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# Historical Analysis of the Growth and Development of the Trade in Old Motor Spare Parts, Ipata Oloje, Ilorin, 1980-2020

**Adeshina, Lukman**
Department of History and International Studies,
Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin,
Kwara State, Nigeria.
**Email:** adeshina.l@unilorin.edu.ng
**Phone:** +234-8039404799

**Abstract**
The desire to consume and enjoy a variety of goods and services within people's income was a prime factor behind the establishment of trade in used commodities. Selling and buying of second-hand commodities are not new to the Nigerian market system but it is called different names such as second-hand, *tokunbo*, *akube, bosikoro, aganmu*, bend-down select, *okrika* and fairly used amongst others in the markets. This article presents a comprehensive historical analysis of the trade in old motor spare parts at Ipata, Ilorin, from 1980 to 2020. Using oral interviews, secondary sources and observations, the author traced the origin and growth of the trade, from its humble beginning to its current status as a thriving old motor spare parts hub in Ilorin in particular and Kwara State as a whole. The study examined the factors that led to the establishment of the trade and its growth, which included the entrepreneurial zeal of the founders of the trade and the role of the Ilorin West Local Government. The author highlighted the transformative impact of the trade on the local economy of the Ilorin community such as the creation of employment opportunities, the generation of revenue and environmental sanitation, amongst others. The study is a valuable resource for scholars, policymakers, and entrepreneurs who have an interest in understanding the dynamics of informal trade in Nigeria and how entrepreneurial innovation can drive economic growth and development.
**Keywords:** Old Motors Spare Parts, Ipata OLoje, Ilorin, Trade, Growth

## Introduction

Selling and buying of used commodities began to gain prominence in Nigeria between the periods of 1980-1985 when there was a decline in the economic fortunes of Nigeria because oil prices fell drastically. This negatively affected the nation's economy and the standard of living of the populace as the level of poverty increased significantly between 1979 and 1983 because the proportion of people living below the poverty line rose from about 30 per cent in 1979 to about 40 per cent in 1983 and, worsened thereafter. The desire to consume and enjoy a variety of goods and services within people's income was a prime factor behind the establishment of trade in used commodities. Thus, selling and buying of second-hand commodities are not new to the Nigerian market system but it is called different names such as second-hand, *tokunbo*, *akube, bosikoro, aganmu*, bend-down select, *okrika* and fairly used amongst others in the markets.

The trade in used automobile spare parts in Ilorin emerged as a result of the realization by the people that the engine of a particular brand of vehicle could last longer than others, this realization led to the replacement of engines and gearboxes of vehicles while such vehicles still retained their bodies and other components. It was from these requests or demands for engines and gearbox replacement that the demand for and trade in the spare parts of different brands of used automobiles arose in Ilorin. The trade is different from the sales of *tokunbo* automobile spare parts because the traders dealt mainly with the spare parts of vehicles that have been used in Nigeria.

Therefore, in the context of this study old motor spare parts are referred to the spare parts of the vehicles that were bought either as brand new or *tokunbo* but they had been used within Nigeria. They are different from the foreign used automobile spare parts which are referred to as *tokunbo* spare parts, thus, old motor spare parts and used automobile/vehicle spare parts are interchangeably

used in this work to distinguish them from the foreign ones- *tokunbo* parts. This paper relies largely on oral sources and available written materials and examines the historical origin and development of the trade in old motor spare parts in Ilorin. The paper is divided into five sections. Section one discusses the origin of the trade in old motor spare parts in Ilorin. Section two analyzes the market structure and regulations. The next section discusses the articles of trade and their sources. Section four discusses the socio-economic impact of the trade, while the last section discusses the challenges of the trade in old motor spare parts in Ilorin.

**Origin of the Trade in Old Motor Spare Parts in Ilorin**

Trading in used automobile spare parts in Ilorin emerged as a result of the realization by the people that, the engine of a particular brand of vehicle could last longer than others, this realization led to the replacement of engines and gearbox of vehicles while such vehicles still retained their bodies and other components. For example, some car users realized in the 1980s that the engines of Toyota cars last longer than that of Datsun. They therefore demanded for the engines and gearboxes of Toyota cars from *tokunb*o car dealers, to replace the bad ones in their cars, which were not Toyota model. This development was brought about by the decline in the economic fortunes of Nigerians because of the drastic fall in oil prices between 1980 and 1985; and the resultant poverty level of the populace.[5] However, some Nigerians believe that what further worsened the living conditions of the people to the point of replacing their damaged automobile spare parts with old and fairly used ones, was as a result of the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) between 1986 and 1988.[5] One of the objectives of SAP was to restructure and diversify the productive base of the economy to reduce its dependence on the oil sector and imports. One of the main instruments used to achieve the SAP objectives was exchange rate adjustment, which led to a drastic devaluation of the Naira vis-à-vis major trading currencies. The exchange rate became the anchor and was adopted to redress the imbalance in the external sector and especially to reduce the demand for imported goods, amongst others.

The brain behind the establishment of the trade in used vehicle spare parts in Ilorin was linked to three enterprising men in Ilorin. They were known as Salaudeen Ajisegiri, Olaleye Anwa-o'oko and a certain Ajumobi. Salaudeen Ajisegiri and Ajumobi are indigenes of the Ilorin Emirate who hail from Abayawo and Sanni Okin compounds respectively while Olaleye Anwa-o'oko hails from Ogbomoso, Oyo State. These people were known and regarded as the founding fathers of the trade in used or old motor spare parts in Ilorin. Other prominent people who followed the above three enterprising men in the trade included Alhaji Baba Ololu, Alhaji Baba Issa and Chief Olu Olaleye. The sales of used automobile spare parts in Ilorin started in areas like Agaka, Isale Aluko, Adabata and Sango. Later, more people started to get involved in the trade. This was the situation until 1983 when all the traders organized themselves and formed an association called Kwara State Old Motor Spare Parts Dealers Association. Chief Olu Olaleye was appointed as the first President of the traders' association when it was formed in 1983 because he was noted to be the most educated among the elders of the trade at that time. By 1986, the traders' association was registered with the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs. The association brought the members together but members continued their shops where they sold their goods in different parts of Ilorin.

**Movement to Ipata-Oloje Market**

Oloje and Baboko market buildings/complexes were constructed by the late George Agbazika Innih, the military administrator of Kwara State between 1976 and 1978 as part of his community development projects in the state. In 1992, some elders among the traders such as Chief Olu, Alhaji Jubril Ololu and Alhaji Sa'adu Babatunde approached the Ilorin West Local Government authority for the use of Oloje market complex for their trading activities since a small portion of the complex was occupied by butchers who used it as abattoir. The name of the complex "*ipata Oloje*"

derived from it being an abattoir. The approval of the traders' request by the Local Government for the use of the complex resulted in auto-parts traders moving into the complex from different parts of Ilorin and beyond from 1992/1993 till the present. Fig.1 shows the view of a section of the market.

**Fig. 1**



Picture taken by the author in 2023

**Market Structures and Regulations**

Trading in used motor vehicle spare parts in Ilorin is a male business, and females have yet to venture into it. Anyone who has an interest in the business must obtain an apprenticeship with any of the traders for a period of two to three years. After the expiration of his apprenticeship, he would be given the freedom to stand on his own in the trade by paying the association due, usually seven thousand naira for the issuance of a membership certificate and Identity card. It should be mentioned here that, his master was at liberty to demand any reasonable thing from him, for impacting the trade knowledge in him. He might not demand a dime from him if he so desired, this depended on the understanding between the apprentice and the master.

The association has the ethics that guide the spare part dealers. For instance, none of the traders must buy used motor vehicles or spare parts without particulars and a valid agreement must also be made between the buyers i.e. the traders and the sellers. They must neither buy stolen vehicles nor steal in the market or outside. No one among the traders in the market must fight with customers, law enforcement agents and fellow traders. Also, the traders must not engage in any criminal activities such as smoking Indian hemp or dealing in hard drugs. Any member who flaunted the rules and regulations guiding the conduct of the traders in the market would be punished accordingly. For instance, anyone who was involved in criminal activities such as stealing, smoking Indian hemp and taking hard drugs would be dismissed but if a person was a suspect, he would be suspended and if found not guilty, the suspension would be lifted. However, if any member was found guilty of fighting in the market, he would be suspended for several days as decided by the Executive Disciplinary Committee of the traders' association. Any of the traders who were suspended would have his shop(s) locked up but if he dared break the shop, such a member would be ordered to buy three padlocks in replacement and also made to pay a fine, to serve as deterrence to others. It is pertinent to note that the traders accepted that some bad eggs in their midst had at one time or the other involved in buying and selling stolen vehicles, though some mistakenly bought a stolen vehicle as well. However, the present mechanism that has been put in place by the association such as the

display of the pictures of the thieving members at the association secretariat and the insistence that the traders must always follow the laid down rules and regulations of the trade, amongst others, have helped to forestall the incidence of buying and selling of stolen vehicles in the market.

**Kwara State Old Motor Spare Parts Dealers Association**

The traders association in Ilorin was called Kwara State Old Motor Spare Parts Dealers Association. It was formed in 1983 with the social and economic development of its members as the goal of the Association. The President was the overall leader of the Association, he and his executive members were elected by all zonal members of the Association for a four-year term and might be re-elected for a second term in office. There was an understanding among all members of the Association from the mid-1990s that, the post of president of the Association must be contested for by only indigenes of Ilorin Emirate which is comprised of Ilorin West, Ilorin South, Ilorin East, Asa and Moro Local Government Areas of Kwara State while the post of vice president was not contested for by any indigene of the above mentioned Local Government Areas. This understanding was the fallout of the crisis which rocked the association over its leadership in the early 1990s.

The causes of the crisis were a conglomeration of factors such as the dissatisfaction of many Ilorin indigenes among the traders in the market over the fact that Chief Olu Olaleye was the president of the traders association while at the same time his younger brother of the same father, Gbenga Olaleye was the secretary and their uncle was the treasurer. This made people see the association as a family affair and there were allegations that the elections which produced Chief Olu as the president after his first tenure appointment were undemocratic. The grudges of the indigenes of the Ilorin Emirate against the non-indigenes within the market heightened as a result of the side talks among the non-indigenes that they would continue to dominate the indigenes in the market until they were civilized. The final straw that broke the camel's back was when Chief Olu Olaleye rebuked his Vice who is an Ilorin Indigene over signing a membership ID card when he was not around.

The summation of the grievances of the entire Ilorin Emirate indigenes in the market over the association leadership led to their unanimous call for the conduct of a proper election which they believed its outcome would be in their favour, being the majority. The initial refusal of the president to organize an election in the way the majority of the traders wanted led to the crisis. The intervention of the Ilorin Emirate Council and the Ilorin Emirate Descendants Progressive Union (I.E.D.P.U) urged the traders to allow peace to reign in the market by allowing the indigenes of the Ilorin Emirate to always emerge as their overall leader, giving the fact that the association is in a local/community market where the indigenes are the majority. The Emirate cited the sample of what was obtainable in many other parts of Nigeria, especially in the Northern markets where indigenes were the leaders of their various traders' associations. The urge from the Emirate further united the Ilorin Emirate indigenes within the market and resolved that, henceforth, the position of the association president would be contested for only by the indigenes of the Emirate.

Chief Olu Olaleye eventually agreed to conduct an election but he was advised not to contest as he was even offered the position of the life Patron of the association, he rejected the offer and opted for contesting with an Ilorin Emirate indigene where he lost to late Alhaji Aremu Teledalase who hailed from Baboko, Ilorin in 1994. The loss of Chief Olu in the election and the emergence of Alhaji Teledalase concretized the resolution of the Ilorin Emirate indigenes in the market that the post of the association president would be contested for only by the indigenes of the Emirate. Alhaji Aremu Teledalase died in 1996 and that was what led to the emergence of his Vice, Ezekiel Yemi Omidiji who was not an indigene of the Emirate as the third (3rd) president of the association between 1996 and 1998.

The Association leadership set out its bye-laws as a matter of custom, preference, and practicality. The Executive Officers of the Association are the President, Vice President, General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary, Treasurer, Financial Secretary and the Public Relations

Officer (P.R.O).

The market was divided into three zones of A, B, and C, and this division led to the emergence of zonal executives within the market. Each of the zones has its Chairman, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, and P.R.O. who were all selected by members of their zones for a period of four years term and might be re-selected after the expiration of their tenure. Every Tuesday was the executive meeting of the Association where each zonal Chairman and four members of his executives converged at the Association secretariat. The executive meeting therefore comprised of the President and his executive members, all zonal chairmen and four members each of their zonal executives. The three zones have their days of meeting. For example, Zone A held its zonal meeting on alternate Wednesdays, Zone B held its meeting on alternate Thursdays, and Zone C held its zonal meeting on alternate Fridays**.**

**Presidents of the Kwara State Old Motor Spare Parts Dealers Association.**

| S/N | Name | Tenure |
|---|---|---|
| 1st President | Chief Olu Olaleye | 1983 – 1994 |
| 2nd President | Alhaji Aremu Teledalase | 1994 – 1996 |
| 3rd President | Ezekiel Yemi Omidiji | 1996 – 1998 |
| 4th President | Mr. Jimoh Adisa | 1998-2022 |
| 5th President | Alhaji Adebayo Ajani | 2002 – 2005 |
| 6th President | Alhaji Obalowu Ayinde | 2005 – 2007 |
| 7th President | Alhaji Ajadi Alabi | 2007 – 2011 |
| 8th President | Alhaji Obalowu Ayinde | 2011 – 2015 |
| 9th President | Alhaji Salawudeen Adeyi | 2015 – 2018 |
| 10th President | Alhaji Mashood Idilobe | 2019 – 2023 |
| 11th President | Mallam MuhammedJamiu Asajo | 2023 till date |

**Articles of the Trade, Sources and Pattern of the Trade**

The traders bought and sold any model or type of used motor vehicles and their spare parts. Thus, all components of any used vehicle were bought and sold at the market. The components of an automobile which were sold and bought in the market are categorized into six or seven, namely;

1. The body structure (frame) e.g. the main mounting for all the components including the various parts of the body of a car.
2. The transmission system. It includes parts such as clutch assembly, gear pump, gear ring, speedometer, and propeller amongst others.
3. The internal engine system. It is a device that converts chemical energy from fuel through combustion with air into mechanical energy with the use of other components in the engine. The internal engine system includes an engine block, fan belt, piston, and engine valve, amongst others
4. The control system. It comprises of suspension, steering, and brake system
5. The auxiliaries. It consists of all electrical and electronic components and a battery system. They include audio/video devices, radio players, alternators and gauges such as an ammeter, odometer, oil pressure gauge and fuel gauge, amongst others
6. Car interiors. such as dash panels, car seats, seat belts and armrests, amongst others
7. The miscellaneous and accessories components. They are minor accessories found in an automobile, such as an air-conditioning system.

However, there were sort of specializations among the traders within the market. Some of the traders specialized in buying and selling certain parts of any used vehicle while others specialized in

used parts of a particular model or type of vehicle. For example, some of the traders specialized in buying and selling gears and engines of a particular used vehicle while others bought and sold any used vehicle's gears and engines. However, the majority of them did not specialize as they bought and sold spare parts of any vehicle model that came their way. Figure 2 shows a display of back axles of used vehicles for sale in the market while Figure 3 shows assorted spare parts for sale at the market.

**Fig. 2**



**Fig. 3**



Pictures taken by the author in 2023

Among the sources of the articles of trade was the intentional sale of used vehicles or spare parts to the traders by the owners. Also, many vehicles that were involved in accidents were usually sold to traders who then dismembered such vehicles and sold the usable parts. Apart from this, the traders travelled as far as Owode Onirin Market in Lagos State and Araromi market, Agodi Gate, Ibadan to buy some used vehicles' parts for resale in Ilorin. In addition, many of the traders have business partners or friends in markets outside Ilorin where used vehicle spare parts were sold, especially in Lagos and Ibadan. Each time any particular spare part was needed by a customer and could not be found in the market at Ipata Oloje, Ilorin, the traders would ask their business partners or friends in the markets outside Ilorin to look for the spare parts and send to them in Ilorin. This kind of business correspondence where goods were exchanged between the traders from different towns in Nigeria was another source of articles of the trade.

The medium of the trade in old motor vehicle spare parts in Ilorin was a mixture of formal and informal arrangements. The methods of sourcing for the articles of the trade were characterised by informality. Anyone who wished to sell his used motor vehicle or spare parts could invite any of the traders for inspection and bargaining. They also went around Ilorin and any part of Nigeria in search of used automobiles with a label of 'for sale' on them. Owode Onirin and Agodi Gate in Lagos and Ibadan respectively were the common markets outside Ilorin where the traders often bought used spare parts into their market in Ilorin. The formal requirements as part of the medium of the trade were manifested at the point of making payment for the goods to be purchased. Payment for goods would not made unless such used automobile's receipt was seen and a valid agreement was also made between the buyer i.e. trader and the seller. Used vehicles that were bought would then be brought to the market where they were dismantled into spares.

**Socio-Economic Impacts Trade in Old Motor Spare Parts in Ilorin**

Trade in used vehicle spare parts in Ilorin has contributed to the development of the social life of the people in Ilorin and beyond. The traders had on many occasions, on humanitarian grounds, accepted some boys and men to undergo training on the trade free of charge and became part of them. This kind gesture from the traders has reduced the unemployment rate and consequently reduced the rate of crime and criminality in society through the opportunity of self-employment provided to people who would have become a nuisance to society

There was a business correspondence that existed between the traders in used motor vehicle spare parts in Ilorin and elsewhere. This correspondence fostered unity among people of different

backgrounds with the resultant effect on the promotion of inter-group relations in Nigeria. Also, the traders became socialized as a result of social integration among the different people in the market. For example, some of the traders were illiterates who came from villages where there were little interactions with people from other cultures and backgrounds but the market and the activities therein had socialized them this was achievable due to the laid down rules and regulations guiding the conduct of the traders in the market.

Furthermore, the traders helped themselves financially by organizing thrifts and contributions among themselves. Anyone who was in financial difficulty among the contributors was usually given priority in terms of benefits over others. The traders' association too, helped members in financial needs if their attention was drawn to the plight of such members.

The trade has contributed to environmental sanitation in the society. By this, purchasing and disassembling of abandoned cars have reduced litter of abandoned vehicles on streets and roadsides of Ilorin. Many cars that were abandoned for one reason or the other have been bought and brought to the market for sale either as a whole or disassembled into spare parts by the traders. This has greatly assisted in reducing the number of abandoned cars on the streets and roadsides of Ilorin. This not only sanitizes the environment but also helps to reduce occasional traffic congestion caused by indiscriminate abandonment of unwanted but serviceable or unserviceable vehicles on the streets and roads of Ilorin. In addition to this, the trade was seen as a social uplifter of car owners and users. Many car users/owners who either did not have enough money to buy new spare parts or could not find a new spoilt part(s), usually made recourse to Ipata Oloje used spare parts market where their longings were attainable. Thus, the continuous use of cars by many lower income earner car owners/users was to the credit of the traders.

From an economic perspective, the trade has provided employment opportunities for thousands of people in Ilorin and beyond. For example, the total number of traders who voted in the association election in 2023 was one thousand three hundred and eighty-two (1,382). The traders were believed to be more than the numbers of the voters because many abstained from voting. It provided opportunities for many men and boys in Ilorin to become self-employed, make money and contribute to the economic progress of Ilorin, Kwara State and Nigeria at large. The trade has also helped to enrich the pockets of the unwanted, abandoned, useless or serviceable car owners who sold such vehicles to the traders.

Besides the traders, other skilled artisans were able to eke out their livelihood because of the spare parts trade in Ilorin. For example, there were many automobile mechanics, panel beaters, re-wirers, and vulcanizers amongst others who worked in the market. The trade has equally provided work for unskilled labourers such as the people who used axes to dismember the bodies of cars within the market. This people were referred to as “butchers” in the market. There were also those who loaded trucks with iron and other items, food sellers as well as towing businesses who took the trade opportunity to earn their livelihood. Figure 7 shows a picture of unskilled labourers called “butchers” in the market, using an axe to dismember vehicles.

**Fig. 7**



Picture taken by the author in 2023

The trade has contributed to revenue generation of Ilorin West Local Government and Kwara State Government. The traders paid rents between one thousand and eight hundred naira per month on each of the total number of the one hundred and eighty (180) shops in the market to Ilorin West Local Government while the Kwara State Government collected tax from the traders every year since 1992/1993 when the traders moved to the market up till the present.

The existence or establishment of the trade in Ilorin has helped to bring to the doorsteps of residents of Ilorin and its environs, the needed used motor spare parts, thereby saving them the cost of traveling far in search of desired spare parts. This cost-saving is an economic contribution to trade in Ilorin.

**Challenges of the Trade in Old Motor Spare Parts Ilorin**

One of the major challenges faced by the traders of old motor spare parts in Ilorin was the lack of trust from members of the public in transacting business with the traders. There was a notion held by some members of the public in Ilorin that, once one invited any of the traders to come and buy a used car or spare parts if there was no agreement on the price between the buyer (trader) and the intending seller. No other trader would price the car or spare parts beyond the earlier price offered by the first trader. Hence, there were allegations that, either the traders used juju to de-market any car whose owner did not agree with the price offered for the purchase or there were some signs made on such a car which indicated that, they had priced it but the owner rejected the price offered, and that the sign would prevent other traders from buying it at the price higher than the one earlier offered. This belief of the people toward the traders had led to a situation whereby many intending sellers preferred to sell their old cars or spare parts to the end users rather than the traders.

However, the traders denied the allegations and posited that the reason for the occurrence of such an occasion in transacting business with the people was a display of expertise in the course of their business. They argued that, if any one of them offered a price for a car in good faith, and another skilled trader was called to it, the price that he would offer was not likely to be higher than the earlier one offered by the first trader and when this happened, it showed an exhibition of expertise on the trade. Thus, there was no use of juju or any dubious act when any other trader offered an exact or lesser price than the first trader but a manifestation of expertise in the trade was at play.

The traders also have security challenges. There were incidences of shop breaks and theft within the market, usually at night when costly spare parts were carted away by thieves. Part of the security measures in the market was the employment of vigilantes by the market management to guard the market at night. In addition to this, there were occasions of harassment of the traders and

customers by law enforcement agents. Many of the traders and buyers of used cars or spare parts were at one time or another embarrassed by the law enforcement agents under the aegis of maintaining law and order or searching for stolen cars. For example, the traders considered it unnecessary and indeed an embarrassment for law enforcement agents like the Police to request for receipt of some parts of the vehicles that were disassembled from the body structure and sold into spare parts, like tyres, engines and gears after a show of evidence that the parts were dismembered from the legally purchased cars.

Another challenge of the trade at Ipata Oloje, Ilorin was waste disposal. Useless parts of vehicles that were neither saleable nor usable such as rugs, carpets, broken glasses and nylons amongst others that needed urgent evacuation were dumped in different areas within the market. Improper disposal of some useless parts of used vehicles such as rugs and broken glass within the market has constituted a hazard to the inhabitants of the houses around the market. The traders at a point in time were fond of burning useless parts of vehicles which could neither be sold nor re-used in an open space at the entrance of the market. The persistent complaints of the residents of the Ipata Oloje area about the danger of the fumes from the burning eventually led to the stoppage of the practice and the decision to earmark the burning field as the market parking lot. A former President of the traders' association narrated to the researcher the difficulty he faced in evacuating wastes from the market such as the money spent on waste disposal all the time apart from the payment for registration of right to waste disposal with the government.

**Conclusion**

Trading in used automobile spare parts in Ilorin came into existence as a result of demand for engines and gearboxes of Toyota cars upon the realization by the people that, Toyota engines used to last longer than other vehicle brands. The socio-economic impact of the trade in old motor spare parts in Ilorin is glossed over by scholars in the economic history of Ilorin. Despite the challenges associated with the trade, it has contributed immensely to the improvement of the socio-economic lives of the lower-income earners in Ilorin and Kwara State. Thus, the ethics of the trade laid down by the traders' association has assisted the traders in achieving their socio-economic goals which included the provision of employment opportunities for a large number of people in Ilorin and beyond apart from the traders themselves.

The study is a valuable resource for scholars, policymakers, and entrepreneurs who have an interest in understanding the dynamics of informal trade in Nigeria and how entrepreneurial innovation can drive economic growth and development. It would help to fill the gap in the available literature on second-hand trade in general and trade in old motor spare parts in Ilorin in particular, thus becoming a useful contribution to knowledge and serve as reference material to those who might be interested in studying the area(s) covered in this work.

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