

The Production of Rize Fabric (Feretiko) as a Traditional Handicraft and Touristic Product

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Abstract

Rize fabric, one of the traditional handicrafts in Anatolia, also known as feretiko, is well-known for its texture of being woven from hemp fibers, its slimness and durability, absorbance of sweat more in comparison to other fabrics and quick drying features. It makes human body feel dry and fresh in warm and humid weather with these characteristics. Being weaved in the handlooms of women in the Ottoman Empire since the XVI. Century, this fabric was sent to a wide range of realms, particularly Anatolia, Egypt and the Balkans and also used in the attires of the Ottoman sultans.

Handicrafts' inability to compete with the products of manufacture as a result of the industrial revolution was also seen in feretiko and the production of this handicraft was significantly declined in early XX. Century. Hemp cultivation was greatly reduced due to the start of tea cultivation after the 1930s and its proliferation in the 1960s in Rize province and the production of Rize fabric came to a finishing point. This handicraft, which fell into oblivion, began to gain importance through works conducted after 2003. The continuation of Feretiko production is important for keeping the cultural heritage alive and passing it on to future generations. Being a remarkable touristic product for the region at the same time, this craft has a great potential in the promotion of tourism in the province.

Keywords: Feretiko, Rize fabric, traditional handicrafts, cultural heritage, touristic product

1. Introduction

Handicrafts are products that carry aesthetical, functional and cultural values produced by human beings by means of adding their knowledge and skills through specific raw materials and hand tools in order to meet with their daily and ceremonial needs (Handicraft Marketing Sales-Market Research Report, 2012: 39). They are passed from master to apprentice based on personal knowledge and skills. It carries a traditional characteristic with the transfer of knowledge and continuance of production. The products are either personal or produced by small businesses. They reflect the production, life style and economic level of the society (Sümerkan, 2008:9). Handicrafts begin with activities that first meet with the needs of human beings. The resulting products are also related to human capabilities and climatic conditions. The works, which were at first unraveled with the purpose of providing pure and simple benefits, take the shape of decorative art works by gradually embodying all artistic capabilities of the person and finally of the community (Özbel, 1945:4). Handicrafts are the most vivid and

significant tangible documents of the cultural identity and personality of a nation. These works reflect the characteristics of the region and acquire the feature of being an important cultural heritage with the experience of centuries (Akpınarlı, 2013: XIII).

Anatolia has been an area where many civilizations existed due to its location at the position where old continents came close to one another the most, its climatic, terrestrial and other characteristics and its station in a place convenient for living. Various cultures of these civilizations have created a source of wealth for handicrafts. There are a variety of handicrafts in Anatolia such as copper-working, silver-smithery, jewelry, cutlery, ceramics, pottery, glass-processing, stone-processing and wood-carving. They acquired a traditional feature by conveyance of cultural characteristics and their continuation from the past to the present.

The woven products are also among the traditional handicrafts in Anatolia. There are different weaving products such as carpets, rugs and fabrics. Rize fabric, also known as feretiko, is one of them. Being woven in handlooms for centuries in the Eastern Black Sea, especially in Rize and its surroundings, feretiko is a significant traditional handicraft that bears traces from local culture. In this regard, it is a source of cultural heritage and a touristic product. It was chosen as the topic of this study because of these features.

2. Aim and Method

The aim of the study was to reveal the historical development of Rize fabric which is one of the traditional handicrafts, its characteristics, production and its significance as a touristic product. Resources in subjects, such as cultural heritage, weaving, feretiko and use of handicrafts as touristic products, were examined in order to make use of them in the study.

Interviews were being conducted with managers, trainers and trainees regarding the characteristics and weaving of Rize fabric, passing this handicraft on to next generations, its marketing and issues by visiting public education centers in İyidere, Derepaşarı, Çayeli, Güneysu, İkizdere and Central districts of Rize province during the data collection phase of the study. Information on the number of people taking feretiko course, number of handlooms, its production status and marketing was collected by sending surveys to public education directorates in Pazar, Ardeşen, Fındıklı, Çamlıhemşin, and Hemşin districts. In addition to these, interviews were conducted with private sector representatives that manufacture and sale of feretiko, such as Tekpa, Bizimeller, Zaimoğlu, Koç and Fırat in Central district of Rize, Kuru in Çayeli, Fırat and Kaçkar in Derepaşarı districts as well as with housewives engaged in this business individually regarding the production, marketing and problems of feretiko. The authorities at Rize Provincial Directorate of Tourism were visited and tourism brochures and websites were examined in relation to how Rize fabric was evaluated as a touristic product in the promotion of the province.

3. Location Features of The Study Area

Rize is a province with a small surface area located in Eastern Black Sea region in the north-east of Turkey and is surrounded by Trabzon in the west, Artvin in the east, Bayburt and Erzurum in the south and the Black Sea in the north (Figure 1). The province's total area is 3921 km² and accounts for 0.5% of Turkey's territories. It ranks 72nd among the provinces in terms of area size

in Turkey and is the smallest province next to Bayburt among the provinces in Eastern Black Sea Region (TÜİK, 2013: 5). Rize has 12 districts.

A significant portion of the land in Rize province is mountainous and hilly. Mountains extend in the east-west direction by generating slightly concaved arcs. They begin to rise from the coast like walls in most places and their elevations increase gradually to the south (Rize Provincial Directorate of Environment and Urbanization, 2012: 7). Accordingly, the agricultural land constitutes only 14% of provincial area. There are tea gardens in 98.7% of the agricultural land in the province. Next to tea, kiwi and hazelnut stand out as other products (Rize Provincial Directorate of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, 2014).

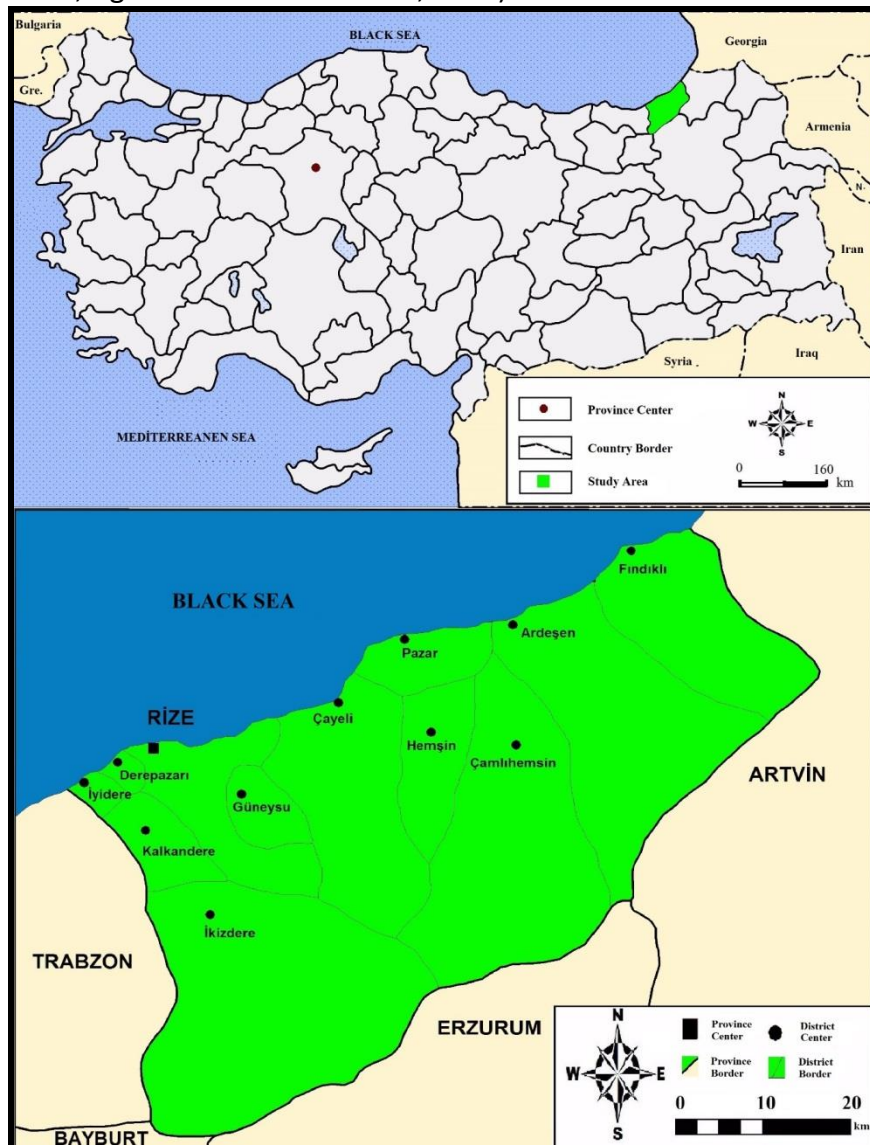


Figure 1. Location of the study area

4. Historical Development of Rize Fabric

There are opinions that feretiko began to be produced in the Eastern Black Sea in VIII and IX Century B.C. with Scythians (Aydın, 2012:8). Although it is not clearly known, there is information that some attire of the sultans of the Ottoman Empire, especially the attires of Suleiman the Magnificent, Sultan Abdulhamid II, and Sultan Abdulaziz, were sewn from Rize fabric (Megep, 2009:3).

Feretiko production was an important economic activity around Rize and Trabzon in XV. Century during the Ottoman period. Rize fabric was sent to cities on the Black Sea coast, Anatolia, Europe and Egypt from the customs in Rize and Of docks and the Trabzon harbor (Bostan, 2002:509).

Hemp, from which feretiko was obtained, was an important agricultural product in the region in XV. and XVI. Centuries. As a matter of fact, while taxes on hemp in Trabzon in 1486 were 52 thousand akçe (coins), they exceeded 90 thousand coins in 1515 and increased over 147 thousand coins in 1554 (Table 1). Income tax on this product was collected from Trabzon, Rize and Of townships the most (Bostan, 2002:510). These figures are remarkable in terms of showing the importance of hemp cultivation and feretiko production in the region in the aforementioned period.

Table 1. Distribution of tax on hemp taken in 1486, 1515 and 1554 in Trabzon District by Townships

Townships	1486		1515		1554	
	Coins	%	Coins	%	Coins	%
Trabzon	24.289	46.21	29.335	32.36	57.930	39.17
Rize	15.801	30.06	18.226	20.10	30.738	20.78
Of	7.674	14.60	12.448	13.73	12.754	8.62
Atina (Pazar)	1.888	3.59	11.692	12.89	19.364	13.09
Arhavi	2.760	5.25	8.935	9.85	14.463	9.78
Torul	90	0.17	1.993	2.19	4.251	2.87
Çepni	-	-	3.025	3.33	5.249	3.54
Kürtün	50	0.09	4.984	5.49	3.134	2.11
Total	52.552	100	90.638	100	147.883	100

Source: Bostan, 2002:510

It can be understood from the Trabzon Provincial Annals dated 1901 that feretiko was an important woven product and was produced in Rize and Trabzon districts. Feretiko was known particularly in Anatolia and the areas inhabited by Arabs, in India and Europe. The Europeans

began to produce fabrics in factories with industrialization and this led to a reduction in the production of Rize fabric. In fact, while 100 thousand rolls of Rize fabric were exported annually and an income of 60 thousand lira was obtained until the 1860s, only 17 thousand rolls could be exported in 1901 (Trabzon Provincial Annals, 1901, 2008:408). The negative impact of industrialism on handicrafts was also seen in the production of Rize fabric.

On the other hand, hemp cultivation sites began to be contracted and the Rize fabric production, continued to depend upon hemp, was also declined with widespread tea cultivation in the province since the 1930s (Doğanay, Çavuş, 2016: 93). The number of people dealing with this business was largely decreased due to both the less inconveniency and high economic returns of tea cultivation compared to hemp farming, the long and troublesome process requirements of extracting fiber from hemp after all, cheapness of woven products in the market and the low income obtained from feretiko and this handicraft fell into oblivion. Decision on opening courses in public education centers was taken in 2003 in order to revive the weaving tradition of Rize fabric. To this end, first of all, students, who would offer Rize fabric course, were trained first and hundreds of handlooms were built. Feretiko weaving courses were opened in all districts, many neighborhoods and villages of Rize province. These courses were free of cost and a module consisted between 270 and 320 hours. Training, which began in September, continued until the month of May. 20% of theoretical and 80% of practical trainings are offered in these courses with regard to the historical development of this handicraft, preparation of handloom for weaving, weaving techniques and designs. The number of people who received Rize fabric weaving certificate from public education centers and learnt this handicraft between 2004 and 2015 were over 8 thousand according to the information provided by the authorities. Almost all of these figures consisted of women between 16 and 70 years of age.

5. Characteristics, Production and Marketing Of Rize Fabric

Rize fabric is woven from the yarn obtained hemp fibers. Hemp is the name of the fiber extracted from the stalk of the hemp plant. The use of hemp, instead of cannabis which is the actual name of the plant among Turkish people, is quite widespread (Taşdemir, 2003:1, Bulut, 2006). Thinner fibers are obtained from hemp that is a plant of one-season compared to other plants (Doğanay, Coşkun, 2012:257). It was understood from resources that the cultivation of hemp was carried out and its fibers were used in China at 2800 B.C. Herodotus of Halicarnassus expressed how the Scythians grew hemp fibers and for which purposes they used them (Gürcüm, 2010; 229). Hemp cultivation was carried out in temperate climate areas extending from Kastamonu to the Caucasus during the Ottoman period (Aygün, 2005:352). Even though Rize was one of the places where this product was produced, tea gardens replaced hemp production fields after 1930s due to start of tea cultivation and its expansion after the 1960s. Today, the hemp plantation is allowed in limited fields in certain provinces in Turkey within the scope of "Regulation on the Planting and Supervision of Hemp". No yarn is made of hemp sown in our country, but used in different fields. Therefore, hemp yarn is imported from countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Romania.

Rize fabric is woven on handlooms with whips. The most important feature of this handloom is that the shuttle is picked by pulling the whip not by hand (Rize Fabric Feretiko Weaving,

2013:3). The sizes of handlooms where Rize fabric are produced are ranged from 45 cm to 1.5 m. While all of handlooms were made of wood until recently, most of them today (2015) are made of metal (Photo 1). By the year 2015, there are more than 500 handlooms with whips in Rize, 80% of which are in public education centers. It was noteworthy that handlooms and the art of weaving Rize fabric were mostly concentrated in coastal districts.



Photo 1. Wooden and metal handlooms with whips where Rize fabric is woven

The specialty of Rize fabric is that it is woven from hemp fibers, it is slim and durable, and absorbs the sweat and dries quickly compared to other fabrics made from cotton or linen. This characteristic of the fabric makes human body to feel dry and fresh in warm and humid weather. It is beige or dark when it is first woven, but is being whitened by bleaching (Geographical Indication Registration Document, 2007: 2). The fabric is whitened as it is

washed. It is silky in appearance, but a rough and resistant fabric. Various fabrics are used in handlooms for different products (Photo 2). Various garments, such as undershirts, underpants, shirts, etc., and many products like home textile and souvenirs as well as bags are being made from Rize fabric (Photo 3). It is mostly woven in public education centers, in the workshops of shops making sales in private sector and in a room or ground floors of homes by housewives even a little.

Products, made from Rize fabric, are marketed in shops and salesrooms of public education centers in the city (Table 2). Manufactured products are also available in shops in addition to handicraft products. It is important that these two types of product groups should be marketed in the same place as supplements not an alternative to one another. The price of hand-woven product is at least 3-4 times higher than manufactured products. Different products, made from feretiko woven in handlooms, are produced and marketed in public education centers (Photo 4) than in garment shop. In addition, there are few places, which are visited by tourists and engage both in production and marketing, along Rize-Hopa and Rize-Trabzon coastal highway.

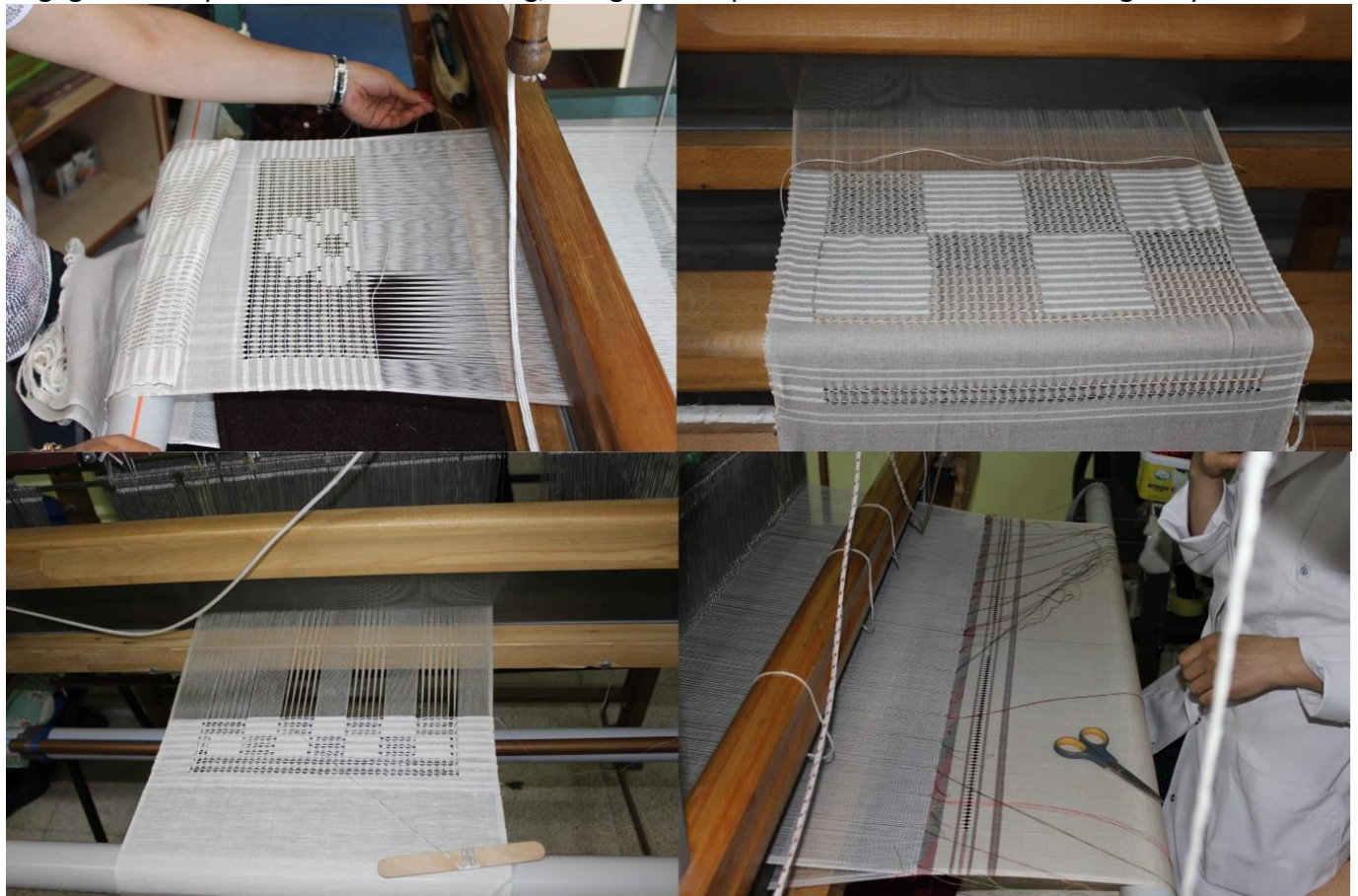


Photo 2. Rize fabric woven in different patterns and shapes in handlooms



Photo 3. Some products made from Rize fabric

Table 2. Shops in which products made from feretiko are marketed in Rize province and their distribution by districts

Rize Fabric Shops	District
1. Zaimoğlu Rize Fabric (3 shops)	Central District
2. Koç Rize Fabric	Central District
3. Tekpa Rize Fabric	Central District
4. Fırat Rize Fabric	Central District
5. Bizim Eller Rize Fabric	Central District
6. Kuru Rize Fabric (2 shops)	Çayeli
7. Kaçkar Rize Fabric	Derepaşarı
8. Fırat Rize Fabric	Derepaşarı

9.	İyidere Public Education Center	İyidere
10.	Güneysu Public Education Center	Güneysu
11.	Merkez Public Education Center	Central District

Source: Observations on site



Photo 4. Feretiko is woven in handlooms in the workshops of public education centers in Rize province and different products are being made from this fabric and marketed.

6. Use of Feretiko As a Touristic Product

There are five stages in tourism consisting of the planning of the trip, traveling, visiting the destination, returning and finally recollecting the trip. Handicrafts or remembrance elements as their equivalence in tourism gain their real importance in the recollection stage constituting the fifth stage. Because a product of handicraft, purchased from the place visited, has a function of making tourists to visit that region again (Williams, 1998:15-16).

Thus, the travel experience can be prolonged by means of this element after the trip. Souvenirs are the most important of all means and symbols in reliving the trip experience, enriching and preserving the memories of the trip (Doğan, 1987: 85-86). In addition to this, they are listed among the reasons of tourism and are also used as a means of earning people's respect. Souvenirs, purchased from any place, are shown as a proof of taking a vacation and increase the respect and dignity of the people who took touristic trips in their own environments (Doğan, 1987: 16). Therefore, tourists will have the desire to purchase a souvenir from the

places they visited. In fact, the production and marketing of souvenirs in touristic regions has become an important sector of tourism today as a result of this desire. Those which are original and truly preserve the character of handicrafts among these souvenirs become more valuable in terms of tourism. Thus, the travel experience can also be prolonged after the trip by means of a traditional handicraft product.

Among traditional handicrafts, Rize fabric draws attention by means of sheltering a cultural heritage and being a local touristic product with geographical indication certificate documenting its connection with this region. In addition to this, the assessment of Rize fabric not only as product but also as a process is important for tourists to have a nice time in places they visit. Taking tourists to the places where Rize fabric is woven, giving them information regarding this handicraft and showing them how feretiko is woven in handlooms will be quite appealing for them in terms of learning the local culture.

7. Conclusion and Suggestions

Rize fabric or feretiko as its alias is one of the traditional handicrafts in Turkey. The fabric is well-known for being thin and durable, absorbing sweat more than cotton or linen, drying quickly and making human body feel cool and fresh in warm weather. Women in Rize and around have woven feretiko from hemp yarn in their handlooms since XV. Century in the Ottoman Empire and the fabric earned the quality of cultural heritage by becoming a product of local culture. Feretiko is a potential value as touristic product in the promotion of Rize province. The dissemination of this handicraft is also important in terms of diversification of income sources in the province. However, there are some problems that were indentified in the production of Rize fabric.

- This handicraft was taught to over 8000 people in feretiko weaving courses from 2004 to 2015 in Rize province. However, even though the number of people that learnt this handicraft is expressed in thousands, the number of people dealing with this business does not exceed a few hundred. People's inability to see feretiko as a profession and problems experienced in the marketing of these handicrafts that require intensive labor are effective in this. For this reason, it is suggested that a market designed in accordance with traditional architecture by through which local women would be able to market their products is to be built. The production and sale of feretiko in this market will prove to be more beneficial in terms of tourism since these handicrafts will be used both as a product and process.
- Rize fabric is known in the region but is not well-known at national level. Emphasizing Rize fabric to be a traditional handicraft, a source of cultural heritage and an organic product will increase the interest towards this product and contribute to the diversification of provincial tourism. A festival at national dedicated to Rize fabric will draw attention to this handicraft and contribute to the promotion of feretiko.
- Rize fabric should become a brand. Stages should be identified for this and works should be carried out together with public and private sector representatives. More economical revenues can be obtained with the branding of feretiko and it can be recognized more as a touristic product. For this reason, it should not be contented with the weaving training provided by public education centers and training on clothing design should also be

offered. Furthermore, the manufacture of different products from Rize fabric should be resorted by R&D and innovation works.

- There are products sold in Rize under the name of Rize fabric, but have no relations with this fabric. A committee, consisting of experts in this field from professional chambers, public institutions and other relevant organizations should be established and regular audits should be carried out. In this way, customers should be able to distinguish handicraft, manufactured and other products.
- Hemp yarn, which is the raw material of Rize fabric, is not produced in Turkey and it is imported. The imported hemp yarns are not at the same standards. This affects the quality of feretiko woven from these yarns. Hemp cultivation and the establishment of facilities to obtain yarn should be promoted in Rize and its surroundings. The raw material problem will be resolved in this way and a new source can be created for the local economy.

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