Poetic Grounds of Epic Formulae

Abstract: The study of oral formulae in the twentieth century had several phases. After the initial – very stimulating and influential – research by M. Parry and A. B. Lord, who focused on the technique of composing the poem and the mnemotechnic function of formulae, the focus at first shifted to the concept of performance (J. M. Foley), and then to the mental text (L. Honko), which introduced into research horizons social, ideological, psychological and mental conditions of improvisation, interaction between the singer and the audience, collective and individual factors of memorising, cultural representation, and the like. Although all the abovementioned aspects undoubtedly determine the structure of a specific variant, it should be kept in mind that formulae transcend concrete improvisations and connect different epic zones, different local traditions and different times. The formula precedes verbal improvisation both chronologically and logically. Therefore – before explaining the repeating of formulae by the needs and nature of improvisation (composition-in-performance) or the generating of formulae in specific variants by textualisation of mental text – we must explain the existence of the formula in the first place. This paper seeks to point out the complex system of factors that determine the genesis of formulae. Formulae are regarded as cultural codes, which combine elements from different spheres (the conceptualization of space, time, colour and so on, elements of rituals, customary norms, historical experience, life realities, ethics, etc.). Therefore, their structure is described in terms of hidden knowledge, hidden complexity, frame semantics, the tip of the iceberg, compressed meanings. Meanings “compressed” in the formulae are upgraded with new “income” in every new/concrete realisation (i.e. poem) and this is the area where aesthetics rivals poetics.

Keywords: oral formulae, oral epics, poetics, conceptualization of space and time, South Slavic tradition, folklore

Although the theory of formulae may be said broadly to go back to Antiquity (more securely it is linked to the rhetoric of the Neoplatonist Hermogenes; Mal’tsev 1989: 24), and although, in a narrower sense – as the study of specifics of oral poetry – it dates back at least to the first decades of the twentieth century (A. van Gennep, La Question d’Homer, Paris 1909), its founders are with good reason considered to be M. Perry and A. Lord. Their work and papers connected homerology with living oral tradition, putting on a broader basis both the study of ancient epics and the study of oral folklore. However, the specified analytic position had its disadvantages. Contact with live oral performance focused the attention of researchers on the technique of composing the poem, whose importance has been made absolute at the cost of marginalising all other aspects of oral epics and oral formulae:
...it must have been for some good reason that the poet ... kept to the formulas even when he ... had to use some of them very frequently. What was this constraint? ... The answer is not only the desire for an easy way to make verses, but the complete need of it ... There is only one need of this sort which can even be suggested — the necessity of making verses by the spoken word ... The necessity shows its force most clearly ... in the simple numbers of formulas. (M. Parry; cf. Sale 1996: 379–380; italics mine)

Formulaity is, however, not just a feature of oral folklore, but of a whole range of arts, both linguistic and non-linguistic, which is a serious argument in favour of the thesis that the essence of formula does not lie in its mnemotechnic function — which, of course, cannot be denied, but which cannot be considered as a starting point of formula and formulaity:

Formulaity is not specific only to lyric poetry, nor even to folklore in general, but to the multitude of canonical systems of art, both literary and other (e.g. folklore painting and visual arts, medieval literature and iconography), where neither orality nor mnemotechnics can be spoken of. (Mal'tsev 1989: 18)

The other extreme was the reaction to the Parry-Lord positions which led to the expansion of studies that observed/considered formula only as a means of compositional technique and narrowed the field of research to the formal/mechanical and statistical aspects. The focus was shifted to the concept of performance (“from composition as the central element of the theory of oral poetry toward the notion of performance”, Bakker & Kahane 1997: 3) and mental text, which introduced into the scope of research social, ideological, psychological and mental conditions of improvisation, interaction between the singer and the audience, collective and individual factors of memorizing, cultural representation, and the like. In this case too — as in the studies by M. Perry, A. Lord and their “harder” followers — the fact was overlooked that the formula, both chronologically and logically, precedes verbal improvisation (because singers learn formulae before they use them in performance) and the constituting/structuring of a mental text (the latter being based upon already existing formulae). This further means that before we explain the repeating of formulae by the needs and nature of improvisation (composition-in-performance) or the generating of formulae

\[1\] „Формулъностъ является спецификой не только лирики, не только фольклора в целом, но целого ряда канонических художественных систем, как словесных, так и несловесных (например, народное изобразительное и прикладное искусство, средневековая литература и живопись), где ни о какой устности и хранении в памяти не может быть и речи.”

\[2\] “The last few years have seen a dramatic and gratifying upsurge of interest in the Homeric formula. This new interest has gradually come to focus on the real nature of the formula as a mental template in the mind of the oral poet, rather than on statistical aspects of ‘repetition’ found among phrases in the text” (Nagler 1967: 269).
Lauri Honko criticized the “classical” approach to oral epics for putting texts that do not belong to the same segments of tradition on the same level:

The days are past when a scholar sought for a “master form” by combining elements from different singers of epics, sometimes from different areas, too. Such composite texts were in danger of gliding outside the local poetic system. Their connection to sung performance was lost or skewed.

(Honko 2000a: vii)

Yet, formulae do connect poems of various epic singers and texts that belong to different epic zones, different local traditions and different times (in Serbian/South Slavic tradition there are records from the late fifteenth century to the present day). If we all agree with L. Honko (and many other researchers of similar methodological orientation) that better insight into the meaning of specific variants cannot be established if we neglect the performative situation, and that the semantic potential of oral presentation exceeds the semantic potential of records, there still remains the fact that
formulae (except the simplest types, such as adjective + noun) cannot even be detected on the basis of one performance (no matter how meticulously recorded and no matter how minutely described), or based on the corpus of a single singer. The existence and meaning of formulae can be discussed only in the much broader context of a local (epic) tradition.

Hence, if we want to explain the nature of the phenomenon, the origin, meaning and sense of formulae and their survival in an extremely long, often immeasurable period of time, despite variations in every new improvisation and the opportunities for singers to distort the canon (which they most certainly often did!), we must turn to poetics (broadly understood), which is what even some proponents of the idea of a mental text plead for:

Furthermore, it is an unfortunate fact that, despite many suggestions and some preliminary attempts, no coherent aesthetic theory has as yet emerged which would equip us to understand or appreciate the special nature of oral poetry as poetry. Unlike Parry himself, some students of the formula have tended to regard it as a “phrase type” or “metrical type”, without complicating the issue with meaningfulness or aesthetic value – a simplification which, as I shall try to show, throws the baby out with the bath water. (Nagler 1967: 273)

Although M. Nagler has not gone far in constituting a coherent aesthetic and poetic theory of oral epic poetry, this statement can certainly be the _credo_ of any similar attempt. Insisting on meaningfulness and aesthetic value turns us back, however, to one important distinction made (without the pomp and echoes that follow Homeric studies, and in a language much less known than English) between _formula_ and _formulaity_:4

...the epic formula is a tool resulting from the “working” of formulaity within the framework of the secondary linguistic system of epic poetry; the relation between them is a generic one, formulaity being only one of the conditions necessary for creating formulas and not identical with them. (Detelić 1996a: 220)

Formulaity is not characteristic of epic language only, but of verbal communication in general (Vinogradov 1938; cf. Kravar 1978), because

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4 Albert Lord (2000: 47) also noticed that difference: “There’s nothing in the song that is not formulaic”. However, he is not terminologically (or logically) consistent, and in the first sentence that follows the one just quoted, “formulaic” starts to mean the same as “formula” by his definition: “Moreover, the lines and half lines that we call ‘formulaic’ (because they follow the basic patterns of rhythm and syntax and have at least one word in the same position in the line in common with other lines or half lines) not only illustrate the patterns themselves but also show us examples of the systems of the poetry”.

5 “В системе русского языка слова, по большей части, функционируют не как произвольно и неожиданно сталкиваемые и сцепляемые компоненты речи, а занимая устойчивые места в традиционных формулах. Большинство людей говорит и пишет с помощью готовых формул, клише” (Vinogradov 1938: 121; cf. Mal’tsev 1989: 6).
it is “a paradigmatic element of every primary linguistic system” (Detelić 1996a: 220). Syntactic norms/structures inherent in language are a basis of formulaity even before epic modelling starts. Metric form is an additional, and the first, poetic factor of restrictions: “Oral verse created a syntax within a syntax: within it occurred a particular phraseologization, the fixing of a separate set of syntactic patterns” (Petković 1990: 201). Even A. Lord fell into the trap of not distinguishing between two levels of formulaity – linguistic and epic/poetic – singling out as formulae groups of words linked only by morpho-syntactic form (a three-syllable noun in the dative followed by the reflexive, for example):

dogatu se
junaku se (Lord 2000: 47)

In an attempt to draw a distinction between the two aforementioned types of formulaity, M. Detelić introduced the term “real formulae”, referring to the formulae generated by the epic system, and not by the language (and verse) itself:

...therefore it is necessary to discern between formulas coming from everyday speech (and necessarily going through changes while adjusting to metric-syntactic pattern of asymmetric decasyllabic verse) and the formulas as an important element of technique, style, and composition in traditional epic versemaking. (Detelić 1996a: 219)

To some extent (but not quite!) the distinction is compatible with the difference between formulae derived from the plot/sujet of the poem (imposed by the logic of narration/story development) and those generated from non-sujet and non-epic context. The latter can lead to a collision of layers of different origins (sujet and non-sujet), from which appear situations recognized as paradoxes/oxymorons (the “white throat” of a Black Arab; the attribution of an unfaithful wife as a “faithful one”, a burnt tower as “white”, and so on; for examples in Homer cf. Combellack 1965).

Although in the quotation above “technique, style, and composition in traditional epic versemaking” are especially accentuated, the generic system (of formulae) is predominantly based on the complex semantics whose origins are in the depths of folk memory, the type of culture and imperatives/norms of the genre. The “right formulae” are points/hubs that connect different genre systems and different levels/layers of epic tradition and tradition in general (Detelić 1996b: 104–106). They have a high semantic density and hold cultural information of the first degree (cf. Mal’tsev 1998: 6), which – by definition – cannot be transmitted directly. Therefore, formulae are elements that mediate basic social stratification, basic ethical and ritual-customary norms and the structures of thinking, as well as sublime experience of traditional communities. Repeatability is the most striking feature of formula, but repeatability, as G. Mal’tsev noticed, is not the essence of it:
We cannot agree with J. Hainsworth (and his school of thinking) that “the essence of a formula is its repetition”; repetition is only an outcome, a result of the formula’s “essence”, i.e. of the inner liability of the given representation, of the given meaning as a traditional idea. (Mal’tsev 1989: 43)

1 Space conceptualization
1.1 Semantization and structuring of spatial oppositions

Among three main categories of symbolic thinking (space, time and number) space is the only one that is perceived by senses. This fact has made spatial orientation a basic human orientation and set apart the mentioned category as a basis of conceptualizing:

(1) time and number (which are non-perceptible categories) and
(2) a series of social/cultural categories.

Conceptualization of time by spatial determinants is, however, characteristic of human thinking as such and it is embedded into the very foundations of the linguistic and phraseological system. We speak of “getting closer to Thanksgiving, approaching (or coming up on) the weekend, passing the deadline, arriving in a minute, leaving some unhappy event far behind, reaching Saturday, and being halfway through the month” (Johnson 2007: 8). In oral epics it resulted in formulaic attribution of time (and some categories that imply time, such as the length of a particular condition or the duration of

6 “Нельзя согласиться с положением Дж. Хайнсворта (и представляемой им школой) о том, что ‘сущность формулы в ее повторяемости’ (‘The essence of a formula is its repetition’); повторяемость – только следствие, результат ‘сущности формулы, т.е. внутренней обязательности данного представления, данного смысла как традиционной идеи.”
7 Time metaphors are mainly based upon spatial categories (cf. Lakoff & Johnson 1999: 139–161; Johnson 2007: 6–12), as well as the concept of number, which can be illustrated by elementary arithmetic operations. If it is tasked to specify the sum of 7 and 5 or the difference between 7 and 5, it just means that one should start from 7 and count 5 steps forward or backward. Number 7 becomes the starting point of a new series and assumes the role of zero (cf. Cassirer III 1985: 219).
8 On the other hand, space is conceptualized by time determinants – hours and days. Here again we are not speaking about “true” epic formulae, but the formulae taken from linguistic/phraseological system: “How big is the field in front of Novin? / It is wide four hours [of walking/riding], / It is long twelve hours [of walking/riding], / And it is all covered by Vlachs” [Koliko je polje pod Novinom, / U širinu četiri sahata, / U duljnu dvanaest sahata, / Sve je vlaški tabor pritisnuo] (Vuk III, 33:300–303). “When Ivo Crnojević decided to marry / He requested a girl from afar / Three days’ walk through the flat fields / Four days walking over the black mountains / One month sailing over the grey sea / From that ban of a maritime state” [Kad se ženi Crnojević Ivo / daleko je prosio djevojku / tri dni hoda priko ravna polja / četir’ danah priko crne gore / misec danah priko sinja mora / u onoga bana primorskoga] (ER 188).
some action) – as “long” (Serb. “dugo”): “It was not for a long time” [“To vri-
je me za dugo ne bilo”] (SM 5); “Sister Heike, stay miserable for a long time” 
[“Seko Hajke, dugo jadna bila!”] (SANU III, 50); “This promise – not for a 
long time” [“Ova vjera ne za dugo vri‘jeme”] (MH II, 20); “It’s been long and 
time has passed, / And for a long time the ban stayed” [“Dugo bilo i vrije-
me prode, / I zadugo bane začamao”] (Vuk II, 44) and so on.

This aspect of formulaity – taken from the linguistic system – has to be 
differentiated from formulaity generated within the epic genre. Such is, for 
example, the formula in which the length of time that the hero was bed-rid-
den relates to the length/width of the bed in which he lay (space) (although 
in a particular case correlation is, to some extent, based on realities):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brzo trči dvoru bijelome,</th>
<th>Run quickly to the white court,</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pa mi steri mekanu postelju,</td>
<td>And make a soft bed for me,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni dugačku, ni vrlo široku,</td>
<td>Neither long nor very wide,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer ti dugo bolovati ne ću.</td>
<td>Because I will not ail for a long time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vuk III, 78: 235–238)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steri meni mekanu ložnicu,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ne steri je dugu ni široku,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer ti neču dugo bolovati.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Rajković, p. 242)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

“Make me a soft chamber,”9
“Make it neither long nor wide, 
Because I will not ail for a long time.”

More often it is, however, activated tendency of mythic thinking 
to stratify physical space and make it heterogeneous by a specific type of 
semantization.10 Not a single pair of spatial relations stayed immune to 
this action of mythic thinking: “near” became “our”, “far” – “strange”, “in 
front of” – “life”, “behind” – “death”;11 “right” and “left” became positively 
or negatively connotated in local variants of traditional culture. Although 
all previously mentioned pairs are multiply semantized (pure : impure, hu-
man : inhumane/demonic, etc.), the opposition up : down is by far the most 
generatively productive. (Reason for that could be found in the fact that 
this opposition, among other things, constitutes the vertical [Axis Mundi], 
which is – due to gravity and human perception – favoured direction [in 
vacuum or mathematical space there are neither preferred directions, nor

9 Ložnica (chamber) is not quite the same as postelja (bed), but it also can be soft: in the 
houses of the Muslim upper class, there were no beds in the western style. It was more 
like a Japanese concept of space where bedclothes were kept in wardrobes during the 
day, and pulled out for the night. In that sense, a chamber can be soft if necessary.

10 Mythic thinking tends to alter differences of all sort into the spatial differences, and 
to present them directly in that (spatial) form (cf. Cassirer II 1985: 101).

11 In folk legends and folk beliefs some demonic beings have been presented with no 
back (Radenković 2008: 103). Prohibition of looking back is based on the same sym-
boric structure: space behind belongs to the demons, and looking back can open a chan-
nel between the world of the dead and the world of the living.
spatial categories like up : down, left : right, in front of : behind, etc.) Although polymorphic (phytomorphic/tree, anthropomorphic/Odin/Christ/Virgin Mary, pole/stick/ Axial rod, ladders, etc.), this spatial axis is universal in all traditional cultures. In South Slavic oral epics this characteristic of spatial cognition generated an entire system of formulae:

1) \[\text{Dolje leže, gore ne ustade} \] [He lay down, and did not get up again.]
    \[(Vuk \ II, 74:121)\]
\[\text{Dolje pade, gore ne ustade} \] [He fell down, and did not get up again.]
    \[(Vuk \ III, 88:149; \ Vuk \ IV, 30:188)\]
\[\text{Dolje pade, više ne ustade} \] [He fell down, and never got up again.]
    \[(Vuk \ VI, 10:189)\]
(up/vertical = life : down/horizontal = death);

2) \[\text{Vodi konje u donje podrume,} \] [He takes horses to the cellars bellow,]
    \[(MH IX, 14)\]
\[\text{A delije na gornje čardake} \] [And the heroes to the upper tower]
\[\text{Konje vodi dolje u podrume,} \] [He takes horses down to the cellars,]
    \[(SANU III, 27)\]
\[\text{A Ivana gore u čardake} \] [And Ivan up to the tower]
\[\text{Konje vodi u ahare donje} \] [He takes Bey to the cellars bellow,]
    \[(Vuk \ II, 75)\]
\[\text{Bega vodi na gornje čardake} \] [He takes Bey to the upper tower]
    \[(cf. Vuk II 92; MX I, 66)\]
(down/bellow = inhuman/animal: up/upper = human/socialized)

3) \[\text{Ono su ti pod kamenom guje} \] (Vuk III, 24:304, 314)
\[\text{Ljuta, brate, pod kamenom guja} \] (Vuk III, 24:380)
\[\text{Kako ljuta guja pod kamenom} \] (Vuk IV, 33:224)
\[\text{Kao ljuta guja pod kamenu} \] (Vuk VI, 67:326)
\[\text{Ali tuži ko pod kamenom guja} \] (KH III, 4:1573)
\[\text{i šarena pod kamenom guja} \] (KH III, 6:148)
\[\text{kako ljute zmije pod kamenom} \] (SM 37:146)

[All quotes refer to the “snake(s) under the stone”, mainly through comparison.]

In the last examples, the bottom of the Cosmic Axis (“under the stone”) is symbolically marked by the creature that is steadily related to it – snake/serpent/adder.\(^\text{12}\) Complete Vertical axis is established in the Slavic

\(^{12}\) Snakes are really associated with stones and rocks (as their habitats), but not exclusively. It is indicative, however, that nowhere in the corpus an adder is positioned on a stone/rock, but always under it (there is just one exception: “Like angry [dangerous] snakes in the rock” (“Kao ljute u kamenu guje”); Vuk II, 70:44).
antithesis that involves the same formula (down = snake : up\textsuperscript{13} = fairy [Serb. “vila”]):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serbian</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bože mili: čuda velikoga!</td>
<td>Dear God, what a great wonder!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Što procvilje u Banjane gornje?</td>
<td>What is whining in Upper Banjane?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da l’je vila, da li guja ljuta?</td>
<td>Is it a fairy, or a bitter snake?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da je vila, na višće bi bila,</td>
<td>If it were a fairy, she’d be up in the sky,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da je guja, pod kamen bi bila;</td>
<td>If it were a snake, it’d be under the rock;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nit’ je vila, niti guja ljuta,</td>
<td>It’s neither a fairy nor a bitter snake,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Već to cvili Perović-Bariću</td>
<td>But it’s Perović Barić whining,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U rukama Ćorović-Osmana.</td>
<td>In the hands of Ćorović Osman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vuk IV, 1:1–8; cf. Vuk VI, 78:1–8)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serbian</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Što procvili u Zadru kamenu</td>
<td>What is whining in the stony Zadar,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U tavnici mlad’ zadarskog bana?</td>
<td>In the dungeon of Zadar’s young ban?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al je vila, al je zmija ljuta?</td>
<td>Is it a fairy, or a bitter snake?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nit je vila, nit je zmija ljuta.</td>
<td>It’s neither a fairy nor a bitter snake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da je vila, u gori bi bila,</td>
<td>If it were a fairy, she’d be in the forest,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da je zmija, u stini bi bila,</td>
<td>If it were a snake, it’d be in the rocks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Već to cvile sužnji u tamnici.</td>
<td>It’s the whining of captives in the dungeon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MH III, 23:1–7; cf. Vuk VIII, 35:1–6)</td>
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In these examples the fairy (as a winged creature) figures instead of a bird – which in mythology and folklore is universally and consistently connected to the top of the Axis Mundi (whether this Axis is imagined as the World Tree, Caduceus, Uraeon/Uraeus or some similar model; cf. Delić 2012). Although the fairy is nowhere in South Slavic folklore described as a bird,\textsuperscript{14} in another type of (introductory) formulae she alternates with it. It is a formula in which a “voice” (news about an event) reaches the addressed person from a great distance, or from the future. In these cases, the mediators are:

\textsuperscript{13} Forest/mountain [Serb. gora/planina] figures as a point away from house/court/city [Serb. kuća/dvor/grad] both on horizontal and vertical levels: as far and as high.

\textsuperscript{14} Fairies are typically imagined as young, beautiful, slender girls with long golden hair, sometimes also with animal attributes (goat, donkey, horse, cow’s feet, etc.) (Sl. M: 80). Some of them are called “oblakinje” (from Serb. “oblak” – cloud); they have the power to influence the rain (“I’m neither crazy, nor too wise, / Nor a fairy to lead the clouds” [Serb. “Nit’ sam luda, nit’ odviše mudra, / Nit’ sam vila, da zbijam oblake”]; Vuk I, 599) and some sort of flying equipment – “krila” (wings) and “okrilje” (the word derived from the word \textit{krila}, but it is not known what it is exactly or how it looks like). Although called “wings”, they are not parts of the body: they can be taken off or given as a present (cf. MH I, 75:15–30). In one type of sujet (group of poems/variants), the hero has to steal the fairy’s wings before he can marry her. In Bulgarian folklore fairies sometimes wear dresses decorated with bird feathers (Sl. M: 80), which may also be a relic of the ornitomorphic image of fairies.
(1) a bird, as in Bulgarian folklore (Blg. “пиле”):

Пилѣ пѣе всрѣдѣ морѣ,
кайно пѣе, дума дума:
по турци щѣ мор да станѣ,
по христянѣ плѣн щѣ плѣни

(SbNU34, p. 17) –

(2) birds – two black ravens (Serb. “dva vrana gavrana”), or –

(3) a fairy (it is particularly significant that it is only in this type of formulae that the fairy produces/emits a sound like the falcon (Serb. “kliktati”)).  

In all cases, the “voice” [news] is bad – it reports about the accident that already happened or foretells an accident that will happen soon – which posits messengers between life and death:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GAVRAN GLASNOŠA</th>
<th>RAVEN THE NEWS-BEARER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Polećela dva vrana gavrana,  
Sa Mišara polja širokoga  
A od Šapca grada bijeloga,  
Krvavijeh kljuna do očiju,  
I krvavih nogu do koljena...  
(Vuk IV, 30:1–5) | Flying there come two coal-black ravens,  
From afar, from the plain of Mišar,  
From the white fortress of Šabac.  
Bloody are their beaks to the very eyes,  
Bloody are their claws to the very knees...  
(Vuk III, 88:1; Vuk IV, 45:1; Vuk IX, 25:4; similar in: Vuk VI, 54:59; Vuk VII, 56:1; Vuk VIII, 2:1; SANU IV, 23:1; Vuk VI, 54:1; Vuk IV, 2:1; 26:1; SANU III, 19:1; Vuk VIII, 65:1; Vuk IX, 6:63; MH VIII, 18:13, 26; SANU III, 52:10; SM 24:1; Vuk IV, 59:1–2; Vuk II, 45:19–120; Vuk II, 48:57–58) |

15 In oral epics, this kind of announcing is transferred to the hero too [Serb. “Kliće Stojan tanko glasovito”, “Kliće Iva kroz lug popevati”, “Kliće Nikac grlom bijelijem” etc., with meaning: “Stojan/Iva/Nikac... starts to sing”], which correlates with their attribution [Serb. “Ban udade sestricu Jelicu ... Za sokola Brđanina Pavla”, “Strahin-bane, ti sokole srpski”, “J'o Kaica, moj sokole sivi” etc.; in these examples heroes are metaphorically named as “falcons”).

Fairies are vocal participants in the epic formulae of the Serbian oral tradition. A fairy cries from Urvina mountain and calls Marko the Prince:

“Pobratime, Kraljeviću Marko! Znadeš, brate, što ti konj posrće? Žali Šarac tebe gospodara, Jer ćete se brzo rastanuti.”

(Vuk II, 74:19–24)

Although ravens could be incorporated in this formula on the basis of realities – as the last participants in battles (they were scavengers that fell on the bodies of dead warriors, which made them associated with the god of death, and – also – they could easily be taught to talk) – the very jagged mythological background indicates a more complex and deeper origin of the formula. However, even if we establish a parallel with:

1. Odin’s two birds (ravens Huginn and Muninn [Thought and Memory]), which leave Odin at dawn and fly around the world to bring him news of what is happening (Loma 2003: 121), or –

2. Shamanic practice (North Eurasia) “in which the raven plays such an important role of pre-shaman, cult hero and demiurge” (Loma 2003: 125), or –

3. The Mesopotamian myth of the Great Flood, where the raven that does not return (analogous to the biblical dove) indicates the end of the flood (Loma 2003: 110) – there still remains the fact that the archetype of mediation is steadily associated with this bird, and that it goes beyond specific myths and specific folklore traditions. In this respect, the “report of ravens” (the pattern that G. Gesemann and A. Schmaus named “raven the news-bearer”; Gezeman 2002 [1926], Šmaus 1937) is not different from the “fairy’s acclamation/prophecy” [Serb. “klikovanje vile”].

Becoming tied to underlying cultural codes – such as the basic structure of spatial axis – the archaic image of a fairy–bird in the epic formula becomes ossified, deformed and barely recognizable. Out of this formula, and
in other folk genres, this notion is practically forgotten and almost completely suppressed by other layers of tradition. Extremely rare and hardly noticeable signals confirm our findings. One of such comes from a ritual poem the purpose of which is to call down rain (Serb. “dodolske pesme”), where the ritual situation has contributed to its conservation. In that lyric poem the fairy is positioned on the top of the fir, high “up to the sky”, as well as a bird on the top of the World Tree in mythologies and their folklore derivatives:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Nasred sela vita jela,} & \quad \text{In the middle of the village – a thin fir,} \\
\text{Oj dodo, oj dodole!} & \quad \text{Oh, dodo, oh, dodole!} \\
\text{Vita jela čak do neba.} & \quad \text{A thin fir up to the sky.} \\
\text{Na vr' jele b'jela vila} & \quad \text{On the top of the fir – a white fairy,} \\
\text{U krilu joj ogledalo;} & \quad \text{With a mirror in her lap;} \\
\text{Okreće ga, prevrće ga.} & \quad \text{She’s turning it over and over.} \\
\text{Prevrnu se vedro nebo} & \quad \text{The clear sky turns over,} \\
\text{I udari rosna kiša.} & \quad \text{And a dewy rain sets in.} \\
\text{Oj dodo, oj dodole!} & \quad \text{Oh, dodo, oh, dodole!} \\
\text{(AnL 132)} & \quad &
\end{align*}
\]

1.2 Segmentation and semantisation of physical space

Different segments of physical space carry the same system of connotations as the aforementioned spatial relations (up : down, left : right, in front of : behind, etc.). Among them, as particularly accentuated, stand out house/tower/court and city (as closed, safe human spaces), on one hand, and mountain, water (sea, lake) and road (as open, demonic/chthonic, dangerous locations), on the other (Detelić 1992). The logic of systemic oppositions determined – among other things – formulaic epic attribution: mountain (forest) became black, sea – grey, tower/court and city – white (Detelić & Ilić 2006; Detelić & Delić 2013).17 Similarly, the typical epic antagonist is the Black Arab (from the Turkish perspective: Black George [Serb. Karadörde, Turkish “kara” = black]), while the attribution of the hero18 inclines toward the op-

17 Origins of attribution are not the same (white city [Serb. “beli grad”] carries the traces of sacredness, as well as white church [Serb. “bela crkva”], for example), nor is the symbolic of colours monolithic and uncontroversial (both white and black can carry different, mutually contradictory symbolic values); cf. Detelić & Ilić 2006; with a bibliography.

18 This refers not (only) to the character that is perceived as “our” from the author’s position (perspective of a singer), but to the hero as an eponym of a genre, with the following structural elements: parts of the body, clothes, horse, weapon (as private/personal), and family, court/tower and city (as public). Therefore, the second type of attribution – imposed by the rules and the imperatives of a heroic genre – sets apart formulaic description of body parts, weapons and duels as heroic (cf. Detelić 2008).
posite semantic field: his throat and arms are formulaically described as white (Serb. “belo grlo”, “bele ruke”), his cheek – as bright (Serb. “svetli obraz”), his weapons – as shiny (Serb. “svijetlo oružje”) (Delić & Delić 2013).

The described segmentation of space has generated a whole range of formulae based upon characteristics of chthonic zones and taboos related to them. Correlation voice = human : silence = inhuman generated the formula “singing through the mountain”, which figures as a typical sign of violating the chthonic space. In entire circles of variants (different models of sujet/story/plot), singing through a mountain initiates a conflict between hero and demon (fairy) or some isomorphic figure (rebel/rebels [Serb. “hajduk”/“hajduci”] / mountain wolves [Serb. “gorski vuci”]). This formula usually includes the motif of an extraordinary/destructive power of the voice, inherited from mythic layers. The origin of the motif (in narrative terms) – as supposed by Lj. Radenković – could be found in the myth of Thunder God and his family (cf. Sudnik & Tsivian 1980: 242; Radenković 1988):

| Kad ugleda mlada Andelija,                  | When young Andjelija saw it, |
| Zapiva mu grlom debelijem.                 | She started to sing in a loud voice. |
| Kako piva, kuja je rodila:                 | How does she sing! Bitch gave her birth! |
| S gorice je lišće polatilo                  | The leaves fell from the trees, |
| Po planini trava pokleknula.               | The grass flattened in the mountain. |
| To začuo Malen harambaša,                  | Harambasha Malen heard it, |
| Pijuć vino s trideset hajduka.             | while drinking wine with his thirty hajduks. |
| (MH VIII, 16:24–30)                        |                              |

Similarly, the correlation between the oppositions pure dead : impure dead and graveyard (consecrated space) : mountain (chthonic space) generated a very complex formula – “burial in the mountain”, which sublimated a number of key elements of the cult of the dead. Those who die in an impure place – even if it is through no fault of their own – assume the characteristics of the space itself and have to be buried where they died (Detelić 1996b: 99). Therefore, such persons are not carried to the cemetery. The grave is dug on the spot (in the mountain or some other impure place – by the road, 19 The symbolic aspect of that voice partly overlaps with the notion of the (cosmic) vertical: “The strength of the voice is usually expressed through two elements: the leaves fall from the trees (= up – down) and the grass flies up from the ground (= down – up), creating a symbolic axis Heaven – Earth” (Radenković 1998: 240).
near the crossroads and the like), and arranged in a way that incorporates elements of ritual/cult (water, appropriate plants, funeral gifts – small coins and gold coins [Serb. “groši i dukati”] etc.; cf. Detelić 2008; Detelić 2013). This case shows as evident the distinctive tendency of mythical thinking toward tautology – i.e. multiplication and accumulation of details from the same semantic field:

(1) *mountain* is a liminal space (entrance to the other world);
(2) *water* is “strong” border (between the worlds of the living and the dead);
(3) *tree* and *liana* (grapevine, rose) as mediators between the upper and nether worlds (analogous to the world of the living and the world of the dead);
(4) *sitting in the forest* – as an absence of movement – is a metaphor for death.

**THE GRAVE OF LJEPOSAVA,**
**THE BRIDE OF MILIĆ THE STANDARD-BEARER**
*(in the mountain)*

Sastaše se kićeni svatovi,  The wedding guests came together,
Sabljama joj sanduk satesaše,  They made her casket with sabres,
Nadžacima raku iskopaše,  They dug her grave with hatchets,
Saraniše lijepu devojku  They buried the beautiful girl

Otcuda se jasno sunce rada;  Where the bright sun rises;
Posuše je grošim’ i dukatim’;  They threw groats and ducats on her;
Čelo glave vodu izvedoše,  They brought water to the head of the grave,
Oko vode klupe pogradiše,  And made benches around the water,
Posadište ružu s obje strane:  And planted a rose on either side:
Ko j’ umoran, neka se odmara;  For him who is tired – to get rest;
Ko je mladan, nek se kiti cv’jećem;  Who is young – to spruce himself with flowers;
Ko je žedan, neka vodu piše  Who is thirsty – to drink water,
Za dušicu lijepu devojke.  For the soul of the beautiful girl.

*(Vuk III, 78:189–201)*

**THE GRAVE OF IVAN SENJANIN’S NEPHEW**
*(by the road)*

Lepo ga je uja saranio,  His uncle buried him nicely,
Javor-sanduk lep mu satesao,  He made him a maple-wood casket,
Šaren sanduk ko šareno jaje  Colourful casket like a colourful egg,
S leve strane te šarene grane,  On the left side – those colourful branches,
S desne strane sitne knjiže male.  On the right side – tiny little letters.
Jošt na lepšem mestu ukopa ga,  He buried him in an even nicer place,
Raku kopa kraj druma careva,  He dug the pit by the emperor’s road,
Oko groba stole pometao,  Around the grave he put tables,
Čelo glave ružu usadio,
A do nogu jelu usadio.
Do te jele bunar iskopao
I za jelu dobra konja svež'o:
Koji prođe tud drumom carevim
Ko j’ umoran, neka otpočine,
Ko je mlađan, pa je za kićenje,
Nek’ se kiti ružicom rumenom,
A koga je obrvala žećca,
Bunar ima, nek’ utoli žećcu,
Ko je junak vredan za konjica,
Nek’ ga dreši, pa nek drumom jezdi
Sve za zdravlje Ive Senjanina
I za dušu nejaka nećaka
(SANU III, 40:93–114)

In this case the epic is indifferent not only to the sex of the diseased (male/female), but also to the formal (confessional) differences between the Orthodox and Catholic funeral rites. The graves of both Christians and Muslims are treated in an analogous way:

THE GRAVE OF AHMED THE STANDARD-BEARER
AND BEJZA FROM VARAD
(in the field)

Otalen se Turci povratili,
Mrtvu oni Bejzu ponesoše.
Kad su sišli u polje kaniško
Do sokola Ahmed-bajraktara,
Tu su konje dobre razjahali,
A Ahmedu kuću načinili
I kod njega Bejzi Varatkinji.

Više bajre turbe načinili,
Oko njega bašcu ogradili,
A po bašći voće posadili,
A u bašću vodu navratili,
Oko vode klupe pogradili,
Kraj turbeta džadu načinili:

The Turks returned from there,
And took dead Bejza with them.
When they reached the field of Kaniža,
And the falcon, Ahmed the standard-bearer,
They dismounted their good horses,
And made a house for Ahmed,

And near him one for Bejza from Varad.
They made a türbe above the standard-bearer,
Enclosed the garden around it,
And planted fruit trees in the garden,
And brought water to the garden,

And a road by the türbe:
Who is thirsty – to drink water,
Who is hungry – to eat fruits,
Who is tired – to get rest,

And to mention Ahmed the standard-bearer
And Bejza the girl from Varad.

(MH IV, 44:430–447)

---

Turbe is a Muslim tomb similar to a chapel or a mausoleum, usually built for noblemen.
2 Conceptualization of time

Unlike space, time does not have the “character of being” (cf. Cassirer 1985 III: 144) and, as noted above, cannot be perceived by senses. Therefore, the language itself is forced (before the epic modelling even starts) to denote temporal dimensions and relations by spatial determinants (cf. the examples in section 1.1). Even the exact sciences have not been able to avoid this type of figurative representation: time is imagined as an infinite line, as a spiral or circle, or – in non-standard topologies of time – as a ray (half-line) without beginning or end, as a line segment, or as a branching time (cf. Arsenijević 2003: 59–73). In folklore, time is predominantly conceptualized through cosmic and biological rhythms, which are perceived as fundamental. As the categories of physical space are defined in relation to the human body in a gravitational field,21 the experience of time flow is mediated through phases of human life, as they are biologically and socially defined and segmented. Hence, oral formulae are often associated with key rites of passage (birth, marriage, death) or daily and annual cycles. The first mentioned can be found in different positions in the text – initial (like in the bugarstica22 about the death of Vuk Grgurević Branković, written down in the mid-seventeenth century) or final (like in a Macedonian lyric poem):

INITIAL POSITION

Što mi graka postoja u gradu u Kupjenomu,
Kupjenomu gradu,
Ali mi se djetić ženi, ali mlado čedo krsti?
Ah, ni mi se djetić ženi, niti mlado čedo krsti
Za Boga da vam sam,
Nego mi se Vuk despot s grešnom dušom razdjeljuje.
(Pantić 2002: 75)

What’s that noise in the town of Kupjenovo,
The town of Kupjenovo,
Is it a young man getting married, or a child being baptized?
Oh, neither is a young man getting married, nor a child baptized,
For God’s sake,
But Despot Vuk is parting with his sinful soul (= dies).23

---

21 In traditional societies space was even measured by parts of the body – foot, span, cubit, etc.

22 Bugarstica is a special type of oral poem, sung in long verses (15 or 16 syllables), mostly in urban areas. They were mainly recorded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the Adriatic coast.

23 Vuk Grgurević Branković – in oral epics known also as Vuk the Fiery Dragon [Srb. “Zmaj Ognjeni Vuk”; the name “Vuk” means “wolf”] – was a member of the Branković
FINAL POSITION

[...] Curved grapevine has heard it:
“Why do you boast, oh rose on the window!
I’ll bear a lot of grapes this year,
I will marry many young heroes,
I will marry many young girls,
I will bury three hundred old elders,
I will baptize three hundred crazy kids.”

The same formulaic nucleus is identified in a group of poems in which
three kings/nobles of another religion or nation invite the hero to baptism
(= birth), to wedding (= marriage), or to war (= death). This formula is as a
rule in the initial position:

Ali Marku tri knjige dodoše:
Jedna knjiga od Stambola grada,
Od onoga cara Pojazeta;
Druga knjiga od Budima grada,
Od onoga kralja Budimskoga;
Treća knjiga od Sbinja grada,
Od vojvode Sbinjanin-Janka.
Koja knjiga od Stambola grada,
Car ga u njoj na vojsku poziva,
Na Arapsku ljutu pokrajinu;
Koja knjiga od Budima grada,
Kralj ga u njoj u svatove zove,
U svatove na kumstvo vjenčano,
Da ga vjenča s gospodom kraljicom;
Koja knjiga od Sbinja grada,
Janko u njoj na kumstvo zaziva,
Da mu krsti deva nejaka sina.
(Vuk II, 62:3–19)

Three letters came to Marko,
One letter – from the city of Istanbul,
From that emperor Bayezid;
The second one – from the city of Buda,
From that king of Buda;
The third one – from the city of Sibiu,
From Captain Janos of Sibiu,
In the letter from the city of Istanbul,
The emperor invites him to join the army,
In the bitter province of Arabia;
In the letter from the city of Buda,
The king invites him to the wedding,
To be his best man,
To marry the king to the queen;
In the letter from the city of Sibinj,
Janko asks him to be the godfather,
To baptize his two young sons.

In traditional cultures, the daily cycle was measured primarily by the
motion of celestial bodies (planets, Moon, Sun). In many ancient religions,
and in South Slavic folklore, a key role was played by Venus [Serb. “Danica”,
both a female name and the name for the morning star, daystar]. It assumed
this role probably because of the correlation between its movement and the
sunrise/sunset, which generated a system of formulae, mainly introductory,
both in lyric and in epic poetry:

family “of Srem” [Serb. “sremski Branković”] and a famous fighter against the Otto-
mans. They were the last medieval rulers of Serbia before it was finally conquered by the
Ottomans after the fall of Smederevo in 1459.
LYRICS

Falila se Danica zvijezda
Da je prose trojii prosocii:
Jedni prose za žareno sunce,
Drugi prose za sjajna mjeseca,
Treći prose za sedam vlašića.

[...]  
Al’ govori žareno sunašce:
“Podi za me, Danice zvijezdo!
Svu noćicu za sunašcem ajde,
A u danu pred sunašcem ajde.”
(Rajković 185)

And the bright Sun says:
“Marry me, the Morning Star!
All night long you’ll follow the Sun,
All day long – go in front of the Sun.”

Bright Sun goes to its residence (= to sleep),
The Morning Star goes ahead of him,
And she quietly speaks to it:
“Bright Sun, are you tired?”
(Ristić 11)

EPICS

Kad Danica na istok izade,
Mesec jasan nad zaodom beše,
Pak Milošu govorit počeše…
(SANU II, 30:1425–1428)

Još zorica ne zabijelila,
Ni danica pomolila lica,
I oddana ni spomena nema,
Dok poklikta sa Javora vila
(Vuk IV, 38:1–4; cf.: Vuk II, 95; Vuk III, 10, 39, 47; Vuk IV, 38, 43, 46; Vuk VIII, 42; Vuk IX, 25; KH I, 25; KH II, 43, 57; KH III, 8, 10; MH II, 45; MH VIII, 6; SANU II, 31; SM 11, 134)

Kad u jutru zora zab’jeljela,
I danica pero pomolila
(KH I, 2; cf.: KH II, 50; MH IV, 50;
MH IX, 23)

Još zorica ne zabijelila,
ni Danica pomolila krilca
(SM 85)

When the Morning Star rose in the east,
Clear Moon was setting down,
Both [heroes] came to Miloš,
And began to talk to Miloš...

The dawn has not broken yet,
Nor has the Morning Star showed her face,
And there’s still no sign of daylight,
But the fairy [vila] cries from Javor mountain.

When the dawn broke in the morning,
And the Morning Star showed her feather.

The dawn has not broken yet,
Nor has the Morning Star showed her wings.

24 In Serbian, the nouns Sun (neutrum), Moon and Pleiades (Serb. “Vlašići”) are masculine nouns, so they can marry the “morning star” Danica (Venus), which is a feminine noun.
Such position in oral formulae and such importance in time conceptualization leads to the conclusion that Danica, the Morning Star (Venus) could be a folklore counterpart of the primordial deity of Time, which in ancient myths and philosophy precedes cosmogony (cf. Šćepanović 2012: 19–25 with relevant bibliography). This symbolic and ontological dimension, inherited from the most ancient cultural layers, could explain quite stable figuring of the “star” Danica in the initial oral formulae:

**EPICS**

Mjesec kara zvijezdu danicu:
“De si bila, zvijezdo danice?
De si bila, de si dangubila?
Dangubila tri bijela dana?”

Danica se njemu odgovara:
“Ja sam bila, ja sam dangubila
Više bjela grada Bijograda,
Gledajući čuda velikoga,
De dijele braća očevinu,
Jakšić Dmitar i Jakšić Bogdana…”

(Vuk II, 98:1–10)

**LYRICS**

Sjajna zvjezdo, de si sinoć sjala?
“Ja sam sjala više Biograda,
Osvitala više Carigrada,
Te gledala šta se tamo radi…”

(Bašić 94)

Dve se zvezde na nebu skaraše,
Preodnica i zvezda Danica.
Preodnica Danici besedi:
“Oj Danice, ležavkinjo,
Ti preleža od večer’ do sveta,
Ja obido’ zemlju i gradove…”

(SANU I, 275)

The Moon scolds the Morning Star:
“Where’ve you been, Morning Star?
Where’ve you been, wasting your time?
Wasting your time for three white days?”

The Morning Star replies:
“I’ve been, I’ve wasted my time,
Above the white city of Bijograd,
Watching a great wonder,
Brothers dividing their patrimony,
Jakšić Dmitar and Jakšić Bogdan…”

Shiny star, where did you shine last night?
“I shined above Biograd,
Rose above Constantinople,
And watched what’s happening there…”

The two stars quarreled in the sky,
The Forerunner and the Morning Star.
The Forerunner tells to the Morning Star:
“Oh Morning Star, lazy slacker,
You were lying from evening to morning,
While I circled the country and the cities…”

The aforementioned ancient philosophical concept (time as primordial deity which precedes cosmogony) is based upon the distinction between mythical time (which is an absolute past) and historical time (within which each item points to another that lies further behind, so recourse to the past becomes regressus in infinitum; cf. Cassirer II 1985: 112). Mythical past – as the time of the “origin” of things both natural and cultural – is replicated in ritual situations and intervals that carry the quality of mythic/holy time through the logic of a “beginning”. Like the mythical experience of space and its conceptualization in traditional cultures, mythical perception of time separates homogeneous physical continuum and validates its segments differently. As G. Mal’tsev showed in a broad comparative context,
it highlights *early morning/dawn* as the densest and the most productive formulaic nucleus:

In the daily cycle, the “dawn”, the appearance of the sun – that is the time of the “beginning”, the time of birth and of rebirth, the time associated with destiny. The magic of sunrise is caused by these notions. As every “beginning”, the morning is sacralized and mythologized ... It is on the morning – the beginning – that depends the development, the destiny of the coming day. (Mal’tsev 1989: 79–80)

The given complex of notions (“magic of the morning”) and the given logic of thinking founded one of the most widespread oral formulae. It has many stylizations (cf. tables below), occurs in a broad cultural areal (Panslavic context) and in a wide range of genres:

(1) in proverbs with the meaning “The *early* bird catches the worm” [Serb. “*Ko rano rani – dve sreće grabi*”; “Who gets up *early* – doubles his luck”], [Rus. “*Kto рано встает, тому бог подает*”, “Who gets up *early* – God gives him luck/goods”]

(2) lyric poems (especially ritual)

(3) epic poems

(4) phrases (such as “Good morning!”)

(5) legends/narratives, etc.

The formula shows a slightly higher lexical fixation in the initial position, but not a higher frequency, because every change or the beginning of an action can be linked to early morning/dawn/sunrise in the medial stages as well:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INITIAL POSITION (EPICS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rano rani²⁶ dakone Stevane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vuk II, 3:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rano rani Turkinja devojka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vuk II, 57:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rano rani Kraljeviću Marko, Rano rani do ishoda sunca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MH II, 7:1–2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


²⁶ In Serbian both the adverb *early* (Serb. “*rano*”) and the verbs with the meaning “to get up early in the morning”, “to do/start something early in the morning” (Serb. “*rani*”, “*poranio*”, “*uranio*”) are derived from the same root (*figura etymologica*).
Podranio Kraljeviću Marko,  
Podranio u nedjelju svetu  
Prije zore i bijela dana,  
Podranio u lov u planine  
(MH I, 40:1–4)

Uranila Kosovka djevojka,  
Uranila rano u nedelju  
(Vuk II, 51:1-2)

Zoran junak rano podranio  
(Vuk IX, 7:1)

Sitna knjiga rano podranila  
(Vuk VIII, 72:1)

MEDIAL POSITION (EPICS)

Rano rani ljuba Prijezdina,  
Rano rani na sam Đurđev danak,  
Rano rani na vodicu ladnu  
(SANU II, 78:43–45)

Poranio beže Milan-beže  
(Vuk II, 10:63)

Prije beže bješe poranio  
(Vuk VI, 6:56)

Dobro ti si jutro poranio  
(EH 1:396)

Na Ilinj-dan bijah poranila  
(KH III, 4:135)

Uranio slavan car Lazare  
(Vuk II, 43:106)

Noć noćio, rano podranio  
(MH III, 4:134)

The wife of Prijezda got up early,  
She got up early on St. George’s day,  
She went early to the water...

Milan-bey got up early...

Bey got up early, before...

You got up early on a good morning...

I got up early on St. Elias’ day...

Glorious emperor Lazar got up early...

He stayed overnight, and got up early...

In lyric poems, the variational field of formula (the scope of variation) is slightly larger (among other things, because of the existence of multiple metric forms), but semantics is the same:

Podranila Đurđevića Jela,  
Prije Dura u goricu došla,  
Nabrala je emilje i bosilja,  
A najviše đurđeva cvijeća  
(SANU I, 95)

Helen, the wife of George, got up early,  
She came to the woods before George,  
She picked some immortelle and basil,  
But most of all she picked St. George’s flowers [lily of the valley].

Get up early, Bela, get up early
Get up early, Bela, to fetch the water.
Another type of qualitative distinction is observed in the division into good and bad moments, which chronological series makes discrete on the basis of the nature (features) of time intervals or moments:

**GOOD MOMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good morning, Ljubović bey</th>
<th>O God, may it be in a good moment for them!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U čao čas po me ili po te.</td>
<td>Go, children, may the moment of your depart be good!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vuk III, 70)</td>
<td>In a good moment, Osman the standard-bearer!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simeune, dugo jadan bio!</td>
<td>Cause I’m getting married, let it be in a good moment!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vuk III, 70)</td>
<td>Go ahead, my bay, in hundred good moments!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U zó čas si zemljuz zamutilo,</td>
<td>Good morning, Ljubović bey,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A u gori Kosovo razbitio.</td>
<td>In bad moment either for you, or for me!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(SM 62)</td>
<td>Simeon, stay miserable for a long time!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BAD MOMENT**

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<th>Good morning, Ljubović bey</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
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27 Analogy with the notion of *kairos* in ancient and medieval cultures is imposed. In ancient traditions noun *kairos* (καιρός) was sometimes used as a synonym for *chronos* (χρόνος). *Chronos* is, however, often associated with eternity (Šćepanović 2012), which make it the basic term in the area of philosophical categories (radić 2012: 35). On the other hand, *kairos* has a more specified meaning and generally is determined as time suitable for some action, both in antiquity (Aristotle) and in the middle ages (cf. radić 2012: 35, 42).

Even this reduced and incomplete review indicates extreme complexity of codes that fund oral formulae and complexity of meanings generated or transferred by them. In this paper, the focus was on the conceptualization of space and time – and even that only partially. Among other things, a whole system of formulae which structures annual cycle (speaking in cultural categories) was neglected, as well as some other means of conceptualizing, like Church calendar (“From St. George’s to St. Demetrius’ Day” [Serb. “Od Đurđeva do Mitrova dana’’]) or seasonal changes. For the latter, the most beautiful example is the famous Slavic antithesis at the beginning of the Hasanaginica:

What is whitening there, in the green hills?
Is it snow, or is it the swans?
If it were snow, it would have melted long ago,
If it were swans, they would have flown away.
It is neither snow nor swans,
But the tent of aga Hasan-aga.

(Vuk III, 80: 1–6)

Out of our focus stayed the much wider area – actually quite a few segments of culture:

1 ritual and ethical models: marriage to a maiden from a far away place, for example [Serb. ženidba “na daleko”]; establishing of loyalty or heroism, which generated a number of crucial “stable” epithets (faithful wife [Serb. “verna ljuba”], heroic head/shoulders/chest/duel [Serb. “glava/pleća/prsa junačka”, “megdan junački”]) (cf. Detelić 2008), and so on;

2 elements of social stratification (social hierarchy and etiquette, entitling),

3 whole areas where cultural codes (Indo-European heritage) converge with distinctive types of conceptualization; the best example of that sort is category of colour, especially domains of black and white and corresponding formulaic attribution.²⁹

Besides, a sublime life and historical experience also participate in constitution of oral formulae, which is, for example, obvious in attribution of:

²⁹ Linguistic literature on the subject is quite extensive, especially studies based on the cognitive approach (basic study in this field is Berlin & Kay 1969, which initiated further investigations and theories, prototype theory, for example). About the semantics of white colour in South Slavic oral epics, mainly in relation to the formulae white town, white tower and white hall see Detelić & Ilić 2006 (with bibliography of linguistic provenance that covers the Slavic cultural area) and Detelić & Delić 2013.
(1) arms (after the origin: sabre from Damascus/Sham or Germany [Serb. “sablja dimišćija/alamanka/šamlijanka”], rifle from Italy [Serb. “puška latinka/talijanka”] or from Germany [“danickinja”]),

(2) cities (as capitals [Serb. “stojni Beograd/Carigrad/Prizren”, from “prestoni” = capital], or –

(3) typical characters (Latins are described as wise [Serb. “premudri Latini”, “mudra Latinija”] and as tricksters [Serb. “Latini su stare varalice”, “Latini su mudre varalice”], which are folk stereotypes based upon political skills and flexibility of the Venetian Republic).

Formulae can also contain information about the genre or the type of sujet (plot) which follows, usually the initial ones. In such cases, they can serve as specific “switchers” too (they send information about the change of discourse, i.e. about the transition from vernacular to poetic discourse; cf. Petković 1990; Detelić 1996: 23–25). Furthermore, formulae have specific intertextual disposition, for which J. M. Foley introduces the term traditional referentiality (Foley 1995).

All the mentioned aspects – together or in some combination – determine the genesis and the structure of formulae. It allows us to regard each of them as the “tip of the iceberg”, whose underwater massif constitutes of traditional system as a whole (whereby that whole must include categories of thinking, genre norms and other factors that common concept of traditional system does not involve). Therefore, the survival of formulae should be linked not only (and perhaps not even primarily) to their mne-motechnic function, but also to the fact that tradition reproduces, defines and maintains itself by them:

Tradition – it is primarily semantic, evaluative category. So, we investigated the formula – a kind of overwater part of an iceberg. “Underwater” part – most substantial and probably the most significant – does not express itself directly in specific ways [...] A deep layer of tradition with its own parameters, trends and connections can be observed as comprehensive and potentialy inexhaustible centre that ‘irradiates’ meanings. Tradition – it is a generating category, and formulae act as canonical fixations of certain areas of the traditional seman-tics.30 (Mal’tsev 1989: 68–69)

30 “Традиция – это прежде всего смысловая, ценностная категория. Так, исследуемые нами формулы – это своего рода надводная часть айсберга. А часть ’подводная’ – что наиболее содержательное и, пожалуй, зачастую наиболее существенное – непосредственно не выражается особыми путями [...] Глубинный уровень традиции со своими собственными параметрами, тенденциями и связями может рассматриваться как содержательный и потенциалъно неисчерпаемый центръ, ’иррадиирующий’ значения. Традиция – это порождающая категория, и формулы выступают как каноническая фиксация определенных зон традиционной семантики.”
Therefore, the analogy that has been established lately between folkloristic approach to the formulae and cognitive-linguistic approach to speech (metaphor),\textsuperscript{31} except at the level of creation (composition-in-performance) – and before at the level of creation – should be recognized at the level of semantic structures. Semantic structure of formulae and semantic structure of metaphor and linguistic units in general could be equally well described in terms of both scientific disciplines: \textit{iceberg} (“iceberg” – Mal’tsev 1989, “the tip of the iceberg” – Fauconnier & Turner 2002), \textit{hidden knowledge}, \textit{hidden complexity}, \textit{frame semantics}, or perhaps most accurately – \textit{compressed meanings}. The meanings that are “compressed” and modelled originate, as we have seen, in the system of traditional culture – which has absorbed elements from extremely diverse spheres (conceptualization, rituals, life realities, historical experience, common law, ethics, etc.). Those meanings are, however, upgraded with new “income” in every new/concrete realization (i.e. poem) (cf. Detelić 1996: 106–107) and this is the area where aesthetics rivals poetics.

\textit{UDC 801.676:801.81
821.163-13.0
398(–163)}

\textbf{Corpus}
Collections available at: http://www.mirjanadetelic.com/e-baze.php:

\textbf{AnL} – \textit{Antologija srpske lirske usmene poezije}. Zoja Karanović (prir.). Novi Sad 1996. (in Cyrillic)

\textsuperscript{31} Cf. presentations at the conference \textit{Oral Poetics and Cognitive Science} (The School of Language and Literature at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS), Freiburg, January 24–26, 2013; conference website: https://sites.google.com/site/oral-poetcogsci/).


SbNU – Sbornik za narodni umotvorenia nauka i knizhovna, ot. kn. 27. Sbornik za narodni umotvorenia i narodopis, MNP (ot kn. XIX izd. Bulgarskoto knizhovno družestvo, a ot kn. XXVII – BAN), Sofia 1889 –.


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L. Delić, Poetic Grounds of Epic Formulae


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