Phytosociology and biodiversity patterns of annual wetland communities of Pyriatynskyi National Nature Park (Poltava Oblast, Ukraine)

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Abstract – The results of a comparative structural analysis of the annual wetland herb vegetation syntaxa (class Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea) of Pyriatynskyi National Nature Park (Poltava Oblast, Ukraine) are presented. The systematic, biomorphological, ecological and geographical structures of syntaxa were studied using cluster, discriminant and factor analysis. The principal conformity of the floristic similarity dendrogram and the previously developed classification scheme were analysed. It was revealed that the leading factor of coenosis development is the soil moisture, while most parameters of these ecotopes are constant. The critical differentiation of Nano-Cyperion and Eleocharition ovatae alliances and the legitimacy of the recognition of the Radiolion linoidis alliance and Polygono recti-Juncetum juzepczukii association as separate syntaxa of the main ranks are emphasized.

Keywords: analysis of syntaxa, annual wetland, herb vegetation, Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea vegetation, syntaxonomy

Introduction

One of the problems of modern phytosociology is the harmonization of regional systems of classification and monographic processing of some classes of vegetation. This fully applies to dynamic and compositionally complex communities of the annual wetland herb vegetation belonging to the class Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea Br.-Bl. et Tx. ex Br.-Bl. et al. 1952. Despite more than a century of research in Western and Central Europe (Ellenberg 1982), as well as recent intensive research in Siberia and Eastern Europe (Taran 1993, 1995, 2001, Senchylo and Goncharenko 2008a, b, Shapoval 2006, Golub et al. 2007, Kovalenko 2014), there is considerable confusion in the definition and interpretation of the main associations and alliances of this class. To build a stable hierarchical system of Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea, we propose to use a complex comparative and structural analysis of determined syntaxa as multiparameter systems (Senchylo and Goncharenko 2008a).

Materials and methods

We studied the annual wetland herb vegetation of the Pyriatynskyi National Nature Park (NNP) (Poltava Oblast, Ukraine) in 2010–2012. We have already proposed its taxonomical scheme and described 2 associations as new for science (Kovalenko 2014).

The floristic similarity of the syntaxa determined was counted using the Index of inclusion of Kulchytsky (Semkin and Komarova 1977). Peculiarities of ecological differentiation of communities of the annual wetland herb vegetation were assessed by the method of synphytoindication (Didukh and Pliuta 1994), using the ecological scales of Didukh (2011). The comparative and structural analysis of the syntaxa was carried out according to 5 groups of parameters: taxonomical, biomorphological (the main type of biomorph, the character of seasonal vegetation, the structure of the above-ground and underground shoots, the type of root system, the type of pubescence, the methods of pollination and dissemination), the chorological (type of range, chorian element and activity), ecological and coenotical (tolerance for climatic and edaphic factors, ecological strategy) block and the block of transformation of flora (tolerance for anthropogenic factors, resistance to conditions of urbanization and hemeroby). The basic principles of the allocation of these categories are justified in the works of Novosad and Krytska (2010) and also Senchylo and Goncharenko (2008a).

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In our analysis we used the parameter “purity of syntaxon”, which means the percentage ratio of the diagnostic species to the general list of flora. It indicates a role of the ephemeral annuals in the composition of communities that are critically important for the determination of the syntaxa of the Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea class.

For factor analysis, we used 121 non-discrete parameters of the systematic, biomorphological, ecological-coenotical and geographical structures. This data set includes floristic information and results of ordination by the phytoindication method.

The data obtained were used for cluster, canonical discriminant and factor analysis in the Statistica 7.0 program (StatSoft).

## Results

Annual wetland communities of Pyriatynskyi National Nature Park are presented by 1 order, 4 alliances and 7 associations:

| Cl. | Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea Br.-Bl. et Tx. ex Br.-Bl. et al. 1952 |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Ord. | Nano-Cyperetalia Klika 1935 |
| All. 1. | Nano-Cyperion flavescentis Koch ex Libbert 1932 |
| Ass. 1. | Cyperetum flavescentis Koch ex Aichinger 1933 |
| 2. | Junctetum bufonii Fedóľdy 1942 |
| All. 2. | Elerocharition ovatae Philippí 1968 |
| Ass. 3. | Cyperetum micheliani Horvatić 1931 |
| 4. | Eleocharito acicularis–Limoselletum aquaticae Wendelberger-Zelinka 1952 |
| All. 3. | Radiolion linoidis Pietsch 1973 |
| Ass. 5. | Psammophilieo–Juncetum nastanthi Kovalenko 2014 |
| All. 4. | Verbenion supinæ Slavnič 1951 |
| Ass. 6. | Polygono recti–Juncetum juzepczukii Kovalenko 2014 |
| 7. | Eleocharito acicularis–Limoselletum aquaticae Golub et al. 2007 |

The analysis of the floristic similarity of syntaxa (Online Suppl. Tab. 1) with subsequent clustering is followed by dendrogram (Fig. 1). The branching of trees did not change significantly depending on the chosen binding parameters.

The first clade was formed by associations of Verbenion supinæ and Radiolion linoidis alliances. The associations of Verbenion supinæ are the most similar to each other by floristic criteria. Psammophilieo–Juncetum nastanthi association is well-separated from this alliance. The second cluster of the dendrogram was formed by associations belonging to two alliances (Nano-Cyperion flavescentis and Eleocharition ovatae).

The basic coenofloristic proportions are the parameter that shows the systematic richness of the syntaxa (number of genera and species per one family). This parameter is similar for the determined syntaxa of Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea (Tab. 1).

| Syntaxon | Basic proportions | Generic coefficient | Magnoliopsida to Liliopsida ratio | Species richness coenoses | «Purity syntaxon» (%) |
|----------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Cyperetum flavescentis | 1 : 1.47 : 1.73 | 1.18 | 2 | 11.08±3 | 10; 38.46 |
| Junctetum bufonii | 1 : 1.27 : 1.64 | 1.29 | 2.6 | 6.64±3 | 13; 72.22 |
| Cyperetum micheliani | 1 : 1.38 : 1.75 | 1.27 | 3.67 | 10.64±7.81 | 21; 75 |
| Eleocharito-Limoselletum | 1 : 1.76 : 2.44 | 1.39 | 2.42 | 7.55±5.45 | 16; 26.23 |
| Psammophilieo–Juncetum | 1 : 1.08 : 1.33 | 1.23 | 2.2 | 9.26±3.74 | 12; 75 |
| Polygono-Juncetum | 1 : 2.4 : 3.2 | 1.33 | 3.2 | 9±5 | 13; 40.63 |
| Eleocharidetum suaveolentis | 1 : 1.62 : 1.77 | 1.1 | 3 | 8.46±2.54 | 17; 73.91 |
| Nano-Cyperion | 1 : 1.39 : 1.94 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 8.96±4.04 | 17; 48.57 |
| Eleocharitionovatae | 1 : 1.71 : 2.54 | 1.48 | 2.63 | 7.88±7.62 | 23; 32.39 |
| Radiolion linoidis | 1 : 1.08 : 1.33 | 1.23 | 2.2 | 9.26±3.74 | 12; 75 |
| Verbenion supinæ | 1 : 2.38 : 2.93 | 1.33 | 2.73 | 9.12±3.78 | 18; 43.9 |
| Nano-Cyperetalia and Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea | 1 : 2.41 : 3.89 | 1.62 | 1.94 | 8.74±8.63 | 41; 39.05 |
The percentage ratio of diagnostic species to the general list of flora (“purity of syntaxon”) negatively correlates with the duration of vegetation of communities, reaching the minimum values for the most trivial association of Eleocharito-Limoselletum (On-line Suppl. Fig. 1).

The genus Juncus dominates in the annual wetland herb vegetation of Pyriatynskyi NNP (6 species, 5.7%). This also corresponds to the phytocoenotic role of its representatives in characteristic coenoses. The Carex genus in the communities studied is represented by 5 species (4.77%), but with no typical ephemerals among them. The third position is occupied by the temperate-tropical Persicaria genus (4, 3.81%), whose representatives are particularly active in the coenoses of the Eleocharition ovatae alliance. Also, four species in the phytocoenoses of the annual wetland herb vegetation belong to the Polygonum genus, which has the highest constancy in the Verbenon supinae alliance.

Among the morphological traits (Tab. 2) of the floristic composition of the class Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea, monocious plants (including facultative ones) take the first place, slightly ahead of the relative number of herbaceous perennial plants. An almost equal ratio of these two life forms is characteristic for the communities Cyperetum flavescentis and Eleocharito-Limoselletum, and also in general for the unions Nano-Cyperon and Eleocharion ovatae, while the remaining syntaxa have a considerable dominance of annuals. Perennial plants, as a rule, do not undergo a full cycle of development and are represented mainly by pregenerative age states in communities of the annual wetland herb vegetation.

According to the type of above-ground shoots, the main group is composed of erosulate plants; only in the association Cyperetum flavescentis do semirosette forms have the main position. A distinctive feature of the communities Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea is the high share of species with an ephemeral type of vegetation. With decreasing humidity of specific habitats, the relative participation of summer-green plants increases, reaching the maximum values in the communities of the Verbenon supinae. The plants with fibrous root systems are more common in mesohygrophytic conditions, whereas with increasing xerophyticity the specific gravity of the tap root species increases. In the type of underground shoots, plants without rhizomes predominate, although the involvement of the short rhizome species is noticeable in the composition of the vegetative cover of hygrophytic and mesophytic alliances of Nano-Cyperion, Eleocharion ovatae and Radiolion linoidis.

Most annual wetland herbs are insect-pollinated or wind-pollinated plants (Fig. 2a), however, self-pollination has a significant part in the phytocoenosis of the class. The specific gravity of the latter increases in the most extreme habitats typical of the associations Juncetum bufonii and Psammophijiello-Juncetum.

The leading ways of diaspors dispersal are anemochory, barochory, zoochory (mainly epizoochory) and hydrochory (Fig. 2b). The ratio of representatives of these dissemination strategies does not change significantly in each individual syntaxon.

Seasonal fluctuations of moisture conditions from hygrophilic to xeromorphophilic are reflected in the distribution of species according to the degree of pubescence (Fig. 2c). In all coenoses, the group of non-pubescent plants is dominant, and in communities with the shortest period of flooding (Radiolion linoidis and Verbenon supinae), the proportion of heavily pubescent species is increased, while the prolonged phase of moistening promotes the groups of medium-inferior species.

Tab. 2. Morphological traits structure of the annual wetland herb vegetation syntaxa of Pyriatynskyi National Nature Park.

| Syntaxon                        | Aboveground shoots (%) | Root system (%) | Phenological groups (%) | Underground shoots (%) |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
|                                | Annuals | Perennials | Trees | Rosette | Semirotte | Erythale | Taproot | Fibrous | Ephemeral | Summer-green | Summer-winter-green | Without rhizome | Long rhizome | Short rhizome | Caudex |
|--------------------------------|---------|------------|-------|---------|-----------|----------|---------|---------|-----------|--------------|------------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|--------|
| Cyperetum flavescentis         | 50.0    | 50.0       | 0.0   | 11.5    | 53.9      | 34.6     | 38.5    | 61.5    | 62.3      | 29.2         | 38.5             | 50.0           | 19.2        | 23.1        | 7.7    |
| Juncetum bufonii               | 77.8    | 22.2       | 0.0   | 16.7    | 38.9      | 44.4     | 66.7    | 33.3    | 66.7      | 22.2         | 11.1             | 72.2           | 0.0         | 22.2        | 5.6    |
| Cyperetum micheliani           | 78.6    | 21.4       | 0.0   | 7.1     | 32.1      | 60.8     | 60.7    | 39.3    | 71.4      | 21.4         | 7.1              | 78.5            | 3.6         | 14.3        | 3.6    |
| Eleocharito-Limoselletum       | 55.7    | 42.7       | 1.6   | 9.8     | 39.4      | 50.8     | 50.0    | 50.0    | 31.1      | 42.7         | 26.2             | 47.6           | 18.0        | 24.6        | 9.8    |
| Psammophijiello-Juncetum       | 75.0    | 25.0       | 0.0   | 18.8    | 25.0      | 56.2     | 50.0    | 50.0    | 43.8      | 37.5         | 18.7             | 75.0           | 0.0         | 25.0        | 0.0    |
| Polygono-Juncetum              | 71.8    | 21.9       | 6.3   | 0.0     | 58.5      | 41.5     | 53.1    | 46.9    | 40.6      | 501          | 9.3              | 78.1            | 3.1         | 9.4         | 9.4    |
| Eringrostidetum suaveolentis    | 87.0    | 8.7        | 4.3   | 0.0     | 43.5      | 56.5     | 60.9    | 39.1    | 56.5      | 34.8         | 8.7              | 91.4            | 4.3         | 4.4         | 4.0    |
| Nano-Cyperon                   | 54.3    | 45.7       | 0.0   | 11.4    | 48.6      | 40.0     | 48.6    | 51.4    | 42.9      | 25.7         | 31.4             | 54.2           | 14.3        | 22.9        | 8.6    |
| Eleocharion ovatae             | 51.4    | 47.1       | 1.5   | 58.6    | 35.7      | 45.7     | 50.0    | 50.0    | 30.0      | 45.7         | 24.3             | 52.8           | 15.7        | 22.9        | 8.6    |
| Radiolion linoidis             | 75.0    | 25.0       | 0.0   | 18.8    | 25.0      | 56.2     | 50.0    | 50.0    | 43.7      | 37.5         | 18.8             | 75.0           | 0.0         | 25.0        | 0.0    |
| Verbenon supinae                | 77.8    | 17.8       | 4.4   | 0.0     | 44.5      | 55.5     | 66.7    | 33.3    | 37.8      | 48.9         | 13.3             | 82.2           | 4.4         | 6.7         | 6.7    |

Nano-Cyperetalia and Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea 55.8 42.3 1.9 6.7 48.2 45.1 51.0 49.0 29.8 26.0 44.2 58.7 14.4 20.2 6.7
Soil humidity has the leading value among factors characterizing edaphic conditions (Didukh 2011). According to it, the highest range of amplitude has *Eleocharito acicularis–Limoselletum aquaticae*. Communities of these associations are common for the national park and forms in habitats with different regimes of humidity. Associations *Cyperetum flavescentis*, *Juncetum bufonii* and *Cyperetum micheliani* have similar values of these factors. The vegetation of the alliances *Eragrostidetum suaveolentis* and *Verbenion supinae* are presented on the most xeric soils. The communities of *Eragrostidetum suaveolentis* are clearly different from *Polygono-Juncetum* plants.

The variability of moisture is very important factor for annual wetland vegetation ephemeretum is manifested in the significant representation in the general list of flora of euhemerobes (27; 25.96%) and mesohemerobes (40; 38.46%). Euhemerobes are particularly active in the coenoses of the association *Eragrostidetum suaveolentis*, but in more humid conditions they are rare.

According to the thermal climate and humidity, all of the associations demonstrated no significant value of variation (Figs. 4b, c). Other climate parameters are the source of differentiation of *Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea* syntaxa. In *Juncetum bufonii* and associations of *Radiolion* and *Verbenion* subcontinental species prevail. In the other syntaxa, we determined the dominance of semi-oceanic elements (Fig. 4d).

The regimes of light in characteristic habitats of the annual wetland vegetation are similar. Most syntaxa have strict ranges of amplitude by this parameter. Only communities of *Polygono-Juncetum* have lower value of light due their development in partly woody areas (Fig. 4f).

The canonical discriminant analysis showed a clear dispersion of the *Cyperetum flavescentis*, *Cyperetum micheliani*, *Eleocharito-Limoselletum* and *Eragrostidetum* associations (Fig. 5). The remaining associations from three different alliances demonstrated a significant overlap in the amplitudes of the whole set of ecological parameters studied, as already mentioned above.

The chorological core of the class in the national park is widespread-rising progressive species with Holarctic (22; 31.73%), cosmopolitan (22, 21.15%) and Palaearctic (12, 11.53%) types of areas. The proportion of geographic elements has a similarity in all syntaxa, with the exception of the *Verebenion*. In this alliance, cosmopolitan species dominate.

Anthropogenic transformation of communities of the annual wetland vegetation ephemeretum is manifested in the significant representation in the general list of flora of euhemerobes (27; 25.96%) and mesohemerobes (40; 38.46%). Euhemerobes are particularly active in the coenoses of the association *Eragrostidetum suaveolentis*, but in more humid conditions they are rare.
The ratio of urbanophiles, urbanoneutral and urbanophobic species is correlated with the previous indicator. Among the apophytes, the prevalent hemiapophytes (29; 54.71%), euapophytes and random apophytes in all syntaxa are represented uniformly.

The lowest percentage of alien species was noted for the alliances of Nano-Cyperion and Radiolithion lioinoidis (5.50% and 6.25% respectively), while similar indicators for the alliances Eleocharition ovatae (12.86%) and Verbenion supinae (21.95%) are significantly higher. The absolute majority of alien species are coenophytes (10, 66.67%) predominantly of North American origin (8, 53.33%).

The factor analysis by the principal components method (Fig. 6) showed, on one hand, a significant affinity for the alliances Cyperetum micheliani and Juncetum bufonii, which are discrete in floral, physiognomic and ecologi-
cal relationships while on the other hand it clearly delineated the associations of the Verbenion supinae association, which were close by the same criteria.

**Discussion**

Results of cluster analysis of syntaxa correspond strongly to the obtained scheme of classification. However, the association Juncetum bufonii did not unite with the Cyperetum flavescentis, as might be expected according to the syntaxonomic position. Juncetum bufonii has a high level of floristic similarity with associations of the Eleocharition ovatae alliance. On one hand, this result confirms the need for the recognition of the separate alliance Juncion bufonii Philippi 1968 or, by contrast, a wider understanding of the Nano-Cyperion alliance, as suggested by a number of authors (Borhidi 2003, Sanda et al. 2008), but without inclusion in its communities of Radiolion linoidis. In our opinion, this discrepancy between the dendrogram and the proposed syntaxonomic scheme is due to the regional difference of Juncetum bufonii.

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**Fig. 4.** Box-whisker plot for distribution of associations of the class Isoëto-Nano-Juncetalia by: a) aeration (Ae); b) thermal climate (Tm); c) humidity (Om); d) continental climate (Kn); e) cryoclimate (Cr); f) light in community (Lc). 1 – Cyperetum flavescentis; 2 – Juncetum bufonii; 3 – Cyperetum micheliani; 4 – Eleocharitum acicularis–Limoselletum aquaticae; 5 – Psammophiliello–Juncetum nastanthi; 6 – Polygono recti–Juncetum juzepczukii; 7 – Eragrostidetum suaveolentis. Box-whisker plot: centre line denotes median value, the box encloses the inner two quartiles (25th and 75th percentile), and the whiskers display the 10th and 90th percentile.
communities with their main distribution area in the north, as well as their spatio-functional contacts with the phytocoenoses of the *Eleocharion ovatae* alliance. Coenofloristic proportion diagnoses a rather low overall level of species diversity, which is due to the unique ecological parameters of the characteristic communities of the class. Due to the increase of the moisture gradient, the coenotic role and representation of monocots in the communities also increase. The spectrum of the leading families of the annual wetland herb vegetation differs significantly from analogous relationships for other types of vegetation. In addition, if the dominance of the representatives of *Asteraceae* and *Poaceae* is the background for most of the coenofloras of the Holarctic temperate zone, and the increasing role of *Cyperaceae* is typical for communities of *Phragmiti-Magno-Caricetea* and *Scheuchzerio-Caricetea nigrae* classes, then the high positions of *Polygonaceae* and *Juncaceae* are a distinctive feature for *Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea*.

The ecological analysis of *Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea* vegetation showed the clearest differentiation of associations according to the soil moisture factor. The *Nano-Cyperion* alliance is traditionally considered the most hygrophytic. However, we find communities of *Cyperetum michelianii* and *Eleocharito-Limoselletum* associations in conditions with higher soil moisture. The answer to whether this is a regional specificity, or yet more evidence in favour of an expanded understanding of the *Nano-Cyperion* will be given by detailed comparative studies of the ecological amplitude of the union throughout the range. According to substrate chemistry, most associations did not show significant differences. In the general background, only the *Cyperetum flavescents* association, genetically linked to weakly saline ecotopes, stands out. Concerning the factors of thermo-regime and continentality, the association *Eragrostidetum suaveolentis*, described from the Volga-Akatubinsk annual wetland herb vegetation, is clearly differentiated, and found its western boundary of distribution here.

The coenotic differentiation of the syntaxa of annual wetland vegetation is formed mainly due to the moisture factor against the background of the constancy of the edaphic and climatic conditions of the habitats. The communities of class *Isoëto-Nano-Juncetea* consist predominantly of species that have a wide eco-coenotic amplitude (generalists and semi-generalists according to Novosad and Krytska (2010)). The main fragments of their coenotic distribution are in the space of classes *Phragmiti-Magno-Caricetea, Molinio-Arrhenetereetea* and *Scorzonero-Juncetea*. It should also be noted that in communities of the annual wetland vegetation, such species are represented either by special forms or by the pregenerative age stages. The role of species with narrow coenotic amplitude (specialists and semi-specialists) increases in the spatially restricted communities of the alliances *Nano-Cyperion* and *Verbenion*. The low value of total coverage and the mo-
Diagnostic species, for example, have a high coenotic value and are therefore considered as confirms the vulnerability of the annual wetland community (Brullo and Minisalle 1998, Šumberová 2011). This analysis confirms the vulnerability of the annual wetland communities to the factor of human pressure, as well as the abundant evidence of the radical transformation and elimination of Isoëto-Nano-Jungetea phytocoenoses in Western and Central Europe (Korneck 1960, Phillipi 1968, Pietsch 1973, Popiella 1996, Šumberová 2011). The results of factor analysis are additionally against synonymization of Polygono-Jungetum with Eragrostidetum suaveolentis as some authors proposed (Dubyna et al. 2016). The problem of determining the ceonoses of Nano-Cyperion, Radiolion and Eleocharition is obvious, at least at the regional level. The peculiarity of the association Eleocharito-Limoselletum is explained by the largest representation, and as a consequence, by the diversity of its communities on the territory of Priyatynskyi NNP.

Conclusions

Analysis of the syntaxa of the annual wetlands vegetation as multiparameter systems revealed a complex picture of their differentiation in a system of floral, ecological and geographic coordinates. The dendrogram of the floristic similarity of phytocoenoses largely coincides with the early classification of vegetation of the class Isoëto-Nano-Jungetea developed for Pyriyatynskyi NNP. The systematic and bio-morphological structure of the determined syntaxa is quite original due to the ecological and phenological uniqueness of the studied communities. According to the data of the synphytoidication, the leading factors of the variety of annual wetland communities are the soil, humidity and to a lesser extent, salt regime against the background of the constancy of the remaining ecological parameters. The geographic structure of the lower-level syntaxa is quite conservative and coincides with that for the class. Anthropogenic pressure on the communities of Isoëto-Nano-Jungetea cases increasing role of anthropophilic elements in the composition of the vegetation cover. As a consequence, the development of special measures for the protection of this unique type of vegetation is necessary. A complex comparative study of Isoëto-Nano-Jungetea syntaxa analysis pointed on one hand to the critical nature of the distinction between the Nano-Cyperion and Eleocharion ovatae alliances and on the other hand confirmed the acceptability of the Radiolion linoidis as a separate syntaxon, and the legitimacy of distinguishing associations Eragrostidetum suaveolentis and Polygono-Jungetum.

In view of the above, we think that a large-scale study of the syntaxa of the annual wetland vegetation allows us to make a stable system of the Isoëto-Nano-Jungetea class and sheds light on many theoretical and practical problems in the classification of vegetation.

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Radiolion linoidis as a separate syntaxon, and the legitimacy of distinguishing associations Eragrostidetum suaveolentis and Polygono-Jungetum.

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