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BERBER TEXTS FROM JEBEL NEFŪSI

(ŽEMMĀRI DIALECT)

JEBEL NEFŪSI is a range of hills in the eastern part of Tripolitania, near the Tunis border, and about seventy miles inland from the town of Tripoli.

The following texts were taken down by me from the dictation of 'Omar Ben Ḥalifa, a native of Žemmāri (Faṣṣāto¹), Berber Assistant at the Royal Oriental Institute, Naples. They have been checked with the greatest care and chosen from among many others of an essentially popular and religious character. They are now for the first time published in phonetic transcription and with an English translation. They may therefore prove useful, both for the comparative study of the various Berber dialects of Tripolitania and for that of Berber psychology. The Berbers have always clung, with jealous tenacity, both to their political independence and to the theological lines of their religious life, as laid down once for all in the Abadhi* chronicles of their ancient teachers, famous alike for learning and piety. The indelible traces of these traditions are preserved in the ancient mosques—places of prayer for residents in the neighbourhood and of pilgrimage for those from a distance—of which the venerable ruins are still to be found in Jebel Nefūsi.†

I. Text :—Dis tmezgīdā d aḥrīb nē Yuḏlīn dī Faṣṣāto¹ nīyet tmezgīdā tāqdīm lémmi tbuṣīlīn ḡessūnet adahfāṭnet² ikellāyen adugurūnet adzārūnet in tmezgīdā n aḥrīb nē Yuḏlīn d adensūnet dīs ba'ādās eṣṣbāḥ¹ adroūwāḥnet adugurūnet in tmaṭṭūt téllī tsāḥfāṭ dī kellā adwellānet adahfāṭnet² af ayūha

¹ The symbol used by Dr. Buselli for the second vowel sound in this word is â with a circumflex accent superimposed. This has not been reproduced owing to typographical difficulties. It recurs in all the words marked ¹.

² The vowel in the third syllable of this word is â with an acute accent superimposed. The words in which this symbol occurs are throughout the texts marked ².

* Or Ibādhi (اباضية), called by Burton (*Zanzibar*, I. 396) "Bayāzi," the sect to which the Seyyids of Zanzibar belong. See Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, s. v. IBĀZĪYAH [Tr.].

[Note by Editor.—The *dh* in "Abadhi" is pronounced like the English "th" in "that." Many speakers of Arabic render this by *z*.]

† The memory of some ancient Abadhi theologians is preserved in the celebrated *Sirjar* of Ašemmahī, for which cf. A. de C. Motylinski, *Les livres de la secte Abadhite* (Alger, 1885). For the history of religious doctrines in Jebel Nefūsi, see *Chronique d'Abou Zakaria, traduite par M. Masqueray* (Alger, 1878).

ettesta 'ámaēlen dī zriyāret ɛn tmezgidā nē Yužlīn sī-lwāqt² aqdīm lémmi tēbūšilt wel tāhaffāt² šī kellā atugūred aténs dīs atwellā atāhḫfāt ikellāyen. Tūha niyet tekml̄.

I. Translation :—There is a mosque among the ruins of Yužlīn at Faššāto¹; it is an ancient mosque. When young girls want to learn to embroider, they visit the mosque of the ruins of Yužlīn and pass the night there. In the morning they come back and go to the house of the woman who teaches embroidery, and (find that) they have already acquired the art. Therefore it is the custom, from ancient times, to visit the mosque of Yužlīn; when a girl (finds she) cannot learn to embroider, she goes to spend the night there and comes back a skilled embroiderer. This (account) is finished.

II. Text :—Sēḫ Abū 'Abīda d Igennāwen. Lémmi ūḡun dastekmū taḏḏū dūnīnnes wel tabāši atéffoḡ sē-dwā ayugūr ayéns dī-ššīḫ Abū 'Abīda atéffoḡ taḏḏūyīha 'āla ḫāṭār¹ nīt šīḫ nē la'ālem moqqār² ded dīs tanemmīrt terḫā.

II. Translation :—The Sheikh Abu Abīda at Igennāwen. When a leech has got into a man's mouth, and he cannot get it out by any medicines, he goes to pass the night at (the tomb of) Sheikh Abu Abīda; and the leech comes out, because that is a Sheikh of great learning and great holiness.

III. Text :—Šīḫ Belmūmen.* Nīt šīḫ nē la 'ēlm di Mézzu ettesta 'ámmēlen dīs ɛn tgellwīt lémmi ūḡun yōūwī ɛdrim s ūḡun wāyet ded yetlābt² ba'ād ezzēmān wel aḡerēsšī drim yenker attiwī in -ššīḫ Belmūmen attiesgēll dīs liakāna iggēll ḫānet lā būdda d assēnnes wēlli iggēll ḫānet adasišār¹ ḫāzā māsala kān ḡerēs algām² naḡ funās ayēmmet dassēnnes ded kāna wel ḡerēsšī ḫāzā adasišār¹ ḫāzā dī-šṣaḫatēnnes yā aya 'āmā yā a'iyāb naḡ ayēmmet lémmi dīs ūḡun yefkū ɛn ūḡun wāiṭ ɛdrim naḡ tḡusā ded ba'ādās yetlābt² ded yenkert wel aḡerēsšī ḡefēs šuhūd naḡ wel aḡerēsšī digfēnnes eddēmmet naḡ essnéd ayugūr aiškā dīs in laḫkūmet adastmél ɛllaḫkūmet ḡerék ḡefēs eddēmmet aimél lā wel aḡerēsšī adastmé ɛllaḫkūmet áwit s gēllet di tmezgidā māni tḡessed aimél ḡéssaḡ attawīg in 'Abd Elmūmen atégg dīdes ɛllaḫkūmet azābṭi adastmél ɛllaḫkūmet in azābṭi liakāna wel yabāši adasiggēll dī 'Abd Elmūmen áwit in elḫābs ayéfk ɛdrim ded kāna iggēll atelḡās ayugūr walāken dī Faššāto¹ iyēlli essēnén 'Abd Elmūmen ettāggēden s 'Abd Elmūmen áktar n laḫkūmet wel tšāqqēmēnši adeggellūn dīs ḫānet 'āla ḫāṭār¹ tikkélt aterrás iggēll dīs ḫānet si ddiusū sayéffoḡ ya'mā d ya'āb qābla² ayéffoḡ sē

* Abu Elmūmen.

‘Abd Elmûmen dettikkélt (= ded tikkélt) iggëll úgun dīs ḥānet ġérés algām² youwited ináhhem dīs sī ddiusû zrāt ‘Abd Elmûmen yuṭā algāmīha d imī ěn tmezgīdā yémmet ded tikkélt tāyeṭ iggëll dīs úgun ḥānet ġérés sen n ilāgmen¹ det-emptén ilāgmen¹ emmētén ass élli iggëll dīs det-tfūnást temmēt ass n tālet yôm ded iyafān erḥān išārāsen sāha yūha ġir iyélli šebāhāġ neċ s tiṭṭennu af ayūha wélli adastémled sé drār n infūsen ggëll dī ‘Abd Elmûmen ḥānet wel itgëllsi ókkull.

III. Translation :—Sheikh Belmûmen. This is a learned Sheikh of Mézzu; people go to his tomb to take oaths. When a man has borrowed money from another, and after some time (the latter) has asked for it again, and he, having no money, has refused (to return it to) him, (the creditor) takes him to swear at (the tomb of) Sheikh Belmûmen. If he swears falsely, certainly, on the very day on which he has done so, some misfortune will befall him: *e. g.* if he has a camel or a bullock, it will die the same day, and if he has nothing, some illness will come upon him, or he will become blind or lame, or he will die. When there is anyone who has lent money, or any article, to another, and afterwards demands it back, and (the debtor) denies having received it, and (the creditor) has no witnesses, or receipt, or other proof, he goes to lay a complaint against him before the magistrate, who says to him, “Have you any proof against him?” The man replies, “No, I have none.” “Have you a receipt from him?” He answers, “No, I have none.” “Have you any witnesses against him?” and he answers, “No, I have none.” Then the magistrate replies, “Take him to swear in any mosque you wish.” He says, “I want to take him to ‘Abd Elmûmen.” So the magistrate sends a policeman with him, saying to the policeman, “If he will not swear, take him to prison, and so he will return the money; but, if he swears, let him go.” But at Faṣṣāto¹, those who know ‘Abd Elmûmen fear him still more than the magistrate, and they dare not swear falsely, because once a man who swore falsely, just as he was about to go out, became blind and lame (even) before he had come out from (the chapel of) ‘Abd Elmûmen; and another time, a certain man swore falsely; he had a camel and was just shouting to hurry it up, when he arrived in front of ‘Abd Elmûmen’s (tomb); the camel stumbled on the threshold of the mosque and died. Another time, a man who swore falsely had two camels and a cow; the camels died on the very day when he took the oath and the cow on the third day. And there are many others to whom the same thing has happened, besides

those whom I have seen with my own eyes. And therefore, if any one in Jebel Nefûsi says to you, "He is swearing falsely by 'Abd Elmûmen," (he means that) the man in question is not swearing at all.

IV. Text :—*Dî-lwâqt*² aqarrâb dîs úgûn šîh mmâlûnas Šêh 'Omar Andemmîrti nît aterrâs aġannâi yetġenna dîslanât bá'd elli yoŵwót la 'amrénnes tlâtín n isuggâsen yuséd in ššîh 'Abdallâh Abarûni yemlâs neċ ġéssaġ adutûbaġ ġéfék ded sadġaraġ elqûr'ân de la 'élm yemlâs ššîh 'Abdallâh elbâb n ettûbet yemméftaġ walâken šek aitârwa² aterrâs moqqâr² yémkun weltfahémédsi yemlâs neċ ġéssaġ sadáġraġ ded Râbbi² ayéftaġ ġéfi iwélla yemlâs bâhi yaqqím iġġâr af eššîh 'Abdallâh elméddet rába' naġ hâmsa n isuggâsen ba'ádâs yugûr in Žirba ba'ádâs yugûr in Mzâb iroúwaġ in-ššîh 'Abdallâh de l'âlem am nît d iwéllef lektúb erġân ded yoúwid šá'ar yerġâ af eššîh 'Abdallâh ba'ádâs iwélla-ššîh 'Abdallâh iġġét di zzâwitennes nît d eššîh n ézzâwîyet dî Yéfren dî tmurâ¹ mlûnâs Labġâbġa ba'ádâs elméddet iwélla yuġén yemlâs-ššîh 'Abdallâh neċ sadugûraġ adrôuhâġ in tmurânnu Tindemmîret 'ála ġâtâr¹ neċ sademtâġ sadugûraġ in tmurânnu ná'la adiredémén di tažebbânt n yûnnu iwélla iroúwaġ in tmurânnes yémmet redmént in tažebbânt n yûnnes yemlú ššîh 'Abdallâh neċ wel éthartélâġši sê-ššîh 'Omar aišâr¹ de ššîh walâken Râbbi² yeftâġ ġéféš sê l'âlem išâr¹ am neċ ded kâtri².

IV. Translation :—In more recent times, there was a Sheikh called Sheikh 'Omar of Tindemmîret. He was a minstrel who used to sing at wedding feasts. After he had reached the age of thirty, he went to Sheikh 'Abdallâh Elbarûni and said to him, "I want to live as a penitent with you and learn the Koran and wisdom." Sheikh 'Abdallâh replied, "The door of penitence is open, but you are a great man (though) perhaps you have not understood (that it is so)." He answered, "I desire to learn, and the Lord will open (my understanding)." (The other) replied, "Good." He stayed with Sheikh 'Abdallâh, studying, for the space of four or five years, and then repaired to Yerba, and thence to Mzab. When he returned to Sheikh 'Abdallâh, he knew as much as he did; and he composed many books and wrote many poems about Sheikh 'Abdallâh. Afterwards, Sheikh 'Abdallâh left him in his *zawia*, with the Sheikh of the *zawia* at Yefren in the country called Labġâbġa. After a time he fell ill and said to Sheikh 'Abdallâh, "I will return to my own country of Tindemmîret, for I am about to die; I will go to my own country, so that they can bury me in the burial-place of my family." Sheikh 'Abdallâh said, "I should

never have thought that Sheikh Omar could have become a Sheikh ; but the Lord revealed wisdom to him, and he became equal to me and even greater than I."

V. Text :—Tanfúst af Náanna Zûra. Ezzëmân dī-lwâqt² n infûsen yeqdîmen dī lemdînet n Tihárt infûsen gëssûn sadqâddémén úgun limâm n infûsen am lémmi dīs sen n elmešâyeh n el'âlem úgun á'âlem n wâiṭ walâken wëlli gërés la'êlm arriḥat nīt aterrâs šaži'a ded wëlli gërés la'âlem yerḥâ nīt aterrâs taqî wel agërëšši šažâ'at wellân ḥammémén ibâb llemdînet mlûn ššiḥûha la'alémennes áqšâr n wûha walâken s ežžihet n eššaža'atennes nīt attanqâddem ded limâm wellân ibâb llemdînet ettéfqun af wëlli gërés la'êlm arriḥat nit aišâr¹ dellimâm walâken bá'd élli ettéfqun gëfés mlûnâs wettšarédši blâ léden n Náanna Zûra wellân enkînt in Náanna Zûra si ddiusû in Náanna Zûra temlâs af mâi tusid yemlâs šem tessnéd af mâi êddusiġ temlâs neč essénâg walâken kâna šek tšâred² dellimâm llemdînet ded dīs lemdînet wâyeṭ a'aléménnek ass laḥárt atšâred² am tmanṭi dī tfâut ded kâna šek a'âlem n ibâb llemdînet ókkull atšâred² dellimâm ded šek ḥâmmem kâna dīs willi a'aléménnek wadakfekkâġši léden élli atšâred² dellimâm ded dīs wâyeṭ a'aléménnek yemlâs dīs wâiṭ šiḥ affanî nit a'aléménnu temlâs enkiyâs addyâs yinkiyâs yuséd temlâs šek kâna dīs wëlli a'aléménnek lâzem nit aišâr¹ dellimâm ded kâna dīs a'âlem n ibâb llemdînet ókkull ded weltgëssédši atšâred² dellimâm ass laḥárt атаққимед am tmanṭi dī tfâut iwëlla iḥâmmem ššiḥûha élli gërés la'êlm áktar n ibâb llemdînet yemlû wel dīšši úgun a'aléménna temlâs Náanna Zûra šek lâzem atšâred² dellimâm iwëlla yetqâddem dellimâm n Tihárt. Tûha tanfúst n Náanna Zûra dellimâm ên Tihárt.

V. Translation :—*The Story of Náanna Zûra.* Once, in the time of the ancient Nefûsi, in the town of Tihart, the people of Nefûsi wished to choose a certain man as Imâm of Nefûsi. Now there were two learned Sheikhs, one of them wiser than the other. But he who had less learning was a man of courage, and he who was very learned was a pious man, but not courageous. The inhabitants of the town began to consider and said, "This Sheikh has less learning than the other, but on account of his courage we will choose him Imâm." Then the townsmen came to an agreement with the man of little learning, that he should become Imâm. But after they had agreed, they said to him, "You cannot become (Imâm) without the consent of Náanna Zûra." So they sent him to Náanna Zûra. When he arrived at Náanna Zûra's (abode), she said to him,

“ Why have you come ? ” He answered her, “ You know why I have come. ” She replied, “ I know, but, if you become Imâm of the town, and there is in the town another wiser than you, (then) on the Day of Judgment you will become like a stake in the fire ; but, if you are the wisest of all the townsmen, you will become Imâm. Consider (it) well, for, if there is any superior to you in wisdom, I will not give my consent, in case there is another Sheikh more learned than you. ” * He replied, “ There is another, Sheikh So and So, of such and such a tribe, who is wiser than I. ” She said, “ Send him here to me. ” He sent him, and when he arrived, Nánna Zûra said to him, “ If there is one wiser than you, he ought to become Imâm ; but if you are the wisest of all the dwellers in the town and do not wish to become Imâm, in the Day of Judgment you will be like a stake in the fire. ” Then that Sheikh began to think that he had more learning than the (rest of the) dwellers in the town, and he said, “ There is none superior to me in wisdom. ” Nánna Zûra replied, “ You must become Imâm, ” and she chose him Imâm of Tihart. This is the story of Nánna Zûra and the Imâm of Tihart.

VI. Text :—Tanfúst n Nánna Tâla. Niyet Nánna Tâla lâšlénnes s Uqâtres ² ass s ussân tem méziyi niyet ded yûnnes si teġġû yûnnes aterrásénnes iddér, ġérés sen n ibûšîlen twélla tgû tabriqt n amén d arrihat ên tinî det-toûwî tazdîténnes d arânnes ettâqqim teggûr an ttâs in elhânqât n uséf mâni tellâ tiru temmérdem tuséd dî talzázt, det-taqqim dîs niyet d arânnes kúll yôm adasentéfk tinwiyîha atenteččûn d adéswn tabûqt n amén ded adáttsân šsbâh adafûn tiniwin det-tabûqt teččûr s amén am tikkélt tamezwârt ba’adâs taqqim ettsésti di tazdîténnes tuṭâ tazdîténnes sê talzázt in buṭ n elhânqât tessúffog el’aín n amén ba’adâs qqîmun yûnnes athâkkaran dîs anddasûn ufúntet dî talzázt mlûnâs éfya róuwaḥ didnaġ temlâsen neč tûha tmurânnu ¹ sadaqqîmaġ dâha walâken sademtâġ lémmi êmtâġ erdemûtîd dî talzáztûha neč d arânnu kull úġun s errêkén twélla temmét fîsa’ fîsa’ niyet d arânnes žemî’a wellân redmêntet di talzáztîha ded buân aġfés têmezgidâ moqqâryet ¹ d amkân élli tuṭâ dîs tazdîténnes tšâr dîs elġéltet moqqâryet ¹ tîn amén kúll elwâqt ² wettkemmélši det-tasûnáséd ibâb n drâr n infûsen sî Faššâto ¹ sî Yéfren sî Lâlût sî Kâbâo ded la’arúfet n drâr kúllah etzârun dîs ‘âla hâtâr ¹ niyet lâl ên tanemmîrt terĥâ mešhûryet imûl di-lbârr ên Ṭârâbles ettâwînas

* Repetitions of the same idea are frequent and even habitual in popular speech, especially in that of the East ; and it is necessary to render them literally in order not to lose the characteristic features and living force of the original.

di ssâ'i dē lema'iz maḥṣūš iżāda'ān d ifunāsen gérresen dīs dettéggun dīs uĉĉū tummén dettéttun kull iyélli adasugurún žemí'a willi yōūwī ded wélli wel yōūwīsi dettzūnun isān af larwāḥ swā ded lémmi wélli yetzūn af larwāḥ igū elḥilet elgelteténnes tīn amén atšār¹ tezwāg am idémmen lémmi tetgíyer elgétet adfahemén iziyāren likūna tšār¹ dīs elḥilet adgūn ettaḥqīq detteftīš māni adháqqāqān elmésalet d adafūn elgāder atwellā elgétet am tikkélt tamezwārt ba'ādās lémmi temmékkes elḥilet iwélla aménénnes mellél am tikkélt tamezwārt. Tūha eṣṣīfet n ezziyāret n Nánna Tāla itūmm.

VI. Translation :—*The Story of Nánna Tāla*.^{*} Nánna Tāla was a native of Uqātres. One day she quarrelled with her family ; when she left her family, her husband was still living. She took with her a jar of water and a few dates, her distaff and her two children. She set out on the road (and went on) till she came to (a place) in the throat of a ravine, where now she is buried. She came to a mound and stopped there with her children. Every day she gave them to eat of the dates and to drink from the jar, and they went to sleep, and in the morning they found the dates, and the jar full of water, as before. Then she began to spin with her distaff. She dropped her distaff from the mound, down into the ravine, and a spring of water burst forth where it fell. Then her relations searched for her, till they found her on the mound, and said, " Now, come back with us." She made answer to them, " This is my country, and I will abide here ; but I shall die. When I am dead, bury me here on this mound, together with my children, one on each side of me." Then she died suddenly, and her children also. They buried her on that mound and built above her a great mosque at the very spot where her distaff fell, and they dug a large pit (which became full) of water, and which is never dry at any time of year. The inhabitants of Jebel Nefūsi come thither, from Faṣṣāto,¹ from Yefren, from Lalūt, from Kabāo, together with all the Bedouins of the mountain, to make pilgrimage to her, because she is a very holy woman, very famous in Tripolitania. They bring her offerings of

^{*} This Nánna Tāla, in Wady Berresof, not far from Uqātres (mudirieh of Lalūt), must not be confused with Nánna Tāla of Elgela'at, to whose spring sick children are brought, in the hope of curing them.—Besides the ancient Abadi doctors, the Nefūsi venerate with particular devotion certain holy women, such as Nánna Tāla, Nánna Zūra, Nánna Māren, Nánna Tukit and others, of whom various miracles and prodigies are related. De Calassanti-Motylnsky has well remarked (*Le Djebel Nefousa*; Paris, Leroux, 1899) : " Les chroniques abadhites fournissent d'intéressants détails sur le rôle de certaines femmes dans les communautés berbères du Djebel Nefousa. Les biographies de femmes qui ont brillé par le piété et l'amour de la science y abondent ; elles renferment des traits de mœurs curieux et caractéristiques " (p. 91).

animals, especially of goats and bullocks; they slaughter them and prepare food and *bāzīna*; and all those who come there eat of it, both those who have brought and those who have not brought, and they divide the meat into equal shares for every person. And if the person who assigns the portions to each person makes any mistake, the pit of water becomes red as blood, and when the colour of the water changes, the pilgrims know that there has been some mistake, and they examine into the matter. As soon as they have ascertained the facts and discovered the mistake, the pit returns to its former condition, and when the mistake has been set right, the water again becomes (clear) white, as it was before. This is the account of the pilgrimage to Nānna Tāla, and it is finished.

VII. Text:—Dīs laḥkāit teza'ām yerḥā tīn aterrās bāb n el'ālem ded fāhem ass s ussān yugūr yettedāhwār nīt ded bābānnes ḥātmén af afeddān wīn yerden det-tāmzīn sabet yemlū aterrāsīha ayāfeddān yadrā bābānnek yeččéseḥ werrāg naḡ aṭṭābed yemlās bābānnes n aterrāsīha elli yemlū tawaltūha šek abahlūl yemlās ēm̄māi yemlās 'āla ḥātar¹ ḡéssaḡ elmá'nā n tawaltūha yemlās elmá'nā n tawaltūha afeddānūha wīn yerden dettāmzīn yeza'ām yerḥā walāken bābānnes n afeddānūha kān nīt aterrās mabsūṭ sattiyéčč itāb¹ ded kān nīt aterrās azaūwāli iččétt werrāg ba'ādās iwélla bābānnes n aterrāsīha yemlū in tarwānnes awālénnek ḥāqq² ba'ādās ugūrun ufūn zekkā yemlās in bābānnes yadrā a bā zekkāyūha bābānnes yemmét naḡ yeddér yemlās bābānnes šek aterrās abahlūl yemlās mm̄māi yemlās bāhi lā búdda bābānnes yemmét yemlās in bābānnes šek abahlūl essénāḡ elžéseḡ n bābānnes yemmét walāken kān nīt aterrās la'ālem bāb n elma 'ārfet dī yudān d aterrās táyweb yetqīm dīma yeddér dīmāwen n yudān yemlās bābānnes šek la'ālem ded bāb n elfāhem af ayūha mā'ādšaškyégleb ḥādd. Tūha laḥkāyet n aterrās ded bābānnes tekmél.

VII. Translation:—There is a pretty story told about a learned and intelligent man. One day he was walking with his father, and they were passing through a field* of wheat and barley not yet ripe. The man said, "O crop! who knows whether your owner will eat you while green, or whether you will ripen?" The father of the man who had uttered these words replied, "You are mad." He said, "Why?" The other replied, "Because I want to know the meaning of what you have said." He answered, "The meaning of my words

* The Arabic فدان *fadan* is properly a superficial measure—about an acre: it is as much land as a pair of oxen can plough in a day.

is, that this crop of wheat and barley is very good; but the owner, if he is a rich man, will eat it when it is ripe; but, if he is poor, he has already eaten it being green." Then that man's father said to his son, "Your words are true." They walked on and came to a grave. (The son) said to his father, "Who knows, O my father, whether in this grave there is a dead man or a living one?" His father replied, "You are mad." "Why?" insisted the son. "Because he who is buried here is certainly dead." (The son) replied to his father, "You are mad: I know very well that his body is dead, but if he was a wise man, and learned among men and an honourable man, he will always remain alive in the mouth of the people." The father replied, "You are learned and wise, and therefore no one will ever be able to overcome you." This story about a man and his father is finished.

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