A SYSTEMATIC METHOD TOWARDS GENERATING THE MALAYSIAN FOLKTALE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

This paper explicates two methods used in a study conducted to propose a Malaysian folktale classification system. Fundamentally, three substantial folktale classification systems exist and individually, each system classifies based on three distinctive folktale units: type, motif, and function. Independently, type and motif classify based on the content of folktale while function, the structure of folktale. The study aims to generate the Malaysian folktale classification system based on an amalgamation of the three renowned units of folktale. To classify, the method selected is structural-semantic analysis which encompassed three levels of classification. It classifies sequentially according to the content and structure of the Malaysian folktale. Nonetheless, prior to classify, an identification of the Malaysian folktales must take place. Such task is steered by two qualifying factors: formal features in an operational definition developed in the study and also an ownership of the folktales. These factors function as a filter towards safeguarding the study from contamination of forms of folklore other than the study intends to examine. Additionally, they assist in discriminating between modern folktales and the ones with embedded cultural values of different generations. In a nutshell, this paper reveals the methods to identify and classify the Malaysian folktales.

Keywords: folktale classification system, type-index, motif-index, function of dramatis personae, structural-semantic analysis, operational definition, folktale's ownership

INTRODUCTION

Cultural legacy is vital in every nation globally since it connects the current to the past. Previously, the cultural legacy referred to eclectic physical (tangible) objects but time changed such perception. At present, it also signifies intangible legacy which is just as substantial as its counterpart (UNESCO, n.d.). Intangible legacy assumes various forms and folklore being one of them, is an art that personifies social and cultural identity of a society (UNESCO, 1989). Folklore too has many forms such as proverb, music, and also storytelling, which become the focus of this study in the form of folktale (Chee, 2005; Mohd Hussein, Mohd Nor, & Abdul Manap, 2001). Bascom (1965) indicated that folktale, myth, and legend are the fundamentals of folklore. A folktale is a tale that embodies cultural identity and transmits positive messages. It is told and embellished for generations by different storytellers preparing it for current and future generations with its distinctive style (Dawkins, 1951; Porter, 2004)

Preservation of folktale, myth, and legend is eminent in this digital time to avoid such priceless legacy from being swallowed by globalization and commercial entertainments (Dorji, 2009). This is due to the fact that if judiciously employed, folktale works as an outlet to uphold and scaffold many positive qualities in a society. Such legacy though seems irrelevant, may impart respectable ethics, internal strength, attitude transformation, sensible verdict, benevolence, and mirrors culture's identity which become foundation to develop a country of unsurpassed cultural values (Babalola & Onanuga, 2012; Kirmani & Frieman, 1997). Six phases are acknowledged as basics towards the folklore preservation effort and the early step is identification. In identifying folktale, there are several endeavors recommended and one of the significant recommendations is folktale classification as stated in the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore (UNESCO, 1989). Internationally, there happens to be various folktale classification systems populating folktales of different nations. However, nearly all of them were created based on three prominent existing folktale classification systems: the type-index classification, the motif-index classification, and morphology-based classification. In the order stated, the folktale classification systems are the updated and expanded ATU (Aarne/Thompson/Uther) Classification and Bibliography of International Folktale System, Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk Literature, and Vladimir Propp's Morphology of the Folktale (Md. Radzi, 2002). The subsequent section discusses the three folktale classification systems.

FOLKTALE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Classification is scientifically essential in any domains with a huge frame of contents in order for the domains to be acknowledged as an object of analysis (Propp, 1998; Thompson, 1951). This view is especially true when folktale is involved because a tale is noted for its breadth and depth and not ideal to be studied in its complete state (Propp, 1998). Thus, in an effort to analyze the body of folktale, it is needed to divide its body of narrative into tinier pieces and this task is known as classification.

The three essential folktale classification systems classify via type, motif, and function respectively (Propp, 1998; Thompson, 1966). The type and motif are often used in combination to classify because both work on the contents of folktale while the function is an entirely different unit than the former two. The first classification system is the type-index, which classifies based on the folktale's theme. To define, type is a tale that occurs individually or with another tale and a solitary or collection of motifs constitute a type. Moreover, it is dynamic, flexible, and adaptable in constructing a novel thematic work and media (Thompson, 1951; Uther, 2011). Likewise, a folktale's tale type represents a combination of its plot synopsis that possess details that other folktales do not but yet somehow limitedly reflects its existing variants. The early type-index classification system (AaTh type-index) contained three main classes: animal tales, regular folktales, and humorous tales. The latest type-index is ATU which is an enhanced and amended version based on the remarks and comments imposed on the AaTh type-index (Uther, 2011). Similar to the original type-index, the ATU type-index still employs motifs of folktale to classify in order to deliver further organization in the classification system. Nevertheless, the main update is the enhancement of folktale classes from three to seven. The updated classes are animal tales, tales of magic, religious tales, realistic tales, tales of the stupid ogre, anecdotes and jokes, and formula tales.

Following the type-index is the motif-index as organized in this paper. The motif-index is able to subsist by itself or with the type-index to supply an extra arrangement in the folktale classification. Plenty of folktale classification systems utilize both units of folktale to classify since it offers deeper and thorough analysis though it is estimated that 60 classification efforts were grounded on both units individually (Thompson, 1951; Uther, 1996). Motif in definition, is the tiniest noticeable element embedded in a tale comprised of actors, items, and single incident. Among the three, the last motif is the one that comprises most motifs in the folktale and able to exist alone. Therefore, it is labelled as the true tale-type since its existence rivals the tale type's definition (Thompson, 1951). As stated, motif if used jointly with the tale type presents the extra arrangement of the folktales (Thompson, 1951; Uther, 2011). In total, 23 motif-indexes were created and its aim is analogous to the tale type-index which is to gather folk literatures and methodically organize it in a logical manner (Georges, 1997). Animals, Tabu, Mythological, Deception, Reversal of Fortune, Humor, Ogres, and Marvels are among the 23 motifs registered in the motif-index classification.

The final folktale classification system selected relates to structures of folktale (Propp, 1998). The structure of folktale which is branded as function, is the actions of dramatis personae (actor) and this classification system classifies folktale by studying the structure from the start to the end of the tale. Totally, there are 31 functions and ideally they transpire sequentially creating the structure of folktale. In the case where certain functions were missing, it will not affect the sequence of the structure. Propp (1998) claimed that the folktale classification system based on the action of dramatis personae offers a more objective and accurate descriptions of folktale compared to the theme-based which he saw as vague and verbose. To classify, folktales with the same groups of function are gathered to form a type. In the end, the collection of types sheltering the similar groups of function would create the type-index. Chiefly, the folktale begins with an initial situation like an introduction of hero or his/her family members. Although such situation is not deemed as one of the functions, still it is a vital component that shapes the structure of folktale with the α sign. Entailing the initial situation, other functions take place beginning with absentation (β) followed by a consecutive range of functions and ended with Wedding (W).

Centered on the elaboration above, it can be seen that the type and motif-index are fitting to work individually though often, both are mutually used. Even so, the third index that is based on the function of folktale works in a completely different method. Thus, the subsequent section concisely exposes the necessity to integrate the all three folktale classification systems.

INTEGRATION OF THE THREE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

The type and motif units of folktale are recognized to support one another in classifying folktales (Harun & Jamaludin, 2013). Both units converge on classifying folktale based on the content while the classification that utilizes the function of folktale focuses on the form and the structure. Though the classification based on the content and the structure walk on different paths, it is unearthed that both are indeed mutually supporting each other because the function actually depends on the dramatis personae and not just the actions performed considering the core and the semantic of folktale are ascertained by the performance and the role of dramatis personae (Propp, 1997; Louwerse, 1997). Correspondingly, Levi-Strauss (1997) emphasized that form (function) and content (type and motif) belongs to the same kind because content descends to reality from the structural formation that establishes the content.

In the end, a tale is not a physical entity but a unique depiction of experiences and occurrences. It is a personal and subjective substance which eliminates the idea that the function alone is sufficient as a unit to study the folktale (Georges, 1997). Furthermore, Kuehnel and Lencek (2012) too reinforced that the study of folktale's motif based on the structure without the semantic is just not possible. To that end, this study chosen to integrate the concept of type, motif, and function with regard to the creation of the Malaysian folktale classification system. The Malaysian folktale classification system is the first step in preserving the Malaysian folktales systematically. As elaborated above, generally a folktale classification system is divided into two streams: the content-based and the structure-based. This study opted to combine the two streams in developing the Malaysian folktale classification system and this act will propel the classification system to a new level. Classifying folktale based on either content or structure means the focus falls on only a single facet of folktale. It is admitted that every single domain of knowledge requires classification because such work reveals the path to a deeper study in the domain (Propp, 1997; Thompson, 1951). Therefore, the unification of both facets of folktale in the creation of the Malaysian folktale classification system ensures a robust and well-rounded platform is available for a much deeper study on the Malaysian folktales.

Apart from populating folktales systematically, scientific classification also works as a comparative tool to examine the associations and the levels of literary features and interdependency of folktales from various countries and regions (Thompson, 1951; Uther, 2009). Basically, the content-based classification is a priceless assistive tool in studying folktale but at the same time it is still incapable to offer an objective comparative analysis and the structure-based classification is suggested (Dundes, 2007a, 2007b). From the context of this study, the integration of the two facets of folktale in generating the Malaysian folktale classification system will produce a more complete, and adequate comparative tool. For instance, the folktale of *Bawang Putih Bawang Merah* is owned by both Malaysia and Indonesia (Oentardjo, Bangsa, & Yudani, 2013; Puteh & Said, 2010). In order for one to scientifically compare the folktale, the comparative tool is useful and such tool that represents content and structure of folktale ensures a thorough comparison finding is obtained. The subsequent section explains the method used in the hybrid classification of the Malaysian folktales: the structural-semantic analysis.

STRUCTURAL-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

Investigating folktale concerns the comprehension of the knowledge deeply ingrained in the tales bequeathed for generations and additionally exploiting it for a particular objective developed in a study. This section explicates the method employed to analyze the Malaysian folktales to acquire type, motif, and function which needed to create the Malaysian folktale classification system. The aim of this study is to unite the three units of folktale and considering the fusion signifies two different facets of folktale, it is astute and rational that a distinguished method is applied in the analysis task.

The method chosen is based on an analysis of structural-semantic on narrative folklore (Kerbelyte, 1995, 2011). The analysis was fashioned in an effort to objectively analyze folktales to attain type by analyzing structure and content (semantic) and it has been implemented on the Lithuanian folktales (Cardigos, 2001; Kerbelyte, 1995; Racenaite, 2007). The analysis begins with the establishment of folktale's elementary plot (EP) comprised of two (groups) characters (hero and villain). Afterwards, two central conclusions are initiated. The initial conclusion emphasizes the need to determine similarities between texts on the folktale grounded on its embedded semantic qualities. Entailing is the second conclusion which states that the plot structures organize the core semantic of folktale and additionally, it reveals a connection constructed from the core semantic. Judging on both of the conclusions, it is then decided that the folktales with the structures which bear similarity in its core semantic are classified as the same type (Kerbelyte, 1995).

From the perspective of the current study, the method is relevant to analyze the Malaysian folktales because it stresses on both content (semantic) and structure of folktale. Unfortunately, it does not concur with the AaTh/ATU classification system of folktale regarding its application and paucities in the folktale classification besides the European's (Cardigos, 2001; Racenaite, 2007). Moreover, the 31 functions of folktale by Propp are also not utilized yet the two dramatis personages are used: the hero and the villain. Considering this study engages both classification systems to classify the Malaysian folktales, the mechanics of the method cannot be strictly implemented. Despite, the conclusions that the folktales are classifiable based on content and structure in forming types of classes propel this study to adapt the method's substance bolstered by the folktale classification systems elected. On top of that, the concept is coincidently similar to hierarchical scheme that proposed two stages of generalization in acquiring the type of folktale (Jason, 2000). The first stage is the abstraction of main actions from a group of similar folktales. The following stage is the distribution of the folktales in agreement with the content unit that defines the plots and such act leads to the emergent of type. The types obtained then would create a typology of classes that share a collection of content components as the means to create an indexing scheme towards achieving classification.

With the purpose to fulfill the objectives of the study, the method suggested by Propp to structurally analyze folktale are exploited (Propp, 1998). The method analyzes the folktale's structural resemblance and this corresponds to this study's aim to analyze the Malaysian folktales' structure (Dundes, 1998). On that account, Propp's 31 functions of dramatis personae are adapted in the creation of the scheme to obtain the structure. Despite the fact that the functions are dated, past studies that

investigated on folktale and narrative utilized the functions in the structure analysis of a tale and this apparently exhibits the significance and relevance of the functions as a scheme (Evans & Davies, 2000; Kabaji, 2009; Lwin, 2010; Mori & Hoshino, 2005; Powlison, 1972; Prinsloo, 1992; Yun Gyung, 2007).

Regarding the scheme to extricate motifs from the Malaysian folktales, the method is adapted and directed by the motif-index of folk literature and a manual for compilation and bibliography of indices and indexing (Jason, 2000; Thompson, 1966). The motifs listed in the motif-index work as a key guidance in distinguishing the motifs in the Malaysian folktales while the manual delivers an apparent way to divide the folktales into smaller motifs and assign a tale to a specific type. Apropos of the determination of types of folktale, its construction is guided by the updated and improved type-index, which is the ATU type of international folktales' classification and bibliography (Uther, 2011). As aforementioned, the task to identify the Malaysian folktales precedes the classification process hence, the next section elaborates on the identification method in the collection process of the Malaysian folktales.

METHOD OF FOLKTALE IDENTIFICATION

Preceding the classification, it is important for this study to collect the Malaysian folktales because the folktales are the crux that erects the Malaysian folktale classification system in the first place. To safeguard the collection from contamination of other forms of folklore and to ascertain the presence of elements of culture, two qualifying factors are established to filter the acceptance of folktales as part of the collection: formal features in an operational definition in the study and an ownership of the folktales.

Defining folklore let alone folktale is an intricate matter. Accomplishing agreement on such issue is a work in progress since the terms are lightly used as demand by context (Bascom, 1965; Hunter, 2013; Utley, 1958; Uzun, 2011). Forming a standard operating definition of folktale in this study as part of the qualifying factors is vital for it protects the folktale collection from being contaminated by different forms of folklore namely myth and legend. As disclosed in Table 1, there are five formal features to be fulfilled for a tale to be accepted as folktale. If a folktale does not meet any of the formal features' requirements in its body of narrative, it would be disqualified from being part of the collection. To exemplify by an instance, if a folktale in its body of narrative specifically mentions the date or year of the tale's occurences, it then defeats the requirement of the formal feature of Time thus must be excluded from the collection.

Table 1: The Formal Features of Operational Definition (Bascom, 1965; Thompson, 1951)

Formal Features	Explanation
Belief	The tale is a fiction which means it is not a fact because it is not certain whether it happened or otherwise in the past.
Time	The tale does not indicate an exact timeline of occurrences.
Place	The tale does not indicate any specific location of occurrences or if it does, the

	location is fictional.
Attitude	The tale is a story without any religious, ritual, or holy motivation. It ultimately delivers amusement and worth of moral.
Principal Character	The tale tells a story of adventure and voyage of human or non-human characters both of which able to assume various shapes of appearances.

The second qualifying factor (the ownership) verifies that the folktales that will be collected do contain cultural elements and transcribed from oral storytellers of past generations in literary form (Munan, 2007; Skeat & Gomez, 2012). The sources of folk literatures that will be obtained assist in illuminating that the folktales collected are indeed literature heritage of the past that belong to Malaysia divided according to state or national in general. The ownership chosen in the setting of this study are National, Perlis, Kedah, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Kelantan, Terengganu, Johor, Perak, Melaka, Sarawak, Sabah, and Penang.

Towards determining the ownership of the folktales collected, the substances of the literary sources will be examined and scrutinized to seek any related information indicating that the folktales were transcribed from assortment of Malaysian narrators and owned by Malaysia (state or national). Furthermore, an informal interview will also be conducted in the process of acquiring the sources in order to affirm the sources' cultural value to the study. To achieve what this study aims, it is significant to distinguish folktales that bears cultural value worth to be classified and preserved than contemporary tales of modern storytellers. Therefore, if a folktale collected is vague of its origin or ownership, then clearly it is not fit to be included as part of the collection. These two factors support the identification process in this study and determine the acceptance and the exclusion of the folktales collected in the classification effort. To recap, Figure 1 illustrates the flow of the both methods central in the current study in order to identify and classify the Malaysian folktales towards the generation of the Malaysian folktale classification system.
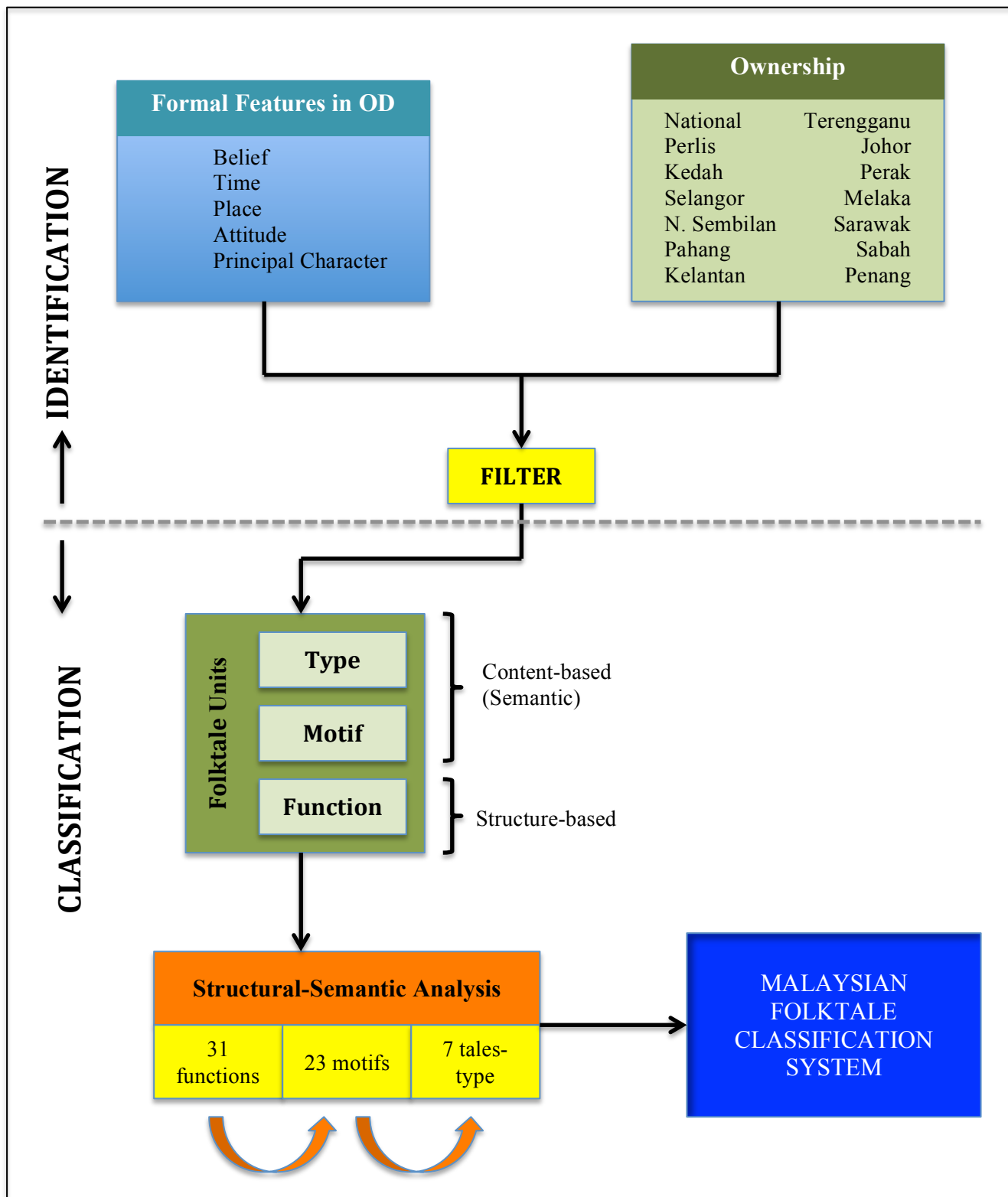
Formal Features in OD

Belief
Time
Place
Attitude
Principal Character

Ownership

National	Terengganu
Perlis	Johor
Kedah	Perak
Selangor	Melaka
N. Sembilan	Sarawak
Pahang	Sabah
Kelantan	Penang

IDENTIFICATION

FILTER

CLASSIFICATION

Folktale Units

Type

Motif

Content-based
(Semantic)

Function

Structure-based

Structural-Semantic Analysis

| 31 functions | 23 motifs | 7 tales-type |

MALAYSIAN FOLKTALE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Figure 1: The Two Stages of Classification Model for Malaysian Folktales

CONCLUSION

The objective of this study is to generate the Malaysian folktale classification system by integrating the three folktale units which respectively, classifies based on type, motif, and function. The content-based classification is conducted through type and motif whilst the structure-based, function. To realize the hybrid folktale classification system, the adapted structural-semantic analysis method is employed. The utilization of both facets of folktale in the classification is expected to yield a holistic classification system. Nevertheless, to classify, it is imperative to identify the collection of Malaysian folktales and the said task precedes the classification activity. The identification task is framed by the two qualifying factors: the formal features in the operational definition initiated in the study and the ownership of the folktales. The factors aid in ensuring the folktales collected are free from contamination of other folklore's forms and tales of cultural value instead of modern version. Being the heart on this paper, these two methods are essential towards generating the Malaysian folktale classification system.

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