tangible benefits of reading Surah Yasín when performed together. As stated by Yayu Safinah (2019) that the activity of reading Surah Yasin during tahfel can bring up religious values for the younger generation if done in the community together.

In addition, it was found that people in Banyumas also believed that they recite Surah Yasin (both individually and collectively) to ease the burden and pain of a dying person. According to Suwito et al (2015: 202), the unique way Banyumas people respond to a dying person is by gathering relatives to pray together by reading Surah Yasín to ease the process, especially for the one who has been seriously ill and the condition is worsening. In fact, in some cases, the family tried to gather many more people to read Surah Yasin together in the hope that the prayers would be more fulfilling. This belief is inherent as a collective perspective of society.

2. Khataman

*Khataman* is reading the Qur’an from the beginning to end (30 Juz). Khatam literally means “finished” or “completed”. In terms of reading the Quran, khatam means reading the entire Qur’an (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indo-
nesia, 2002). We found two kinds of the implementations of this khataman in Banyumas as stated by Candani (2018). First, *khataman* has been a tradition celebrated when a person has finished learning to read the 30 juz the Qur’an so that as proof that he can read properly and correctly, a thanksgiving is usually held for his achievement. Parents who were proud that their children who had finished learning to read the Qur’an were facilitated to hold *khataman*. In this activity, people who have finished learning to read the Qur’an were asked to read from beginning to end and listened to by many people (invited guests) as witnesses. After the recitation of the whole Qur’an (30 juz) finished, the clerics or religious leaders in the area prayed that the knowledge gained would be useful, both in this world and in the hereafter. Muslim in Banyumas who managed to finish learning to read the Qur’an were mostly studying at a boarding school or TPA. As stated by Syitami Giri Candani (2018) that at TPQ Al-Falah, Bobosan, North Purwokerto *khataman* was usually done after students had been able to read the Qur’an well. In fact, several Islamic boarding schools often perform khataman for students who have finished learning the Qur’an, both from the perspective of memorization and in terms of *makhraj* and *tajwid*.

Second, apparently, Banyumas Muslims believed that “khataman” may also be carried out in relays. Within such a group of people, the readings are divided fairly. For example, if there are 15 Quran readers, then everyone would read two juz so that it would take much less time to finish. This is in agreement with the method previously researched by Tussakinah (2019) about the strategy of preaching the One Day One Juz (ODOJ) community as a form of khataman. This activity is carried out from people who have the motivation to regularly read the Quran. This activity is carried out with a monitoring system in a special WhatsApp group. This pattern is actually an extension of the khataman tradition carried out by a group of people, but because they are busy, khataman is carried out online. This tradition is carried out in the context of love for the Qur’an and fostering a tradition of reading together, as well as to maintain their memorization of the Qur’an. In that event, there was someone who led a prayer after reading the Qur’an. Frequently, after reading, they performed a thanksgiving party as an expression of gratitude to Allah for completing the reading. These activities were carried out for people who have high awareness in reading the Qur’an together.
3. Tadārus

*Tadārus* is a tradition of reading the Quran which is usually done during the holy month of Ramadan. In Banyumas villages, just like in other places in Indonesia, *tadārus* was performed at night after the *tarawih* and *witr* prayers were finished. Some readings were carried out in mosques using loudspeakers, but some were done secretly (not using loudspeakers) because they were feared that they would disturb the rest of the community. The reading was carried out routinely one juz every night. Therefore, after one month, the *tadārus* activity was able to complete 30 juz.

However, in some TPAs, sometimes *tadārus* was not done at night, but in the afternoon because most of the people who read were children so that at night they might be sleepy. The choice was because there was a spare time after ‘*Asr* prayer, as well as waiting for the time to break the fast. Some of these readings were done using loudspeakers, some were not through loudspeakers. This event was also sometimes complemented by breaking the fast together at the mosque for fellow *tadārus* participants.

The tradition of *tadārus* apart from the month of Ramadan was actually also practiced in Banyumas, but only in certain circles. As happened in Pengempon Hamlet, Babakan Karanglewas Village, Banyumas, where they carried out the *Slasahan* tradition (every Tuesday) to read the Qur’an as *tadārus* because of its positive benefits for them (Priyono, 2018). This tradition has been carried out every Tuesday after the evening prayer for generations. In addition, in MTs Ma’arif NU I West Purwokerto the tradition of *tadārus* has been carried out outside the month of Ramadan. Students were accustomed to reading the Qur’an properly and correctly so that it became a habit.

4. Nderes

*Nderes* is Qur’an reading performed by people who just read the Qur’an without having to understand the meaning of the words they read. This tradition of *nderes* was also found in Banyumas and usually carried out in the month of Ramadan, but *nderes* for the Banyumas people does not necessarily to be done in the month of Ramadan. We found that this term was often heard in villages where parents encouraged their kids to read the Qur’an in order to get rewarded. For example, “It’s better to sleep than hanging out without any purpose”. This means that parents advised reading the Qur’an, even though they do not know the meaning, is better than doing nothing (interview with...
HK, 2017). They believed that reading the Quran was seen as worship as recommended by the Prophet, the aulia, and the scholars. Therefore, reading the Qur’an was considered a good activity because it would be rewarded as a provision in the afterlife.

The reasons why the term *nderes* is more popular among parents: 1) In the past, the Qur’an was not equipped with a translation so that people could only read it, without knowing the meaning. 2) learning the Qur’an which only emphasizes the reading aspect, but there is no learning of tools to give meaning, interpret verses, so that the contents of the Qur’an are (Interview with Ar, 2017).

Another understanding of the term *nderes* is reading the Qur’an alone with full contemplation. This is done as a form of special reading. In this reading model, it does not have to be in a clear voice, but simply by buzzing or simply reading silently while living the sins that have been committed. The type of person who reads the Qur’an in a loud voice like this because; 1) in worship, you don’t want to show off, 2) if you read too loudly it can disturb others, and/or 3) reading the Qur’an is related to Allah so that the one who feels enough is his heart, and the voice from his mouth is enough for him to hear (Interview with Ar).

5. Tahfil

I found that the *tahfil* tradition is very popular in Banyumas, especially among Nahdatul Ulama (NU) community. The essence of *tahfil* actually reading the *tawhīd* sentence, namely *lā ilāha illā llāh* which means there is no god but Allah, but in practice in the ritual it is equipped with the reading of *tayyibah* words and several Surahs such as *al-Fātiḥah, an-Nās, al-Falaq, al-Ikhlās*, and several verses in surah *al-Baqarah*, and some also include it with Surah *Yaṣīn*. *Tahfil* is synonymous with rituals or salvation ceremonies to send prayers to people who have passed away. This *tahfil* was actually not only carried out in Banyumas, but in Indonesia and Malaysia. However, in Banyumas, *tahfil* has a special feature, where *tahfil* is not only for the ritual of death, but for the ceremony of someone’s safety and wishes, for example when they are about to hold a wedding holding *tahfil* in the hope that the celebration will run smoothly. Just like in other parts of Indonesian, in Banyumas *tahfil* was carried out jointly by a group of people who received an invitation orally. Relatives and neighbors, especially the closest ones were invited.
I found reading the Qur’an in *tahlil* is often considered as not reading, but only orally. This is because the tradition of *tahlil* has been embedded in everyday life so that reading Surahs such as *al-Fātīhah*, *an-Nas*, *al-Falaq*, *al-Ikhlaṣ*, and some verses *al-Baqarah* has been memorized well. Even if you don’t memorize it, because all participants read it out loud, you can imitate or be able to follow it well. They believed that reading these Surahs would enable them to connect the prayers they hope for to God.

Based on an interview with NM (2017) apart from these traditions, the recitation of the Quran was specifically carried out during *mapati* (the day four of birth), the *mitoni* (the day seven of birth), baby naming, as well as in weddings. However, in Banyumas according to NM (2017) Quran reading is not always performed. Only those who understand the benefits of the verses in the Qur’an do so. In *mapati*, for example, reading *Yāsīn*, *Surah Yūsuf*, *Surah Maryam*, *Surah Waqī’ah*, *Surah ar-Rahmān*, *Surah Luqmaan* and several other Surahs is not always done because some people understand that the most important thing is the ritual or tradition. The Surahs are read with a specific purpose, for example reading Surah *Maryam* with the aim of their children being obedient and always receiving guidance from Allah, reading Surah *Yūsuf* with the hope that their children will be good looking, obedient in worship, and become successful people in the future, so that they are able to be devoted to their parents, read Surah *Luqmaan* with the hope that their child will be easily educated and obedient to both parents, Surah *Yāsīn* is read so that the labor process will have convenience and safety, Surah *ar-Rahmān* is read so that children have love and are rewarded with affection. Regarding the definite evidence and the realization of the hopes of those who read, only Allah can grant it (interview with SB, 2017). Humans have tried, related to destiny and existence, only Allah has the power of everything. The most important essence of reading these Surahs is a form of belief and belief in Allah through the Surahs (His book) which was sent down to earth.

The people of Banyumans viewed the Quran as a prayer related to the truths obtained in their social interactions, influence of scholars, teachers, and the experiences of friends with the evidence. In the Banyumas community there is the term “*getok tular*”, which means conveying information from one person to another and then spreads all over the community. This form of social interaction becomes a shared belief and understanding and inherited from generation to generations. In this case, the Quran, apart from being a holy
book, becomes a part of life that is believed to be true because it has direct benefits for those who read it (Interview with Ar, 2017) The basis is that humans need additional strengths especially when they find difficulty in coping with daily life, they read the Quran, which is believed to be a way to change the way of life.

The interaction of the Qur’an with the traditions of the Banyumas people has enriched the local wisdom, assimilation, and accommodation. The understanding of a community with the presence of contact between Banyumas culture and prayers originating from the Qur’an has become a noble value. The public’s understanding of the contents of the content in the Quran is based on the interpretation of the meaning that is correlated with the functions and benefits in life. In the anthropocentric realm, the role of the Qur’an has replaced the prayers of the previous community beliefs. The process, tradition, and ritual are the same, but people have believed that the answered prayer comes from the Qur’an. Both the Qur’an as practice and as a tradition have shown that there is a dialogical knowledge of society. Representation of Islam and Banyumas culture has become a series in the form of local wisdom.

**CONCLUSION**

I concluded that based on the Banyumas Muslim community interpretation on the usefulness of the Qur’an, there were various perspectives. In this community the Qur’an was read as a good deed, part of a ritual, and an effort to achieve peace in the hereafter. They implemented directly in their life through the interpretation of kiyais or scholars. The differences in perspective were due to their interpretations of direct empirical experience. The Banyumas people read the Qur’an was also to fulfill the need of their soul and became a tradition in interpreting the life, which were in line with the contents of the Qur’an. Regarding the level of worship, in general, the Banyumas people read the Qur’an like traders (tujjar to trade their deed for His grace directly) rather than to worship for fear of or to love and to gratify God for all the gifts they have received.

This research is limited to a few informants. The analysis does not allow it to be used as a reference to explain the interpretation of reading the Qur’an on a broader scale. Likewise, the views of the informants did not provide a comprehensive description of the interpretation of reading the Qur’an. Due to this limitation, it is necessary to carry out further research by paying atten-
tion to regional comparative aspects and based on various data so that the implications of the assimilation of religious and cultural teachings can be understood comprehensively.

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