

## **Cultural Heritage Education as a Pedagogical Tool in Revolutionizing the Consciousness of Africans: A Radical Anthro-po-archaeological Perspective**

**Paul-Kolade Tubi**

Federal University Lokoja  
08050634433, 08035984669  
paul.tubi@fulokoja.edu.ng

### **Abstract**

The study makes a critical examination of cultural heritage education in Africa and advocates for its relevance as a revolutionary tool for conscientising the people. The study notes that the problems of cultural illiteracy and absence of proper pedagogy poses a challenge to cultural heritage education in Africa. The problem of the study is that deficit of appropriate pedagogical groundwork has left undone the delicate tasks of unearthing, distilling, documenting and studying the cultural heritage of the peoples of Africa. Data point to the fact that Africa's cultural heritage education has almost become sterile, irrelevant and superficial to the masses. Methodologically, the study uses critical pedagogy and radical anthropology. The methodology allows the study to rigorously examine all structures and patterns that are embedded in artefacts, ecofacts and cultural features as pedagogical tools. The study is justified in asserting the usefulness of cultural heritage education and also by contending that cultural resource education has not been doing what it ought to do in the consciousness of Black Africans because the unique cultural resources of the continent have not been properly utilized in educating the masses of their past heritage and conscientising them. The study concludes that it is in the context of critical questionings that cultural resource education can be relevant in the service of revolutionizing the consciousness of Africans and that cultural resource education holds the key to a proper understanding of cultural data of Africa.

**Keywords:** Afrocentric consciousness, cultural heritage, cultural illiteracy, pedagogy, radical anthropology

### **Introduction**

The imperative of cultural heritage education as a pedagogical tool in revolutionizing the consciousness of Africans imposes itself on scholars, due to the alarming rate of cultural illiteracy and deficit of critical approach in cultural studies in Africa. This study calls for frontal challenge to cultural illiteracy by systematisation of cultural heritage education as a pedagogical tool. Hobart (2000) makes a call for anthropology as a radical metaphysical

critique. Thus, cultural heritage education that is thoroughly rooted in radical anthropology is a *conditio sine qua non* for consciousness raising of Africans who have been subjected to centuries of foreign hegemonic influences. Friere (1998) asserts that conscientisation is the cultivation of critical consciousness which leads to continuous reflection and transformation and Fyfe (2020) argues for radical interpretation of African studies. It is in this regard that the study appraises cultural heritage education in Africa; a continent riddled with mal-conformational effects of foreign influences. The terms cultural heritage and cultural resources are taken as synonyms and are used interchangeably. The study notes that deficit of critical pedagogy in cultural heritage studies has left undone the delicate tasks of unearthing, distilling, documenting and studying the cultural heritage of the peoples of Africa. As a result, anthropology and cultural heritage education in Africa have almost become irrelevant and superficial to the masses. The worst case studies are westernized and arabised African scholars whose opinions about African's past and heritages have been dogged by heavy fusions of foreign religions and philosophies. It was succinctly put that:

They analyzed the externals but missed the core; they made great deal of the shadow, but left out the substance. They confused symbols with what is symbolized and thus they are unable to make philosophical sense or conceptualize their experience (Ehusani 1991:78-79).

### **Establishing context:**

The justification of the study comes from the imperative to fill knowledge gap by extending the frontiers of knowledge on cultural education as a pedagogical tool in the onerous task of revolutionizing the consciousness of Africans. Though scholars (Andah, 2008; Keitumtse, 2016; Schmidt, 2019; Yoshida and Mack, 2008), have contributed highly valuable treatises on some aspects of cultural education in general but the application of radical anthropological perspectives have not been well advanced. As data reveal, African studies have not been completely emancipated from hegemonic influences which suffused cultural education of the continent, (Andah, 1982; Boachie-Ansa, 1982; Ehusani, 1991; Fanon, 2018; Obikelu, Gerard-Marie and Odumegwu, 2023; Tegege, 2023). This continues because the specters of arabisation, westernization, sinoization, globalization and influence of foreign religions have unleashed onslaughts of corroding influence on African cultural landscape. There is therefore the imperative to frontally challenge the hostile academic environment in which African culture is discussed by applying radical anthropological pedagogy.

Essentially the paper examines the current state of studies, practice and philosophies of cultural education in Africa. The paper equally engages in relevant discussion on the aims of cultural resource education and its relevance as a pedagogical tool. Some observations are made with specific respect to what the study considers to be the fundamental purpose of why cultural resource education should become engaged in radical pedagogy in view of revolutionizing the conscientiousness of the masses. This will lead to full affirmation of our humanity, a humanization praxis involving authentic cultural dialogue, awakening critical thinking and active struggle by participants in cultural heritage education. This study proposes that cultural heritage education can by its appeal, be able to identify and distill appropriate

indigenous frameworks for prosecuting relevant revolutionary themes in the areas of education, economy, technology, architecture, politics, social and spiritual development that are distinctly African.

**Statement of the problem:**

Africans are confronted with cultural illiteracy and inadequate cultural resource education in Africa, south of the Sahara. Also, cultural education has assumed almost an unproductive academic role that does not evolve critical consciousness among Africans. Scholars have called to question the purpose of cultural resources education especially its immediate relevance in the lives of Africans today, (Andah, 2008; Idiang, 2015; Kiriama 2020). This study opines that presently, cultural heritage education in Africa continues to thread the path of western educational system. Albeit, resourceful as western system is, it does not satisfy the yearnings of traditional Africans. Eurocentrist cultural educational system is incapable of retrieving, distilling and analyzing traditional African mores, lores and norms. Despite this, the study notes that the curricula of archaeological, anthropological and museological studies in Africa are largely tailored on Western paradigms and our various museums are fashioned after Europeans models. African cultural scholars and heritage managers are shirking the arduous tasks of breaking new frontiers in heritage theories and practice as they neglect to reappraise their own symbolic system and cultural heirlooms with authentic home grown pedagogical tool. The study notes that Africa's cultural heritage education has become almost sterile because of its failure to become a revolutionizing and conscientising pedagogy. The onslaughts of foreign influence dominate and thereby continue to do incalculable damage to the psyche of Africans about their cultural resources. Along this line, Barrrette (2016), Boachie-Ansa (1982), Law (2009), Pierre (2020), and Poncian (2015) sound the alarm that foreign imposed viewpoints are still prevalent in African historiographies.

The problems the study addresses are: In what ways can cultural resource education be useful as a pedagogical method in African studies? How can we overcome cultural illiteracy? How can we make use of cultural resource education when our intellectual output is externally focused to meet western standards of global indices? Why do Western trained African scholars tend to approach Africa's cultural heritage education from the perspectives of eurocentricism which they claim has global application and how can cultural heritage education bring about critical consciousness?

**Objectives of the study:**

The study seeks to offer a constructive engagement of the interconnectivity between cultural heritage education and the development of a critical pedagogical tool in the quest of revolutionizing the consciousness of Africans. The "pedagogy of the oppressed" by Paulo Friere (2009) as proper educational methodological approach to the study of Africa's past and present forms a starting point for the assessment of the objectives of this study. This study extends the scope of knowledge on decoloniality of African thought system as can be seen in the works of Lemu (1982), Emeagwali (1982) and Fyfe (2020) amongst others which highlight the revolutionary potentialities of cultural heritages among Africans. The dual objectives of the study are; (i) to make critical appraisal of the aims and character of cultural resources and

heritage education within African context, (ii) to use cultural heritage education as pedagogical tool of decoloniality and conscientization of the people.

### **Methodology of study:**

Methodologically, the study engages in radical anthropology and critical pedagogy exegetical tools in discussing cultural heritage education in Africa. Radical is an adjective used in this text to mean fundamental reform. It has its origin in Latin words *radix* (root) and *radicalis* (the root of). It is used in this context to mean going to the root of African anthropology. As Kincheloe and Steinburg (1997:24) succinctly opine, “critical pedagogy is the term used to describe what emerges when critical theory encounters education”. The application of pedagogy as a methodology of critical liberationist approach has been discussed by Freire (2009), Giroux (1997), and Kincheloe and Steinburg (1997). Drawing from this, this study focuses on the grim realities of cultural imperialism and dysfunctional cultural education in Africa. It uses critical liberationist pedagogy to advocate for frontal challenge to all realities that engender cultural colonization. Such approach leads to heightened engagement in dialectical discourse (Kincheloe, 2008; Hobart, 2000). The study submits that by a recourse to dialectical processes and praxis, Africa's cultural heritage education would become a liberating exercise.

The application of critical pedagogy in cultural education was underscored by Sekou Toure when he asserts: “Culture implies our struggle, it is our struggle” (<https://www.panafricanperspective.com>). The relevance of critical pedagogy in cultural education is that it recognizes that social change is not solely determined by economic factors, but is also influenced by cultural factors amongst others. It also provides a comprehensive background for analyzing changes from the past to the present and is also useful in shaping the society by analysing the processes and dynamics that influenced persons and societies. Critical pedagogy that is rooted in dialectics helps to discover and distil the complexity in culture. According to Martin and Nakayama (2006), the approach helps to facilitate interparadigmatic dialogue and offers new ways to conceptualize and study intercultural communication.

### **Culture and cultural heritages/resources explained**

Culture is a polysemous word. The Encyclopedia Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com>) defines culture as “beliefs, customs, arts, etc., of a particular society, group, place, or time”, while the Cambridge Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org>) defines it as “the way of life especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time”. This study defines culture as the totality of ways of life and behaviors acquired by human beings within a given locale that provides meaning to their society.

Cultural heritages are construed in this study as tangible and intangible assets that are heirlooms bequeathed from past generations. Tangible assets are movable or immovable heritages that are prehistoric and historic sites, monuments, artefacts, cultural features, work of arts. Intangible assets are non-physical aspects of culture and these include folklores, spiritual beliefs, language, artistic expressions, aesthetics, traditional knowledge and all indigenous intellectual properties. Cultural heritage also include natural assets that are peculiar to specific locales like landscapes and biodiversity. UNESCO says “Heritage is our

legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritages are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration" (<https://www.unesco.org>). African heritage means the totality of history, cultural identities, practices and beliefs of the peoples of Africa.

### **Understanding radical anthropology and cultural heritage education**

Anthropology has succeeded in amassing tremendous data on humanity both past and present, thus it offers us the impetus to take action on behalf of the society by not studying anthropology for anthropology's sake. In this regard Henriksen (2003) argues that we use anthropology as a tool for change, by contesting urgent issues of domination, conflicts and hegemonic tendencies. Hobart (2000) conceives radical anthropology as a radical metaphysical critique. By this he asserts that radical anthropology is the appropriate tool that removes distortions in peoples' consciousness and shows them what truly they are. In this study, radical anthropology is used to mean a critical study of humanity through cultural data that seeks a fundamental change which modifies the status quo to bring about a transformative reform to the essence, structures, practices and interpretative schemes of cultural heritage education.

Felguieres, Tymoschuk, Saborano and Breai (2022), argue that cultural education is a necessary venture which enhances humanity in the widest sense, by incorporating knowledge of the past with the present. Casonato (2022) opines that cultural heritage education brings into sharp focus daily representation of cultural resources. The universal applicability of cultural resource education is underlined by Brandesi (2007), Smith (2006) and Waterton and Watson (2010). Freire (1998) for instance suggests that the goals of education should be in transformation of passive beings into active participants of the developmental process. In this case education then becomes a process which restores to the dehumanized the full realization of their potentials. The nexus between cultural heritage and education has been examined by scholars like Ayibadeinyela ([www.ichekejournal.com](http://www.ichekejournal.com)), Bojang (2021) and Mazonde (1995) with focus on cultural education in Africa.

In this wise, the study explains cultural education in the wider sense. Cultural heritage education is construed in this study as the conscious efforts of identifying, acquiring, evaluating, documenting and educating people on their cultural heritage assets. Cultural heritage education is an applied anthropological subdiscipline, which links the past with the present. In this regards, Hunter (1988) submits that "heritage education is an approach to teaching and learning about history and culture that uses information available from the material culture and the human and built environments as primary instructional resources" (<https://eric.ed.gov>). As opined by him, it nourishes a sense of "connectedness with our historical and cultural experience; encourages citizens to consider their historical and cultural experiences in planning for the future; and fosters stewardship towards the legacies of our local, regional and national heritage" (<https://eric.ed.gov>).

### **Understanding basic challenges confronting cultural heritage education in Africa**

There are several challenges to the study of cultural heritage education in Africa. Four salient challenges are examined because they have profound influence on the issue; these are external hegemony, insularity of researchers, lack of proper pedagogy and technical texts.



**i. External hegemonic influences:**

One of the greatest challenges to cultural education on the continent is the fact that Africa's cultural landscape is under immense external hegemonic forces of neocolonialism and external religions. Thus, semiotic tools that are applied in cultural education of Africa have been tainted by external influences. For this reason Fyfe (2020) calls for radical interpretation of African cultural histories. As observed by Ikara (1982:10), "colonialism has given us such a short, sharp shock that our memories and even our analyses of the past have become disoriented and twisted as recorders of our cultural heritage".

**ii. Academic insularities by cultural educators:**

Also, the problem of local insularity bedevils cultural education in Africa. Cultural educators in Africa largely operate as isolates characterised by narrow-mindedness, parochialism and provincialism. There is near absence of intra-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary collaborations between the various cultural educators in our universities and institutes even within the same country and across countries and regions of Africa where they are operating in cultural education cocoons. This hampers information flow among cultural educators in the continent, (Andah 1982).

**iii. Inability to understand cultural meanings of Africa's symbolic system:**

The inability to decipher correctly the profundity of cultural meanings observed in rituals, symbols and customs remains a major handicap to the study of African cultures by outsiders and many African researchers. There is absence of application of proper pedagogy in understanding Africa's culture and cultural education. This is exacerbated due to the inability to integrate researches with culture. According to Achi (1982), the role of archaeological data in integrating culture to education has not been highlighted in our educational system. Thus, an African scholar in his doctoral dissertation asserts before his professors in Rome saying;

The battle cry of most African intellectuals today has become "let's go African! Back to African roots!" Well and good, I say. I am all for African identity. The question of course is how? Do we return to the primitive stage of bow and arrow, with banana leaves for shirts? Do we go back to the killing of twins, the burying alive of wives with their dead husbands; back to cannibalism and the talking drums of the dark African jungles? Well, that was where we were before the missionaries came- if we really want to be completely and absolutely African (Obuna, 1986:53).

**iv. Hypertechnical texts:**

African cultural researches are often loaded with specialised technical jargons that are clearly out of scope for the unprofessional. Cultural educational texts are often unfathomable to nonprofessionals. Anthropological and archaeological texts that carry field sourced data are overly technical with terminologies, and excessively specific in scientific analysis to meet current global academic standards, but ended up being of little relevance to the masses.

**Assessing the usefulness and tasks for cultural heritage education in Africa**

As an appropriate pedagogy, cultural heritage education can conscientise the masses towards building and running relevant centers like museums, archives, libraries and institutes that make meaningful contributions to the struggle. The first task is to decolonize these educational centers and make them sources of critical thinking. Their functions and structure will be appropriately channeled to meeting the needs of Africans. To this study, it seems most of the cultural research centers do not have detailed perception of the meaning of culture and cultural development. This is why one finds that several institutions are merely for entertainment like Art Councils and Museums, or where institutions have concentrated on one aspect of culture like dance, as if that is the only culture of the people (Andah, 1982; Ikara, 1982; Emeagwali, 1982).

This study submits that cultural resources education should have specific goals. Proper education in general should in fact be a process which is capable of restoring to the colonized, and the oppressed, the dehumanized and the exploited, the full realization of humanity, by stressing their potentialities in bringing about a revolutionary change in the society. In this context, it is apropos to ask: What is the specific role and place of cultural resource education in revolutionizing the consciousness of Africans? What are to be the specific aims of cultural resource education? What are the possibilities for the development of revolutionary consciousness in the context of the teaching of cultural resource education? In what ways can cultural resource education be in the service of revolutionary change that would facilitate such transformation? The answers to these questions can best be seen in the context of the very nature of cultural resource education itself.

In bringing about the desire revolutionary consciousness and change, the study calls for specific tasks for cultural heritage education in Africa:

**i. Retrieval of authentic data on Africa's heritage:**

It is incumbent on African scholars to truly (re)discover, document and disseminate the rich cultural resources of Africa. African scholars have often jettison cultural resources and heritages and insisted on promoting foreign values and culture. Through uncritical acceptance of arabised and westernised theologies the traditional norms of African are ridiculed. The impartation of Arab, Chinese and Western categories, theories and philosophies on traditional African cultural concepts has ended up causing more confusion rather than explicating scholarship. An African scholar notes;

African's purported heritage was not derived from what Africans know or have found out about themselves, but rather from what outsiders, not well equipped to study the subject, have handed down to them, together with all the outsiders inbuilt cultural, and with it mental independence from the supposedly developed nations of the east and west.

(Andah 1982:5).

**ii. Agent of conscientization:**

Cultural resource education should become a necessary tool for engendering revolutionary consciousness. Lemu (1982) opines that the proper application of cultural heritage education is capable of bringing liberation for Africans. Because of its great value in retrieving, distilling, conserving and restoring of culture, cultural resource education can become a great tool of critical consciousness and is more than qualified and competent to initiate critical education of colonized minds. Emeagwali (1982) argues on this point by appraising cultural heritage education as a tool for revolutionary consciousness. Unfortunately, the rich cultural data of Africans at the disposal of researchers which are preserved in form of historical, ethnographic, folkloric and archeological data that are veritable tools of revolutionising the minds of the people have not been well articulated. Due to this fact, the arabised and westernized Africans not only jettison their traditional heritages but seek to discard them. As noted by Ehusani (1997:39);

It is unfortunate but true that no one is more brutally hostile and insensitive to his or her own national tradition than the new African scientist or intellectual, who is ignorant alike of the values of the African cultural heritage.

**iii. To promote cultural identity:**

Cultural resource education should promote cultural identity among Africans. Its emphasis on advocating appropriate education will re-orientate the masses because the colonial educational setup that operates in Africa has failed to meet the yearnings of Africans. The present educational system has produced elites, who do not share the traditional symbols of the people nor the aspirations of the masses for a better nationhood (Ikara 1982). Rather the masses are ensconced in cultural illiteracy. Cultural resource education by its emphasis in upholding indigenous cultural identity is best suited to correct the pedagogical anomaly bedeviling Africans. A concerned scholar notes:

The colonialists left behind some schools and roads, some post offices and bureaucracies. But their cruelest legacy on the African continent was a lingering inferiority complex, a confused sense of identity. After all, when people are told for a century that they're not as clever or capable as their masters, they eventually start to believe it, (Lamb 1986: 140).

**v. Tool for advancement of tradotechnology:**

A properly channeled cultural heritage education will make meaningful contributions to the advancement of tradotechnology and bring about societal development, (Kiriama, 2020; Idiang, 2015). It is undeniable that indigenous science, technology, medicine and folklores are endangered cultural resources in Africa due to the onslaughts of colonial education. The studies of scholars like Andah (1979), Anozie, (1979), Ehret (2023), Eggert (2014) and Okpoko (1987) point to enormous amount of archaeometallurgical scientific knowledge in several



communities of pre-colonial Africa. Unfortunately this science has been left to decay without modernization. Therefore, most engineering departments in our institutions of learning do not make effort to search for indigenous antecedents, because colonial tailored education taught them that there is nothing scientific in pre-colonial Africa. One looks nonplus how the Nigerian government over the years flung \$400m on a single iron and steel project with foreign model and execution, without achieving any result. This project is been executed without reference to traditional metallurgical practices as if there was no indigenous knowledge of iron workings in Africa. In addition, our agricultural mechanism has been stunted by importation of foreign models, without due regards to soil, climate and crops. Traditional ecofriendly agricultural practices have been replaced by modern methods such as synthetic manures which have done more harm to humans, crops and soils than hitherto known. Despite the advantages of foreign technologies, they came with indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources that has led to the destruction of the ecology which Tubi (2020) refers to as ecocide.

**vi. Tool for leadership training:**

As an appropriate utilization of human resources, cultural heritage education can create needful atmosphere which is conducive for the emergence of appropriate leadership and followership. It is in this light that Andah (2008) and Idiung (2015) explore the various values of cultural heritage education in Africa. It will be extremely difficult for a leader who does not know the culture of the nation to attract good followers. This is why there has been several political upheavals and miscalculations in Africa. Cultural heritage education if accompanied with proper planning would highlight some irrelevant institutions of leadership and seek to replace them with workable and relevant ones. It can be pointed out that foreign imposed capitalist and socialist systems have breed mediocre leaders, sectional leaders and opportunists and therefore, the followership has not been as dynamic, resourceful and imaginative as it should be (Ikara, 1982).

**vii. Formulating revolutionary policies for cultural heritage education:**

It is envisaged that cultural resource education would contribute towards the formulation of critical and revolutionary consciousness among Africans. Revolutionary comes from the Latin word *revolutio* which means "turn/roll back". It demands that we undertake thorough sweeping reforms from the root. Cultural heritage education in Africa requires a complete rethink, and a fundamental change in structures, practices and interpretative schemes, (Emeagwali, 1982; Ikara, 1982; Lemu, 1982). The application of critical policies to pedagogy of cultural education will result in critical distillation of institutionalized values, norms, mores and lores. Cultural heritage education would therefore be in the realms of revolutionary consciousness which makes meaningful contribution to liberation, (Andah, 2008; Ikara, 1982). Our artefacts, material culture, and chronology would be viewed in the context of impacting self-transforming knowledge. Through appropriate pedagogy, cultural resource education will harmonize research and cultural centers for dialectical struggles, (Smith, 2006; Martin and Nakayama, 2006).

**viii. Enhancement of cultural communication:**

Cultural communication is very relevant to our quest for revolutionary consciousness. In fact consciousness hinges on appropriate education and communication. As opined by Kiriama (2020) cultural heritage education is a veritable communication strategy. Cultural centers should be able to conscientize the public through multiple channels like ethnographic, historical and archeological information. Medium of communication should be accessible to all without hindrance. In addition, the language of communication must be lucid and less technical for the enjoyment of the public. The pathetic case in which all cultural centers, institutions and universities are understaffed, does not give room for adequate cultural education and communication.

**Summary and conclusion**

In summary, the study notes that cultural resources education by its focus on conserving, preserving, restoring, and exhibiting human's activities helps to illustrate the way and manner in which humanity has transformed their lives, societies and environment over time. By its focus on aspects of humans material culture both on the micro and macro levels, cultural resource education indeed is reminding Africans of their struggles over time to cope with and gain mastery over the vagaries of life. The study advocates that the awareness of the dynamic nature of change and growth over time which cultural education bequeathes is even a fundamental prerequisite for revolutionary consciousness. The study thus asserts that it is therefore its onus to stimulate the masses towards that critical consciousness. The study further notes that most traditional symbols in forms of archaeological finds and anthropological data in Africa have not been used functionally. One would have expected that eurocentricism should have been dead, but recent studies indicate otherwise as many academic papers and books recommended as standard texts for students contain elements of such, (Boachie-Ansah, 1982; Law, 2009; Pierre, 2020).

Sustaining pedagogy for heritage resources education in Africa should help to understand and overcome social structures through which people are dominated, marginalized and oppressed. Critical pedagogy will also influence students towards understanding cultural heritage and heirlooms of their ancestors. Critical pedagogy compels Africans to make a choice in interpreting their symbolic system as cultural heirlooms to either support the status quo or to challenge and uproot it. Neutrality simply gives support to the dominant societal context. In the words of Freire (1982) "washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral". In addition the application of critical pedagogy will unearth the tension between how things are and how they ought to be. Thus there is an urgent need to be equipped with critical pedagogy towards achieving critical consciousness in interpreting cultural heritages.

Conclusively, the study advances that we must not equally accept cultural romanticism that seeks to identify Africa's past with all that is noble and beautiful. The warts must be enunciated too. It brings about critical conscientisation where we go beyond the surface meanings to understand the deep meanings, root causes, social contexts and ideologies that produce Africa's symbolic system and cultural heritages. Indeed cultural resource management holds the key to our proper understanding of historical phenomena. But such

exercise should be done in the context of revolutionary consciousness if it is to be a meaningful exercise (Fanon, 2018). Cultural resource education should be done in the context of praxis. Researchers, students and the masses are to be active participants in the process of unearthing, conserving, restoring and exhibiting Africa's symbolic system so that they will not become passive receptacles of information. In this way, critical thinking becomes a functional exercise.

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