

## Temporal Formulas in Serbian Oral Epic Songs

**Abstract:** This paper seeks to present time as one of the most important parameters in epic songs, shown in the example of temporal formulas. Time also represents the principle of organising section sequences in the song (linear, successive and chronological, or discontinuous and retrospective). The paper further examines the temporal formulas in a broad and a narrow sense, with regard to whether the temporal markers refer to the narrative shifts in the development of the story, or to some archaic meanings related to expressions which mark the determinants of real time (year and its parts, days of the week, time of the day, etc.).

**Keywords:** formula, time, epic song, narration, time of day, days of the week, parts of the year

It is impossible to present the poetics of any artifact of oral tradition without an insight into its fund – folk tradition, and the model of magical and mythical thinking as its base.<sup>1</sup> Part of the tradition is the belief in the magical power of words, which in people’s everyday life resulted in a collection of taboo words (people avoided to name demonic animals and beings directly so as not to call forth evil). On the other hand, there was a belief that words can have a magic influence on certain events in life, i.e. on the course of destiny (spell casting, charm, curse/blessing), on the outcome of illness (incantation), and the like. The archaic root of this complex belief lies in the conviction of traditional man that the word has a great (even demiurgic) power.<sup>2</sup>

The creation of the world was usually the subject of archaic religious epics (cf. the *Enuma Elish*), and it was reactualized by the ritual performance of a poem (at the beginning of the cycle, every new year). Therefore, in their search for the origins of oral epic songs, some scholars (Braun, Schein, Lord, etc.) have found that at first they had magical and ritual purpose “before they became heroic” (Lord 1990 1, 124). Leaving aside these more or less

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<sup>1</sup> In a way, the formula is a mediator between “text” and tradition, thus becoming a kind of hermeneutic key: “традиция в тексте ставит своего рода индексы (формулы), которые не требуют дальнейшего словесного распространения, они устремлены ‘за текст’ к ‘преданию’” (Mal’tsev 1989, 153). Of course, the formula per se functions as a separate text, i.e. a text within the text (see Mal’tsev 1989, 65–67).

<sup>2</sup> An example, if somewhat poetic, of this belief can be found in the famous biblical verse (John 1:1): “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

plausible speculations, one can notice, above all, that they place the emphasis on the creative function of words (just as traditional man tried to recreate the world with words). Therefore, the most promising direction of this research is to look at how the songs were created. The structuring of the literary world inspired by the so-called objective reality is primarily based on certain similarities in terms of shaping space and time.<sup>3</sup> These similarities led, in the mythical magical way of thinking, to replication of certain analogies from the act of cosmogony to the act of oral verse-making.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the very singing of sacred texts was sacred in character. As far as the oral epic song is concerned, faint traces of these connections can be found in the actualization of the magical function of words when addressing gods, giving blessings to the living and praying for the dead in the initial and final position in the song.<sup>5</sup> For this purpose, the singer's repertoire contained some of the traditionally established "stereotyped beginnings and endings", "patterns", or formulas.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> This refers to the space-time continuum and, in a song, to space and time as "basic parameters of situationality" (Detelić 1996, 40).

<sup>4</sup> The analogy between myth and song is not only genetic but also generic – a mythical content assumes its solid form, and the form, diachronically, assumes a different sense and "breeds" new senses (cf. Mal'tsev 1989, 19–20). Or, according to N. Petković (2006, 20), it becomes sense-making form.

<sup>5</sup> Although too cautiously, M. Kleut (1991, 269–270) expressed a similar clue: "There predominate expressions of good wishes in the form of a blessing, praise, or prayer; there is a high frequency of such words as hale/ health, merry/mirth, brother/brothers/sworn brother, group/company, glory/honour, integrity, poem, glass, and God – all of which signify positive life principles. Stating that the poem is being recited in someone's honour, or as a blessing to the living and the dead, or as a praise, has particular implications for the poem and its performance: the poem is recited with honourable intentions. The highly formulaic nature of this poetic device indicates that it too, like others, is traditional, even in the absence of a traditional plot." She perceives the traditionalism of the poetic means even if it is a part of a non-traditional creation. But also, it seems reasonable to argue that the frequent invocation of God, blessings to those who are present and prayers for the dead, based on the magical function of words, have very archaic origins, before these formulas ossified into routine beginnings/ends of the songs.

<sup>6</sup> In this paper, the term formula is used in its broadest conceptual meaning – as "a kind of creative dynamic pattern used for oral improvisation" (NK 1984, s.v. "formula"). It represents a concrete realization of formulaity – oral improvisation of inherent quality to create formulas (NK 1984, s.v. "formulativnost"; Detelić 1996, 9), and dynamic "metrical syntactic pattern", i.e. "firm linguistic fixations [...] which present the situations or details previously repeated in many songs" (Schmaus 1971, 155). This property is also expressed both at micro (permanent epithet, figure of speech, type character, description, action, etc.) and at macro level (plot, composition, "theme pattern" or action schema ...), or "covers the situations from the permanent epithets to stable plots" (Mal'tsev 1989,

The beginnings and the endings of songs, as meeting points of “text” and context, are under greatest pressure, so oral improvisation assigned special meanings to their formulation. Commencement and completion of singing, as an act of creating a verbal world out of communication noise (analogue to chaos), and concluding/finishing of that act, had to overcome the tension involved in crossing the border between different realities, by “separation from the noise, and moving in and out of the fictional world and vice versa” (Detelić 1996, 11, c; Petković 2006, 24–25). Hence the need for “strong” boundaries between the literary world and the empirical reality of the singer and the audience.<sup>7</sup> One of the proven ways of crossing the boundary was dislocation, or a time jump from the performer’s time to narrative time through general initial and final formulas.<sup>8</sup> Because these (marginal) positions endure “higher pressure than normal”, over time they “tend to become ossified, to assume a fixed, unchangeable and therefore easily recognizable and highly communicative form” (Detelić 1996, 11).

Regarding the character and meaning of these formulas, M. Detelić classified them as “*general formulas*, which actually form part of the oral communicative act, and so their relationship with the song is weak and formal; and as *particular ones*, which are so strongly connected to the song that they must be considered as parts of it and as elements of its internal structure” (ibid. 23, emphasis mine). This differentiation is understandable regarding the context of performance. On the one hand, general formulas compass the performance (i.e. the beginning and the end of singing) and, on the other hand, they demarcate two times and two worlds “striving for

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11 – translation mine). In other words, the formulas from the micro level (lower level of hierarchy) are included in the formulas of higher level (see Mal’tsev 1989, 129–131).

<sup>7</sup> Then again, this does not mean that the boundary is completely rigid. Moreover, one of the most common ways of establishing relations with the past is contrasting – forming temporal binary oppositions *then : now* (see Kleut 1991, 268; Detelić 1996, 170–173; Samardžija 2000, 20–21), by measuring time from a given event until the time of performance (SANU IV, 48), by dating events – *Na iljadu i osme stotine/ Četrdeset i treće godine* [In eighteen hundred / And forty-three] (Vuk VIII, 60), and the like.

<sup>8</sup> The definition of this type of formulas is derived on the basis of their position in the text. In addition to this criterion, the given formulas can be further distinguished on the basis of their function. Thus, M. Detelić proposed a division into two groups. *General (external)* have a metatextual function (Detelić 1996, 30). If the meaning of “code signal” is predominant (ibid., 13), for example: *Stan’te, bračo, da vi čudo kažem* [I will tell you a marvel, brethren] (Vuk II, 12); *Đe sjedimo da se veselimo/ Da malene pjesne popjevamo...* [To sit down and be merry/ To sing our small songs] (SANU II, 101), or the focus on the contact established between the performer (sender) and the audience (recipients), this function could be marked with Jakobson’s term *phatic function* (see Jakobson 1966, 289–296).

fabula completeness” while “setting an inner time entirely subordinated to the story” (Lešić 2010, 361).<sup>9</sup>

By contrasting the assumed “epic” past and the present performance (*then : now*), the oral tradition found a suitable means, through general temporal formulas,<sup>10</sup> to cross the boundary between the time of performance and the narrative time of the “text”.<sup>11</sup> This correlation formula, therefore, is used both in older cycles (in bugarštica songs): *Ovo mi je tada bilo, a sada se spominuje[m]* [It happened to me then, now it is just being told] (Bogišić, 7, 24; see also 11, 64), and in decasyllabic epic poetry (*Tada bilo, sad se [s] pominjalo* [That was then, now it is just being told]), with minor or major modifications within *the variational fields* (see Maľtsev 1989, 53) of the formula (cf. Pantić 2002, 200; Bogišić, 93; Vuk II, 27; Vuk III, 12; Vuk IV, 6, 25, 53; Vuk VI, 36, 55, 75; Vuk VII, 30, 55; Vuk VIII, 26, 40, 44, 70; Vuk IX, 13; SANU III, 35 SANU III, 47; SANU IV, 5 etc.). To denote the action whose consequences are still present, the final formula of temporal dislocation is used: *Kako tade tako i danaske* [As it was then, so it is today] (see Vuk II, 1, 89; Vuk III, 12; Vuk IV, 42 etc.), and it can be found at the beginning and at the end of the final block of formulas.

The general formula also often includes the confrontation between the first and the third person – I (Bogišić, 7, 11, 50, 77; Vuk III, 49; Vuk VI, 11, 49, 80; Vuk VII, 1, 15, 21, 35; Vuk VIII, 8, 25, 36; Vuk IX, 23; SANU II, 44, 52, 59, 62, 63, 102, 103, 105; SANU III, 19, 27, 35, 50, 59; SANU IV, 26, 37, 38) or *we* (Pantić 2002, 55, 58; Vuk II, 12, 95; Vuk III, 66, 71, 72; Vuk VI, 11, 36, 49, 70, 76, 80; Vuk VII, 1, 15, 57; Vuk VIII, 8, 25, 26, 44, 51; Vuk IX, 32; SANU II, 101, 104; SANU III, 9, 12, 16, 22, 24, 35, 47; SANU IV, 33, 40) and *he* or *they*: e.g. *Zdravo ošli, vesela im majka, / Njima majka, a mene družina* [In health they left, may their mother be merry, their mother for them, and my company for me] (Vuk III, 49).<sup>12</sup> Obviously, the

<sup>9</sup> “As if the epic singer thus confronts the constant and unstoppable flow of historical time: he seizes the events worth remembering and gives them importance by completing them into a single story.” (Lešić 2010, 361).

<sup>10</sup> The term used by M. Detelić (see Detelić 1996). This type of formulas where “the circumstances (the context of an event) are more important than the event itself (the text)”, is defined by S. Samardžija (2000, 24) as an *external comment*.

<sup>11</sup> As noted by N. Petković (2006, 24), “the role of the shifter at the beginning of a narrative text will be to move us to another level of description”. In correlation to that “when the end of a literary text should be marked, the shifter appears again. But its role is reversed: to take us back to the regular level of description” (ibid. 25). According to N. Petković, the “moments that are usually used in shifting include: *time, space, character and extraneous speech*” (ibid. 24). In this study *time* will have the main importance.

<sup>12</sup> Both actions in these formulas include “intersection of two narrative levels”, where “one refers to the fictitious world (then and there, a fictional event being narrated),

first person belongs to the community in which the given variant is derived from the present, and the third person refers to the time of the narrative, to the time perspective of the participants in the event described in the song.<sup>13</sup> This time confrontation between the present and the past is used also in the final general formula *the dead : the living*; e.g. *Bog mu dao u raj u naselje, / Nama, braćo, zdravlje i veselje* [May God give him paradise, / to us, brothers, health and mirth] (Vuk III, 15).<sup>14</sup>

The special initial temporal formula *otkako/otkada je svijet postanuo/ nastanuo (nije ljepši cvijet procvatio)* [since the world was created, (a more beautiful flower has never bloomed)] (cf. Vuk II, 40; Vuk III, 22, 71, 72, 82; Vuk IV, 5, 25, 40, 43, 64; Vuk VI, 4, 40, 43, 64; Vuk VII, 15, 17, 20, 21, 22; SANU III, 16, 67) had a similar demarcation function, by marking (only) the temporal dimension of the story.<sup>15</sup> This formula, which can be found especially in plots dealing with a hero's marriage, usually at the beginning, accentuates the excellence of the bride's beauty. By describing and not showing it, the beauty is introduced into the fictitious world – in the “present” of the characters, and it also becomes temporally closer to the audience, as if it were there, in front of them – *što je danas, na ovu godinu* [as it is today, in this year] (Vuk III, 71, 72).<sup>16</sup>

General final formula has the opposite course, with a function dissociated from the presented events – *to je bilo kada se činilo* [it was then that it happened ]<sup>17</sup> (Vuk II, 27, 95; Vuk III, 81; Vuk IV, 76; Vuk VI, 76; Vuk VII, 2, 48, 50; Vuk VIII, 54; SANU II, 8, 16, 19, 23, 41, 45, 47, 69, 91, 102;

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while the second arises from the nature of verbal communication and involves the act of verse-making (here and now, the moment when the text is created-accepted)” (Samardžija 2000, 20–21).

<sup>13</sup> “Indeed, the events in the story that make the plot stand *against* the person who talks about them because they already belong to the past. Even when they are clearly presented, the fabled events reflect the spatial and temporal distance from the narrator's time and place. The fabled events enter the story with their logical connections that the narrator cannot ignore. They have their own timeline which differentiate them from the time of storytelling. They, after all, not only stand *against* the narrator, but also against his listeners, like another world worth talking about and listening about” (Lešić 2010, 353).

<sup>14</sup> For a list of variations of this formula, see Detelić 1996, 173–174.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Detelić 1996, 147.

<sup>16</sup> Such present tense used in the (relative) sense becomes the so-called tabular present, which makes that “things long gone and therefore with temporal and spatial distance, stand before the listeners' eyes as a different, wonderful and larger world. No matter how miraculous and unusual, the event in the epic song becomes possible, because the magic of storytelling brings it before the admiring eyes of the listeners.” (Lešić 2010, 363).

<sup>17</sup> The given list includes variant forms of this formula.

SANU III, 2, 4, 8, 9, 15, 23, 28, 29, 36, 38, 39, 47, 48, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65; SANU IV, 4, 5, 14, 15, 18, 21, 23, 33, 41; Milutinović 1990, 8, 9, 30, 101, 155, 166, 170).<sup>18</sup> Used at the end of the text, this temporal formula serves as its constituent boundary – it closes the narration and moves the listeners out of the text, returning them to the time of performance.<sup>19</sup>

These formulaic beginnings/endings actually represent “canonized frameworks” which “extract a literary text from the initial fluctuality and make it a separate textual entity” (Petković 2006, 26). However, the making of clichés and expression of formulaity does not stop there. Descriptions of characters, their actions, and plots may also become clichés, but “the imaginable constructive text boundaries at various levels are becoming clichés most easily” (ibid.). In the narrative structure of the plot, shifts in the development of the story are, according to the habits of performing, most easily denoted by time shifts – i.e. time clauses.

Used at the beginning of the song – the temporal formula (*Kad se ženi* [+ character’s name] [When (character’s name) married],<sup>20</sup> *Kad je bila na Kosovu vojska* [When the army was in Kosovo] – Vuk VI, 15;<sup>21</sup> *Sinoć paša pade na Grahovo* [Last night pasha appeared in Grahovo] – Pantić 2002, 203) occurs, as already noted, as a shifter<sup>22</sup> (to the fictitious world) “with separate signal when moving from the ordinary to the additionally organized text” (Petković 2006, 23).<sup>23</sup> Some of these formulas have more

<sup>18</sup> A more complete list of variants of this formula, including collections that have not been taken into consideration here, is given by M. Detelić (see Detelić 1996, 167–168).

<sup>19</sup> Variants of the formula involving meanings other than temporal, such as the relation to the truth of the narrative, etc. will not be considered on this occasion (for more about this, see Detelić 1996, 28).

<sup>20</sup> See Detelić 1996, 149.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 148–149.

<sup>22</sup> See Petković 2006, 23–26.

<sup>23</sup> Special initial temporal formulas behave differently with regard to time determination. They may be based on the historical chronology of the events described in the song – *Na hiljadu i osme stotine, / I trideset i osme godine* [In the year eighteen hundred, / and thirty-eight] (Vuk VIII, 61), or they accept the time dimension of the described event as a (default) convention – *Kad Lazaru odsekoše glavu* [When they cut off Prince Lazar’s head] (Vuk II, 53 – it is assumed that it took place at the Battle of Kosovo, in 1389). Time information can also be presumed – *Prošetala Đurđeva Jerina* [Jerina, the wife of George, took a walk] (Vuk II, 80); *Kad su mi se d’jelila dva Jakšića mila brata* [When the two loving Jakšić brothers were dividing their inheritance] (Bogišić, 44) – and from the used verb form of (truncated) perfect it can be concluded that it was an event that happened in the past, and a recognizable character’s name also carries a certain chronological connotation becoming one of situationality parameters and fixing

complex meanings and functions. In special cases, the opening (temporal) formula becomes part of the formula of a higher order (see Mal'tsev 1989, 73–84). The formula *Rano rani* [+ ime junaka] [(character's name) *rose early*], *Uranio* [*Early rose* (character's name)],<sup>24</sup> carries in its archaic semantics a rich circle of traditional concepts associated with fate, so it anticipates subsequent events, starting with the fateful encounter, as a series of cause and effect related actions (see Detelić 1996, 66–70). In the recorded long verse songs, the formula of dawning (*Jutrom rano išetala sestra kralja budimskoga* [Early in the morning the sister of the king of Buda walked out] – Bogišić, 21), according to the traditional semantics, “invokes a mythological content to the plot” (Suvajdžić 2010, 55). From her window in the town of Buda she sees three fairy silhouettes on deer, which appear to have been, in fact, three horsemen, so in a way she predetermines their fate with her vision.<sup>25</sup>

Formulas of liminal time (related to the moment before dawn), such as: *Još ni zore ni bijela dan(k)a*, or *Još zorica nije zabjelila*, / *Ni Danica lice pomolila* [Neither dawn nor white day has broken yet, or Dawn has not broken yet, / Nor has the daystar shown her face] not only serve to mark out the text (which is obvious), but become functional tools indicating the beginning of narrative time, conjunction of day and night, i.e. the most critical time of the day (see Mal'tsev 1989, 79, 80). In the poetic semantics key, it is a moment that denotes “the shifting of a character across the border of a semantic field” (Lotman 1976, 304) – *Od Senja se otvoriše vrata*, / *Iziđe jedna četa mala*, / *Sa trideset i četiri druga*, / *Pred njima je Senjanin Tadija*, / *barjak nosi Komnen barjaktaru* [The town gate of Senj opens, / And there goes out a small unit / Of thirty-four men; / In front of them is Senjanin Tadija, / The standard is carried by Komnen the standard-bearer] (Vuk III, 39).<sup>26</sup> Possible semantic layering and potential activation of trans-layered mythical semantics can best be followed if the formula is observed in the context of

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the action (see Detelić 1996, 40–42). No matter which particular variant it is, what these formulas have in common is “that the opening block of an epic song can never end with a time formula: it can occur at the beginning of it; it may be inserted between a general and a specific formula of some other type; it can be found between two different special formulas, but never at the end of the opening block and never in direct contact with the narrative complex” (ibid. 42).

<sup>24</sup> This formula can also appear as the second in the opening block, as the second in a line that also begins with temporal formula: *Još ni zore ni bijela dana* [Neither has dawn nor white day broken yet] (Vuk VIII, 9, 32; SANU II, 62; SANU III, 63).

<sup>25</sup> A maiden by the window, according to the findings of O. M. Freidenberg and G. I. Mal'tsev (cf. Mal'tsev 1989, 123), belongs to ancient motifs.

<sup>26</sup> The tradition sees this moment as an incident (and only “incident” is an event – see Lotman 1976, 304). Any activity of the characters at a bad time of the day entails certain consequences or it is the intent which initiates a subsequent chain of events.

songs in which it occurs (see ER, 81, 88, 89, 90, 91, 133; Vuk II, 95; Vuk III, 10, 21, 39, 47; Vuk IV, 16, 34, 38, 43, 46; Vuk VI, 50, 53, 82; Vuk VII, 82; Vuk VIII, 9, 25, 30, 32, 39, 42, 69; Vuk IX, 25; SANU II, 62; SANU III, 7, 46, 63; Milutinović, 1990: 111, 134).<sup>27</sup> In each of these songs, the formula is at the very beginning.<sup>28</sup> It serves as a point from which the narrative time is measured (it releases the momentum of time that cannot be stopped any more). It sets an initial borderline of the text, anticipates an event (unusual action) and connects with its free end to the next one in a cluster of formulas (see Lord 1990 1, 112–113) usually referring to the spatial positioning of the story.

It is up to the context of the entire plot whether the mythical semantics will be activated or not. One might expect that the appearance of a fairy will “unclose” the song towards the archaic and enable the breakthrough of mythical semantics. However, the demonic time only allows the fairy to appear, although the activity of the fairy is completely consumed within the messenger’s domain (see Samardžija 2008, 247–251). The formula of fairy’s acclamation (see ER, 90, 91; Vuk IV, 38, 43, 46; Vuk VIII, 25, 39, 42),<sup>29</sup> after the introductory formula, indicates change in the existing state (see Samardžija 2008, 247) and becomes an exposition in the narrative which is further modulated according to the scheme of the fairy’s call (see Gesemann 2002, 133–137). Nothing changes significantly even if after this introductory formula appears a human being as the messenger (ER, 81, 133), or the transfer of information is done by means of books (ER, 88; Vuk VIII, 30, 69). One of the most frequent formulas replacing the discussed formula is formula for opening the door (see Vuk II, 21, 39, 47; IV, 16; Vuk VI, 53). It also lacks explicit mythical connotations. The spatial dimension is introduced (*dok s’ u Skadru vrata otvoriše* [when the town gate of Skadar opens] – Vuk IV, 6), and functional value is limited to the introduction of the character(s) or the troops in the epic scene (*Iz grada je junak izlazio ...*

<sup>27</sup> This type of introductory formulas occurs even in early records of long verse songs: *I još ne bješe dan zora bjelo lice otvorila* [Neither dawn nor day has shown its white face yet], associated with the plot formula: *Kada mi ti kleti Turci okoliše bjele mire od Budima* [When the damned Turks besieged my town of Buda] (Bogišić, 28).

<sup>28</sup> It is not possible to know now if it was preceded by general introductory formulas in the original performance.

<sup>29</sup> Only in one example the fairy’s acclamation appears as an exposure of the ritual initiation scenario (see Vuk II, no. 95). However, even in this poem, it is nothing but an announcement of the arrival of the Turkish army, which is the moment when the previous situation changes (i.e. the beginning of the process of the young hero’s initiation).



*Za njim ide do tridest Turaka* [A hero walks out of the town ... Followed by about thirty Turks] – *ibid.*)<sup>30</sup>

Liminal time of the day, introduced with the initial formula *Ni zorice ni bijela dan(k)a* [Neither dawn nor white day has broken yet], overlaps with social liminality of characters in the plots about the wounded/dying hero (see ER, 89; Vuk VII, 82; Vuk VIII, 9; SANU II, 62) and activates certain mythical-ritual semantic layers, associated with the cult of the dead. At that time something<sup>31</sup> announces impending death to Prince Marko (SANU II, 62), after which the hero destroys his epic regalia (horse and weapons).<sup>32</sup> He also performs a magic act with his mace with the meaning of irreversibility – he throws his heavy mace into the sea, saying: *Kad na suho topuz izljevnuo/ Ovakvi se junak izrodio* [When that mace comes out of the sea/ Then there will be such a hero upon the earth again] (*ibid.*). After that, he finishes the preparations for the burial, and he charges whoever should find him with the duty to bury him. In another song (a variant of the song *Smrt Majke Jugovića* [The Death of the Mother of the Jugovitch]), before dawn a voice brings the mother the news of the death of her nine sons (SANU III, 46).<sup>33</sup> And in a third song, a wounded hero, shortly before his death, earned himself with behest a memorial service after his death (ER, 89). This brief overview indicates that the time liminality of the discussed initial formula is not sufficient to activate the (expected) mythical semantics – it will be revived only at the point of intersection between this and some “stronger” liminality mark, like the one of status.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The shaping of the liminal chronotope is achieved by merging the liminal time (*dawn*) and the liminal place (the rampart/the door).

<sup>31</sup> In Serbian language the grammatical form of the non-personal nominal pronoun which stands for things – *something* denotes a non-living entity, while at the same time it is brought into the circle of sacred or tabooed beings (demons) that can predict the future.

<sup>32</sup> By destroying his epic attributes, the hero symbolically cancels his status – “unarmed and epically unprotected, in a state identical to that prior to his epic initiation” (Suvajdžić 2005, 173); he leaves this world in an ambiguous status, the same as when he entered it.

<sup>33</sup> The mother immediately goes to the bloody battlefield and collects the helmets and horses of the heroes. One of her sons posthumously charges her with passing on to his wife to take care of his horse the way he cared about it (*ibid.*). The “speech” of the hero’s horse reveals surprise that mother does not even for a moment express any grief, and suggests her potentially non-human nature.

<sup>34</sup> It seems that it makes no difference when spatial liminality is added to time liminality. Following this formula, there usually is the formula for opening the door, but it does not activate mythical meanings. All this confirms once again that the epic song

Initial temporal formulas are most similar to the *medial temporal formulas* that appear at the beginning of a digressive episode with the retrospection of a framed narrative segment, foreplot, and the like.<sup>35</sup> Since they are located at the beginning of a “story within the story”, they are closest to special introductory formulas (and sometimes alternate with them).<sup>36</sup> What all medial temporal formulas have in common is that they function as “constructive text boundaries” (Petković 2006, 21) and they “break through the boundaries between narrative segments of a song” (Detelić 1996, 14). If they are placed at the beginning of an inserted episode or retrospection, their role of marking its beginning is even more significant. As a rule, they have a recognizable structure (the order of these elements, however, can vary): **when + character + action + locus**: *Kad knez Lazar pričešćiva vojsku/kraj prekrasne Samodreže crkve* [When Prince Lazar went with his army to take the sacrament/ By the fair church in Samodrezha] (Vuk II, 51) or slightly revised: *Kad izgibe vojska na Kosovu* [When the army perished in Kosovo] (Vuk II, 55), *Kad je srpsko poginulo carstvo/ i dva cara pala u Kosovu* [When the Serbian empire perished/ and two emperors died in Kosovo] (Vuk II, 58), *Kad Jerina Smederevo gradi* [When Jerina built Smederevo] (Vuk III, 1). Nothing significantly changes if the retrospection is given in the form of homodiagetic narration – i.e. if it is delivered by a story character/witness in the first person: *Kad sam bio u gorici čarnoj/ Na studencu vodi na plandištu* [When I was in the dark forest/ at the cold spring near the resting place...] (Vuk VI, 22), *Kadno bjesmo na Kosovu bojnom (teški bojak mi s Turci trpljesmo)* [When we were on the battlefield of Kosovo (and fiercely fought with the Turks)] (Vuk II, 54).

In all these cases, as in many others, there is a tendency to integrate spatial and temporal sequences and to form a **chronotope**<sup>37</sup> (in the sense of a unified space-time continuum of the narrative). This formula arrangement is the result of “parameters setting for the story – i.e. for the space, time and character<sup>38</sup> as minimum requirements for the definition of an event” (Detelić 1996, 40), presented in retrospect. In this way, the time component, unlike the introductory formulas, is no longer optional – on the contrary: it is very important *when* the events in the story happened in relation to the

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is not created through analogy with myth, but according to the inherent formative principles.

<sup>35</sup> Like all other formulas, they are substantially determined by three parameters: location, form and function (see Detelić 1996, 17 and 77).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. special initial formula: *Kad se sleže na Kosovo vojska* [When the army gathered at Kosovo] (Vuk II, 48) and the abovementioned medial formulas.

<sup>37</sup> See Bahtin 1989, 193.

<sup>38</sup> The character itself bears certain chronotopic characteristics – cf. Bahtin 1989, 194.

moment of narration, since the time of the primary action has motivational effects on the central action (otherwise it would not be evoked in the narrative and reactualized in memory).

Special medial formulas in non-digressive narratives have somewhat looser distribution than the formulas mentioned before. They usually have a syntactic form of temporal sentences:

<i>Kad ujutru jutro osvanulo</i> (Pantić 2002, p. 256; Bogišić, 71, 72; Vuk II, 43, 53, 92, 99; Vuk III, 2, 28, 49, 61, 69; Vuk VI, 62 etc.)	When the morning has broken
<i>Kad to čuo/začu</i> (+ character's name) (Bogišić, 89; ER, 120; Vuk II, 5, 49; Vuk III, 26, 47, 48, 57 etc)	When (character's name) heard it
<i>Kad to vide</i> (+ character's name) (Vuk II, 29)	When (character's name) saw it
<i>Čim ga vide (tim ga i poznade)</i> (Vuk II, 47)	When he saw him (he recognized him at once)
<i>Pošto su se napojili vina</i> (Vuk II, 17)	When they drank enough wine
<i>Tek što</i> [+ character's name] <i>sjede piti vina</i> (Vuk II, 29)	When (character's name) set to drinking wine

They can carry the semantics of the measure of time (*Ode haber od usta do usta / Dok se začu u Prilipa grada*) [The news went from mouth to mouth,/ until it was heard of in Prilep town] (Vuk II, 54), *Malo vreme za tim postojalo* [Not much time passed] (Vuk II, 5, 43, etc.), *Malo stalo za dugo ne bilo, / Dok eto ti* [+ list of characters] [And within a while, behold (list of characters)] (Vuk II, 55)... They are double marked – first, they serve to demarcate isolated events, to circumscribe compositional entities or smaller narrative sequences, and then to connect them (causally), i.e. to concatenate them (Schmaus 1971).

Appearing in the middle of the “text”, *open at both ends* (see Detelić 1996, 32–33), i.e. bivalent, these formulas connect two neighbouring compositional entities, two events or two narrative sequences in a line (what had been before with what was to come), so they act as a borderline of an entity, and at the same time have the role of a shifter (see Petković 2006, 23)<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Thus, they are somewhat similar to the commentary which “divides, separates, and at the same time connects the sequences of the plot” (Samardžija 2000, 27). Moving temporarily to the time of performance – in the place of the singer who intervenes in the expected sequence of events – we can get the economy of the narrative (*A da ti je, družice, poslušati/ kad hajdučke puške zapucaše, / po odajah biju pašajlije! / Svaki svoga pos’ječe Turčina, / I uze mu blago i oružje* [Listen here, my friend/when hajduks’ rifles fire,/killing the pasha’s men all over the rooms!/Every man kills one Turk,/And takes his wealth and

relating to the next segment of time. Since an epic song is a highly schematized creation (see Braun 1971, Gesemann 2002), and “what keeps these parts from dispersing is a structural grid of singing, its matrix” (Detelić 1996, 34), the formula is that cohesive force which at the same time connects the narrative segments belonging to different hierarchical levels, and demarcates them. A. B. Lord divides these cohesive elements into: formulas of names, formulas of the story, formulas of place and formulas of time (see Lord 1960, 74–76).<sup>40</sup> With their free ends, all these elements can link the narrative segments, and put the hierarchically lower elements – “phrases, subordinate clauses and sentences” in their positions in the model of “specialized poetic grammar” (ibid. 77) of the oral “text”. In addition, Lord considers temporal formulas as those that contain lexicalized means for expressing temporality, i.e. words that refer to the parts of the day.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, the logic of sequencing events in a song creates a certain temporal order. Therefore, the component parts of a song, narrative segments or formulas whose interaction creates the structure of the epic “text”, have their temporal extensibility (as well as melodic, rhythmic, etc.). In this

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weapons] – Vuk III, 66), focus of attention, and/or the knowledge about the outcome of the event described in the song (*[P]la šta ću ti/vam duljit' lakrdiju [Tu Ilija odvede đevojku]*) [I will speak no longer (And then Ilija takes away the girl)] (Vuk III, 33, 72; Vuk VI, 49). Additionally, the commentary is usually used: in expressions of wonder – *Ko će ovo perom opisati / Al' u pjesmu, pobre, spomenuti* [Who will write about this/ Or put it in a song, my friend] (Vuk IX, 14); when compressing and speeding up the narration – *To vam samo starješine kažem* [I mention only the chieftains] (Vuk III, 35), *Ne mogu i' ih redom kaživati, / Jer bi pjesma podugačka bila* [I cannot mention them all, / Because the song would be too long] (Vuk IX, 16); when shifting the focus from the bloody battlefield to the appearance of the hero – *A bre bliže, da vidimo ko je* [Let us look closer, to see who it is] (Vuk VII, 19); using the cut-up technique – *A kad bilo u subotu, braco* [And when Saturday came, my brother] (Vuk VIII, 40), and the like. Unlike them, the final commentaries appear as a kind of value judgments of the events in the song or the “moral” – *Tako svakom onome junaku/ koj' ne sluša svoga starijega* [It serves him right, / If a hero does not obey his elder] (Vuk III, 65). Although they do not represent a temporal formula, since they shift the listener from the time of the story (narrative time) to the time of narration (performance time), the commentaries appear as shifting formulas, since performance time is inherent in them.

<sup>40</sup> A. Schmaus (1971, 143) notes that a formula is used to imply “the situations or particular details, repeated in many songs”. In addition to the already defined formula of the story, it seems justified to talk about *situational* formulas, which, as their name suggests, cover the whole situation, such as fights (formula), receptions, greetings, watching, etc. (ibid. 144–148). G. I. Mal'tsev (1989, 3, 11, and 112), however, considers a formula as various elements of the text, or different levels of the narrative – from permanent epithets and formulaic themes to stable plots.

<sup>41</sup> As an example of temporal formulas, Lord (1960, 76) cites formulas of dawn (morning).

uniform sequence of the same or similar metrical intonation units that form the “text” of a song and in accordance with the principles of syllabic versification of an asymmetric decasyllabic verse, a separate system of markers is established over time which indicate a shift in narrative time and demarcate and(or) connect narrative segments, on the principle of separate segments of time. Therefore, they can be considered as *temporal formulas in the broad sense*. They are most often successively lined up (according to the “adding style” as M. Parry called it – cf. Lord 1960, 107), so succession is one of the most common principles of action presentation. Usually, one action follows immediately after another, which is demonstrated with formulas of immediate succession (for fast succession of narrative sequences), such as:

formulas of perception	
<i>Kad to čuo/začu</i> [+ character's name] (Bogišić, 89; ER, 120; Vuk II, 5, 49; Vuk III, 22; Vuk IV, 53)	When (character's name) heard it
<i>To začula</i> [+ female character's name] (SANU IV, 11)	(Name of a female character) heard it
<i>Kad to vide</i> [+ character's name] (Vuk II, 8)	When (character's name) perceived it
<i>Kad videše</i> [+ names of actors/actants] (Vuk II, 21) <sup>42</sup>	When (names of actors/actants) perceived it
formulas of motion	
<i>Kada dođe dvoru</i> [+ possessive dative of a noun] (Vuk II, 21; Vuk III, 22)	When he came to (+ possessive dative of a noun) dwelling place
<i>Kad s' u sinje more wozoše</i> (Vuk III, 16)	When they sailed off to the deep grey sea
<i>Tek što</i> [+ character's name] <i>poljem izmaknuo</i> (Vuk IV, 67)	No sooner had (character's name) run away from the field
formulas of fast successive sequences (close to simultaneity)	
<i>[Tek što Vuče u riječi bješe], Al' eto ti</i> [+ character's name] (Vuk II, 92)	(Thus Vuk was discoursing), When (character's name) came
<i>Jošte</i> [+ character's name] <i>u riječi bješe</i> (ER, 90)	(character's name) was still speaking
<i>U riječi u koje bijahu</i> [ <i>Ali treća sila ispanula</i> ] (Vuk IV, 41)	They were talking, (but a third force appeared)
<i>U riječi što su govorili</i> [ <i>No ga sitna knjiga dopanula</i> ] (Vuk VIII, 11)	They were talking, (when a letter came to him)
<i>Taman oni u riječi b'jahu</i> , [ <i>Dok eto ti + character's name</i> ] (Vuk VI, 6)	Thus they were discoursing, When (character's name) came
<i>U tu riječ koju besjeđaše</i> [ <i>Dokle puče trideset pušaka</i> ] (Vuk VII, 44)	He was in the middle of a speech, (when thirty rifles fired)

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Bogišić, 33, 45; ER, 139; Vuk II, 78. Schmaus (1971, 154) calls this type of formulas *emulation formulas* and notes that, in bugarštica songs, they also bind to themselves a reaction to the seen, followed by an *introduction to the speech*.

<i>Taman oni malo posjediše</i> (Vuk VII, 43); <i>Taman sio, malo počinuo</i> [Dok mu sitna knjiga dopanula] (Vuk VIII, 13)	<i>He has just sat to rest a bit (when the letter came to him)</i>
<i>Istom oci u besedi bili</i> [/al'eto ti silni janičara] (SANU III, 26)	<i>The elders were discoursing,/ when scores of janissaries appeared</i>
<b>formula for measuring short time</b>	
<i>Malo vreme zatim postojalo</i> (Vuk II, 5, 43)	<i>Not much time passed</i>
<i>Malo bilo, ništa ne trajalo</i> (Vuk IV, 41)	<i>Little time passed, almost no time at all</i>
<i>Malo potrg za dugo ne bilo,</i> [Dok evo ti (+ character's name)] (Vuk VII, 19)	<i>Little time passed,/ When (character's name) came</i>
<i>Malo bilo, ništa ne stanulo,</i> [Puče puška + location determinant] (Vuk VIII, 18)	<i>Short time passed, almost no time at all,/ (when a rifle fires in + location determinant]</i>
<i>I to vrijeme zadugo ne bilo,</i> [Dok poleće siv zelen sokole] (SANU IV, 35)	<i>But before long,/ (When flitted a falcon green and grey)</i>
<b>formulas of a dying man's behest</b>	
<i>To izusti, pa dušicu pusti</i> (Vuk II, 7, 16) <i>To izusti, laku dušu pusti</i> [the same] (Vuk II, 25, 33, 89) <i>To izusti, a dušu ispušti</i> [the same] (Vuk II, 78, 85, 86, 91); <i>To izreče, a ispušti dušu</i> [the same] (Vuk VII, 44), etc.	<i>So he spoke, and breathed his last</i>

According to their specific position in the plot, they are implemented differently and can include: *formulas of succession* (as expressions of a linear and unilateral leading of actions – see Schmaus 2011, 11), and *formulas of “empty” time* (e.g. *Malo vreme zatim postojalo* [Not much time passed], after which a new character is introduced – al'eto ti [+ character's name] [When (character's name) came] or *Tako stade* [*tri godine dana/ za devet godina*] [Three/ Nine years passed without change], and with the next verse begins a new segment of narration), formulas of temporal quantification, which, depending on the length of the story, can be formulas of “short” time (*Malo bilo, mnogo ne trajalo* [Short time passed, almost no time at all]), and formulas of “long” time (duration of a story, usually expressed in years + *passed*). Since epic time “does not run otherwise than as a running story” (Lešić 2010, 363), which, therefore, can be interrupted, stopped, returned, additionally narrated or forwarded, the temporal formulas in the broad sense, as modifiers of the narrative flow, and, as a rule, announcers of certain changes, have a very important role in the structuring of the epic narrative or epic song as a whole.

As for parallel actions, they also can have formulaic character and they express all three types of relations – anteriority, simultaneity and posteriority. Schmaus has already discussed *anteriority* (precedence), showing how formulas of perception attach formula of reaction – greeting upon ar-

rival, which applies to the formula of acknowledging (see Schmaus 1971, 148): *Kad je Mitar r'ječi razumijo, / Uvati je za grlo bijelo* [*When Mitar understood the words, / He seized her by the white throat*] (Vuk II, 100).<sup>43</sup> The formulas of simultaneity describe two parallel actions, e.g. *Dokle Porča sedlo opremio, / Dotle slugе izvedoše đoga* [*As soon as Porča fitted the saddle, / The servants brought his horse*] (Vuk II, 92). Logically, posteriority is realized in the formulas of execution (of previously given commands, requests, etc.): *Odmah njega slugе poslušāše, / Te kapije hitro zatvorīše* [*Immediately his servants obeyed, / And shut the gates quickly*] (ibid.), *Bjehu Đurđa despota slugе svoje poslušale* [*The servants had obeyed despot Djurdje*] (Bogišić, 10) and so on. If the meaning of successiveness is prominent in these actions, it will be marked with conjunction (and): *Gleda njega Budimska kraljica, / Pa doživā Jakšića Todora* [*The queen of Buda watches him, / And calls Jakšić Todor*] (Vuk II, 94), *I dođoše kumu na dvorove, / Te krstiše dvoje đece ludo* [*They came to the home of their godfather, / and baptized two little children*] (Vuk II, 6). As there is a clear idea of what happened before and what afterwards, these temporal meanings are determined by the logic of the sequence of events, which at the same time form a temporal order in the narrative (see Porter Abbott 2009, 27).

*Temporal formulas in a narrow sense*, as opposed to the mentioned ways of referring to the chronology of events, express time with special lexical means – with temporal nouns and adjectives, as well as temporal adverbs. They situate the story at a certain point of day (*Kad ujutru jutro osvanulo* [*When the dawn has broken*]), periods of the year (*ljetu prođe, hladna/ tamna/ grozna zima dođe* [*summer passes, cold/ dark/ awful winter comes*]), or associate it with certain holidays (St George's Day : St Demetrius's Day). At the points where the borderlines of narrative sequences and these time markers overlap (and they, generally, coincide), the "frozen" mythical semantics "captured" in a formula is released and activated.<sup>44</sup>

With the *formula of dawning* G. I. Mal'tsev showed how a formula "works" and what happens when, under the pressure of a constructive borderline, appears a formula petrified in archaic semantics (see Mal'tsev 1989, 73–80). He believes that morning is a period of beginnings, births, renew-

<sup>43</sup> In this circle of formulas Schmaus also includes "formulas for situations when, during a conversation about an event that lies ahead – that event happens" (Schmaus 1971, 148). In this paper these formulas are mentioned as formulas of fast successive sequences.

<sup>44</sup> This occurs because the space-time block in folklore is made up of elements that lose their meaning almost literally, and generate new meanings and new valencies in a new, closed and tightly organized system, established in tradition and structured according to the principle of universal semiotic oppositions (see Tsivian 1973, 13–14): *day : night; morning : evening; dawn : dusk; summer : winter*, etc.

als, while also being linked to the complex of beliefs in fate (Mal'tsev 1989, 79). In the tradition, morning – while the sun is rising – is considered to be the right time, or the most appropriate moment, for initiating activities important for the community and individuals (according to the symbolism of progress, a suitable time). Therefore, the formula *Kad ujutru jutro osvanulo* [When the dawn has broken] (Pantić 2002, 256; Bogišić, 71, 72; Vuk II, 8, 43, 53, 92, 99; Vuk III, 2, 28, 49, 61, 69; Vuk VI, 62 etc.),<sup>45</sup> announces a change and opens the next narrative segment.<sup>46</sup> The nature of this change is defined by the next formula<sup>47</sup> and specified by the further course of events – *the departure of a wedding party* (see Vuk II, 92; Vuk III, 22; Vuk VI, 8, 24, 37, 38, 44; Vuk VII, 12, 14, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, 31, 36; Vuk VIII, 1; Vuk IX, 13; SANU II, 23, 83; SANU III, 7, 35), *going hunting* (Vuk II, 8, 99; Vuk VI, 75),<sup>48</sup> *meeting* (Bogišić, 3; Vuk II, 47, 67; Vuk IV, 22; SANU II: br.70), *the arrival of the army* (Bogišić, 65; Vuk III, 8; Vuk IV, 18, 34, 48, 49, 53, 55, 60; Vuk VII, 53; Vuk VIII, 24, 29, 51, 52, 63, 67, 68, 73, 74; Vuk IX, 10, 11, 25, 40; SANU IV, 3, 38), and the like.

*Noon* is the next point of the daily cycle. It is related to the position of intense sunlight – the highest point that the sun reaches during the day. In the plot it coincides with the climax of the rite such as: the arrival of the wedding party in the forest, a completely unprotected, *alien* territory (Vuk VI, 41, 75; Vuk VII, 11; SANU III, 38, 62), the pinnacle of a duel (ER, 71; Vuk II, 44, 67; Vuk VI, 58; Vuk VII, 2, 28; SANU II, 39, 49, 54, 55), and the most critical moment of the battle (Vuk VI, 13; Vuk VII, 19, 57; Vuk VIII, 41, 62, 67, 68; Vuk IX, 14; SANU III, 24). If we take into consideration the “macro plane” i.e. the whole scheme of the story (which is the formula of the course of events – Braun 2004, 127), it can be seen that the climax overlaps with noon as a climax point of the day. At that moment, a duel in the last

<sup>45</sup> These results are also valid for variations of this formula such as: *A kad sjutra dan i zora dođe* [When the dawn and day breaks tomorrow] (Vuk II, 8); *Kad bijela zora zab'jelila* [When the white dawn comes] (Vuk III, 8), and the like.

<sup>46</sup> Actually, it is not a feature exclusive to this formula. The formula of fairy's acclamation, “regardless of its position in the ‘text’ and shifts on the plot-climax-denouement scale ... implies a change in the previous state” (Samardžija 2008, 247), as well as any other formula, since the formula per se marks the borderline of the narrative, and introduces a new event that will disrupt the previous state.

<sup>47</sup> This, again, does not rule out the possibility that the next formula also has a cohesive function (providing/sending) of the information that reveals the essence of the change, such as formulas of *fairy's acclamation* (see Vuk VI, 73; Vuk VIII, 17); *raven the news-bearer* (see Vuk II, 45; Vuk VII, 56); *telling a prophetic dream* (Vuk II, 66; Vuk III, 68 etc) or *books* (cf. Vuk III, 20, 68; Vuk IX, 1, 5, 7, 31).

<sup>48</sup> See also Vuk III, 48, 49.



scene (during physical conflict),<sup>49</sup> takes a fateful twist, and the hero reaches the limit of his physical endurance. In the songs that sing about clashes of troops or armies (typically in the historic epic), noon decides the outcome of the battle. After midday, when the sun is on its downward path, the negative semantics prevails.

*Evening* and morning mark the *beginning and end* of each *day*, i.e. they act like “connectors” of its most critical moments (see Mal'tsev 1989, 79, 80). Unlike morning, which carries positive symbolism, evening represents its negative counterpart, or semiotic opposition.<sup>50</sup> In addition to a relatively stable form of the formula of evening (*Kad je bilo veče[r] [p]o večeri* [When the evening falls] – cf. ER, 141, Vuk II, 43, 96 etc.),<sup>51</sup> akhsham can also be found in songs (see Vuk III, 5, 22, 48, 52; Vuk IV, 52; Vuk VI, 62; Vuk VII, 12, 14, 30, 44; Vuk IX, 15, SANU III, 60, 67), which is the time of the fourth daily prayer of Muslims which occurs after sunset. It is usually related to the ending (final destination) of movements – *po akšamu stiže u Grahovo* [After akhsham he arrives in Grahovo] (Vuk III, 5), *po akšamu u Sokola dođe* [After akhsham he arrives in Sokol town] (Vuk III, 52), *U lijepo doba dolazio/ Tek na nebo akšam i zvijezda* [In good times he comes/ only akhsham and a star in the sky] (Vuk VII, 14), and others. After the sunset, the hero retreats to the safety of his home. However, if he feels threatened from within by an unfaithful wife (Bogišić, 97; Vuk II, 25; SANU III, 5) or his sister-in-law (Vuk II, 5; SANU II, 4), some malicious activities will prove fatal to the hero/heroine. Apart from this and deprived of their mythical semantics, evening hours can get realistic stylization, when presented as moments of leisure (see ER, 124, 141; Vuk II, 47; Vuk III, 73; Vuk VI, 23; Vuk VII, 14, 46; SANU II, 57, 68, 79; SANU III, 5, 44).

*Night* creates a binary opposition to the period of daylight (daytime).<sup>52</sup> According to traditional coding, night primarily belongs to demonic beings, and therefore the correct behaviour is codified by the set of rules and pro-

<sup>49</sup> This moment is introduced in the song with the formula – *Nosiše se [Čeraju se] ljetni dan do podne* [So they fought until the noon of a summer's day] (see ER, 71; Vuk II, 44, 67; Vuk VI, 58; Vuk VII, 2, 28; SANU II, 39, 54, 55). As it can be noted, the central part of the day is also connected to the determinant of the annual cycle, to the summer as the peak time of the annual cycle.

<sup>50</sup> This order of the parts of the day (morning – noon – evening – night) is analogous to the phases of the annual cycle (spring – summer – fall – winter) – see Frye (1979, 183). Mal'tsev explains this with the fact that the daily cycle historically preceded the annual cycle (see Mal'tsev 1989, 79) and, presumably, was replicated on it.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Vuk II, 5, 13, 30, etc.

<sup>52</sup> The epithets attached to the *day* and the *night* are real antonyms – *beli (bijeli) dan(ak): tamna / mrkla noć(ca)* [white day : dark/obscure night].

hibitions relating to the night (see Tsivian 1973, 15). They are primarily related to the termination of works – not to be contaminated by the influence of the night. The formula *Kad je bilo noći u ponoći* [When it was the midnight hour] (Vuk II, 12)<sup>53</sup> / *Kad je tamna noć dolazila* [When the dark night came] (Vuk VI, 4), therefore, announces something extraordinary (phenomena, processes, operations), and when it appears in a fairytale in verse about a serpent/dragon hero, it announces his transformation into an anthropomorphic form – in reverse time. By changing the genre, in the epic (heroic) song, night actions of the hero do not usually imply his demonic nature, but they could indicate it subtly – especially when it comes to the well-known dragon fighters – Prince Marko (ER, 124, 140; Vuk II, 66; Vuk VI, 18) and Zmaj Ognjeni Vuk (Bogišić, 15; ER, 59; Vuk II, 43; Vuk VI, 6; SANU II, 56; SM 1990, 152). The activities during the night can also be motivated by the need for secret and unobserved actions: *setting an ambush* (Bogišić, 59, 60, 69; ER, 74), *raising troops* (Vuk III, 21, 23, 47; Vuk VI, 49, 53; SANU III, 19, 63), *surprise attack and plunder* (Bogišić, 63, 64, 77; Vuk III, 22, 58; Vuk VI, 82; Vuk VII, 38), *abducting girls* (Vuk VI, 66, Vuk VII, 6, 21; SANU III, 21), *releasing heroes from prison (usually by digging tunnels) under the cover of the night* (Bogišić, 108; ER, 72; SANU III, 8, 41, 42, 80) and the like. In that case, these actions are realistically stylized and mostly devoid of mythic potential.

As a part of the weekly cycle and its boundary, *Sunday* is the most frequently mentioned day in the songs.<sup>54</sup> It is a day of celebration, so everyday activities are prohibited on Sundays. Its sacred character is emphasized with permanent epithet *svet(l)a* [luminous] (Sunday).<sup>55</sup> If a religious holiday falls on a Sunday as well,<sup>56</sup> its character of sacred time (exceptional day) will be more strongly emphasized. Saturday is mainly characterized by negative semantics – *dangerous, last, female, “day of the dead”*. Adding to this semantic line the semantics of the evening as chiefly a bad time of the day –

<sup>53</sup> This formula seems to work in opposition to the formula *Kad ujutru jutro osvanulo* [When the dawn broke]. Everything desirable, as it should be, is reversed with this formula.

<sup>54</sup> See Bogišić, 18, 69, 70, 73, 74, 97, 107, 109; Vuk II, 3, 42, 51, 65, 67, 74, 84, 101; Vuk III, 14, 78; Vuk IV, 27, 31, 33; Vuk VI, 7, 18, 29, 58, 59; Vuk VIII, 13, 40, 41; Vuk IX, 8, 21, 25, 26; SANU II, 22, 38, 40, 66, 95; SANU III, 11, 16, 20, 21, 28, 36, 55, 62, 67; Vuk IV, 2, 41.

<sup>55</sup> Bogišić, 18, 69, 70, 97; Vuk II, 32, 42, 65, 101; Vuk III, 78; Vuk IV, 33; Vuk VI, 29; Vuk VIII, 13, Vuk IX, 26; SANU II, 66, 95; SANU III, 67; SANU IV, 2.

<sup>56</sup> Easter is the most frequently mentioned religious holiday in the songs; see Vuk II, 4, 30; Vuk III, 89; Vuk IV, 39; Vuk VI, 21; Vuk IX, 8. It falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox.

*Kad je večer u subotu bilo* [When it was Saturday evening] (Bogišić, 97), the singer suggests that a given action (destruction of the hero's weapons and burning of the winged horse's wings) will have a fatal outcome for the hero (ibid; see also SANU II, 25). At the same time, the hero dreams an ominous dream, but his tragedy is augmented by the fact that he cannot change the final outcome and obliterate the prediction of the dream (ibid.). Other plots also imply that a dream dreamed on a Saturday night announces bad luck (Vuk III, 14; Vuk IV, 27).

In the tradition, the annual cycle, like the daily cycle,<sup>57</sup> has the semantics according to the principle of binary coding. St George's Day<sup>58</sup> and St Demetrius's Day are referred to as type determinants marking the beginning and the end of an action, so they are the two most popular and, therefore, the two most frequently mentioned holidays in Serbian oral epic songs. Since these are the dates that divide the annual cycle into two periods – winter and summer – the meaning of the beginning and the end (of the vegetation cycle, fertile period, field works, activities of hajduks...) is dominant in their semantics. St George's Day generally represents good time since it symbolizes the beginning (of the year), or spring (often with associated semantics of the morning).<sup>59</sup> They, also, demarcate the periods of activities of hajduks and use the proverbial expressions: *Đurđev danak – hajdučki sastanak*; *Mitrov danak – hajdučki rastanak* [St George's Day – reunion of hajduks; St Demetrius's Day – parting of hajduks].<sup>60</sup> The fact that the collection of tolls (later taxes) was related to these holidays promoted the realistic stylization of the plots of the songs dealing with ambushing toll collectors and fetching the loot. Therefore, the singer places these formulaic holidays symmetrically – winter (parting) and summer (reunion):

<i>Ljeto prođe, Mitrov danak dođe,</i>	<i>Summer passed, St Demetrius's day came,</i>
<i>Snijeg pade, drumi zapadoše</i>	<i>Snow fell, roads were blocked,</i>
<i>Planine se snijegom zaviše,</i>	<i>Mountains enwrapped in snow,</i>
<i>Po gori se hoditi ne može</i>	<i>Forest was impassable</i>
(Vuk III, 53)	

<sup>57</sup> Both the daily and the annual cycle associate the symbolism of life and death with the solar path and its periodic strengthening and weakening (disappearing). Mal'tsev (1989, 81) also noted this similarity while exploring the rituals performed early in the morning on St George's Day.

<sup>58</sup> See ER, 12, 17, 143, 164; Vuk II, 19, 21, 68, 72; Vuk III, 35, 36, 44, 53, 75, 89; Vuk IV, 14, 25, 29, 31; Vuk VI, 3, 20; Vuk VII, 43, 47; Vuk VIII, 73; Vuk IX, 17, 33; SANU II, 5, 6, 39, 49, 78, 102; SANU III, 11, 17, 66, 79.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. the formula of mentioning – *Kao Đurđev danak u godini* [*Kao dobar junak u družini*] [Like St George's day in the year (Like a good hero in a company)] (SANU II, 102).

<sup>60</sup> The reverse time of activities (from St Demetrius's Day to St George's Day) is associated with the enemy (the Turks) – see Vuk IV, 25; SANU III, 79.

The next reunion of the hajduks is scheduled for St George's Day:

<p><i>Kada dođe lijep danak Đurđev</i>  <i>Te se gora preođene listom,</i>  <i>A zemljica travom i cvijetom</i>          (Ibid.)</p>	<p>When the nice day of St George comes,          And the forest dresses in leaves,          And the earth with grass and flowers</p>
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In this way, the whole narrative time is framed by these holidays. The narrative ends with vengeance taken against a treacherous aider and the hero's return to the forest (cf. Vuk III, 52), which completes the episode.

The need for the (formulaic/formal) ending of the text is partly motivated by the fragmentary nature of the oral poetic text (see Mal'tsev 1989, 124–128): “Linguistic units up to (and including) sentences are constant, and in their concrete realizations they are arranged in chains by giving descriptions of certain ‘pieces of reality’. The listener receives them successively, draws the necessary information, and what is called ‘text’ decomposes in successive intervals” (Petković 2006, 16–17). So, the performer constructs the text just to deconstruct it by performing it. During live performance, the illusion of “text” can be abandoned when we change the time dimension – leaving the narrative time of the song ([*to je bilo*] *kada se činilo* [(it was) when it happened] – i.e. when the described event “happened”) and returning to the moment of performance (*a sada se tek pripovijeda* [and now it is only being told]).

All of this suggests the need to redefine the concept of temporal formula, to peruse the intertextual context of its use, as well as its role in other classical decasyllabic songs. The purpose of such research would be to show not only how it functions as a formula per se, but, above all, how it functions in structuring the songs, i.e. in demarcating and signalling the sequence of textual units. Thus it becomes a functional tool which creates one of the dimensions in the world of a song, marks the narrative flow and clearly segments the verbal sequence during the act of verse-making, which also makes improvisation easier. This research would be only an introduction to similar far-reaching attempts.

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