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СЛИВАНЕТО НА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИТЕ ПЕРИОДИ В СРЪБСКИЯ УСТЕН ЕПОС

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THE FUSION OF HISTORICAL PERIODS IN SERBIAN ORAL EPIC

In Serbian oral epic, three major historical dominants are distinguished (oldest, middle and modern times). However, in representation of time there are specific poetic laws and devices. The epic tends to blend and rearrange chronological sequences and epic heroes in order to show a specific idea. Typical epic techniques are bringing together heroes from different periods, and creating anachronistic couples, blood and non-blood relations, pseudo-genealogical lines. Intertextual temporal relations are created by repetition and parallels of similar motifs, attributes, situations. Becoming symbolic chronotopes, some particular elements of epic space have important role in bridging over historical periods. By choosing the specific narrative optics, epic singers have the important share in interpretation of historical events and heroes. Mentioned aspects and techniques contribute to the complex representation of the vision of historical past in the oral epic poetry.

Key words: Serbian oral epic, temporality, relation between history and tradition, poetic techniques for representation of time in epic, invention of tradition, pseudo-genealogical constructions, epic singers' interpretation of national history.

As universal category, time in oral epic is directly related to the problem of representation of poetic world and to its relation to empirical reality. The issue of fusion of epic-historical periods in Serbian epic is part of a broader topic of epic temporality and relations between history and epic poetry, which had been largely discussed in oral-literary criticism and folkloristics[1].

Epic time can be examined on the level of oral performance (the interval needed for rendering of epic song in empirical time can be related to the initial ritual time of epic performance), or a particular song (a specific internal organization of time is connected with other elements of poetic structure, spatial organization, and line of action). From the general aspect of national epic poetry as a whole, time universal is observed on the level of broader epic units and historical dominants:

I. Epic periods (old, middle and modern times); within a single epic period there are different generations of heroes who belong to different categories of time and

chronotopes, which can be marked on the poetic level by the mode of representation and the level of symbolization of characters.

II. Epic circles or cycles, concentrated around: 1) popular hero, forming his biography, 2) specific heroic type in concrete social background, 3) focal historic event, and 4) popular theme.

The poetic time of Serbian oral epic encompasses long prehistoric and historical period: the legendary age; the heroic age (from the beginning of the Serbian state in the 12th century and the investiture of Nemanjić dynasty); the age of slavery under the Turkish govern, from the 15th century up to the end of the 18th century; and the age of liberation and foundation of the modern Serbian state in the beginning of the 19th century. This threefold categorization reflects the most common classification of Serbian epic songs presented in Vuk Karadžić's collections, which comprises the oldest, the middle and the modern times. The old times are differentiated from the middle and the modern times by the use of arms (medieval arms / fire arms). Each period represents specific poetic construction and has internal coherence, but taken together these periods create the impression of unique stylistic and ideological narrative complex of national past.

Closer examination of epic temporality shows that epic periods differ primarily in epic poets' relation to the old and the modern times. The heroic age is generally represented as glorious distant past, so it is embellished, its positive heroes are set as ethical examples that should be followed and emulated, or despised, if they are negative. The middle times and particularly the modern times are closer to epic poets, so those heroes are far from superhuman, but nevertheless valiant. On poetic level, temporality differs in idealization, heroic stylization and relation to empirical reality. The heroic age is chivalric and may include hyperbolic and fantastic elements pertaining to fairy tales, mythological and demonological legends, or religious legends. On the opposite, the middle and the modern epic schemes are more realistic and naturalistic, bring in novelistic elements and plots, but also faithful rendering of episodes introducing actual contemporaries and their rebelling experience. Differences in style are evinced in hierarchy of events, heroes and ethical values, and in semantics of chronotope.

The attention was drown to special features of epic time and its nonequivalent relation to empirical historic time. Putilov wrote that epic time represents a "specific artistic reconstruction, a 'model' which is related to a complex of popular historical concepts and ideals" (Putilov 1990: 260). This model developed gradually and it was never petrified, but remained flexible and open for new impressions and insights. Because of this "a world of objects", i.e. a material part of model, corresponds to more than one epoch and territory. Epic time is intricately connected with space and the line of action. Likhachev (Лихачов 1972) and Nekljudov (Nekljudov 1979) discussed the constant tendency of epic poetry to "close" time within a song. Linear epic time flows regularly, but hero and story line tend to create a circle and "close" both action and time exactly in the point from which the narration had started. Having analyzed many diverse epic traditions, Hatto came up with a categorization of epic time[2]. In Serbian oral epic Hatto found "deviant time": "Here 'Epic Time' might be divided between a time when Heroes were relaxed, temperamental and incalculable (like Marko Kraljević), and a time when they

were tense, self-controlled and dependable (like various Haiduks), with the crucial lost battle of Kosovo (1389) as divider, thus pre-Kosovo setting (Deviant): post-Kosovo setting (Exemplary). Yet experts will quote exceptions."

   To explore a temporal aspect in the scope of one epic period is more complex in comparison to a time dimension in one particular song. The constitution process of an epic period occurs in the mind of the oral poet and in the mind of audience, and it is constantly rearranging on diachronic and synchronic plane. Awareness of the limits of epic period is correlated to communal traditional knowledge in specific culture and point of time, though it may vary individually, like in selection of heroes or monasteries for a catalogue. Epic singers have their own vision of epic period, and their selection reveals their internalized stratification of epic world and system of values.

   Neglect of chronological sequencing, which may affect temporal fusion and condensation, can be illustrated by differences in selection of heroes for a wedding catalogue in two poems recorded in the beginning of the 18th century in territory of Vojna Krajina (Military Frontier)[3]. In the poem about the wedding of Vojvoda Vojin[4], extensive catalogue of heroes includes champions of old and middle epic period. However, the groom Vojvoda Vojin of Vučitrn on Kosovo and his bride Jelica of Prizren on Kosovo, sister of Emperor Stefan, belong to the old heroic scheme. Since their wedding has splendour of national imperial ceremony, both sides are "ours", so there is no need for typical wedding obstacles. Therefore the wedding catalogue assembles heroes known for their valour and prowess regardless of time in which their historical prototypes lived, or epic period to which they were associated. It is typical for the use of anachronisms, confusion of generations and tolerant relation in respect to traditional chronology. Although the first seven names are listed chronologically correctly, consistent with historical life span of characters' prototypes, the following five names mentioned in continuation are chronologically intermixed.[5] This inappropriate sequence is not mistake and can be explained in the line of what was said about the specific vision of old and middle epic period of every particular epic singer. The selection of champions for the catalogue and the assignment of ritual kinship roles to old scheme heroes reveal singer's estimation of characters value in tradition. The second example (Гезeman 1925, № 188) illustrate how oral poets internalize the implicit traditional hierarchy of epic characters and evaluate them accordingly. Ivo Crnojević, the old style hero, summoned many wedding guests who are about to contest for the bride. In a wedding catalogue old style heroes also have vital ritual kinship roles, and chronological order of sequencing corresponds to their popularity. However, organizational logic of the catalogue follows a pattern of a military campaign, so some special martial roles are added[6]. The presence of prominent old and middle style heroes in Ivo Crnojević's wedding procession is motivated by obstacles, but in continuation of song champions actually didn't demonstrate their skills because they were frightened. There is a humour, even a touch of parody when it became clear that in this spectacular parade no one dares to confront the Black Arab ("Crni Arapin"), a demonic adversary, except for Marko Kraljević. Examples confirm a fusion of epic heroes and periods in both songs, although singers' narrative perspectives are different, as well as their comprehension of epic period and the message they want to pass on. In the first song, catalogue glorifies the

groom, champions, and indirectly epic epoch, and in the second example, humorous and parodical elements distort or annul historical vision of epic period.

The process of constitution of epic period is extremely fluctuating and dependent on culture, social conditions, and personal factors like talent or ability for mental comprehension and imagination. On a macro level, epic singers constitute epic periods by setting spatio-temporal limits and creating a mental map of their historical and national past. They compress and compact epic time, and set markers in space of imagined epic world. On a micro level, oral poets are inclined to harmonize their own repertoire, bring contradictions into line, reduce redundancy and form a coherent totality of heroes and events. In that way they create their own narrative position and standpoint in relation to folk tradition, history and the actual moment of performance.

Popular heroes are carriers of epic periods symbolically and semantically. A character is linked to a particular epic epoch on account of the bond with his historical prototype. However, epic hero is not absolutely conditioned by his historical prototype in temporal sense – his epic existence can be shorter or longer than a life span of his historical prototype. Generally speaking, epic heroes are mobile in correlation to characters within the same or other epic period, but some are more mobile than the other.

Some anachronistic connections between characters may contribute to better understanding of prolongation or condensation of temporal extent and coherence of epic period. The way heroes are positioned in the scope of one epic period doesn't have to correspond to general interactions within that period. Bowra pointed to examples of what he considered as "the poets' faulty sense of period" and "mistakes" in bringing characters together:

"In various references to Marko and the Sultan, the Sultan's name is given as Sulejman, though the first of that name succeeded to the throne in 1502. In Marko's case we can perhaps discern why these mistakes are made. Though he is a great national hero, he is not attached to any great historical event or indeed to any circle of stories except his own. He stands for Serbia during the time of Turkish domination, and since this lasted for some centuries, it is not surprising that the poets are not very precise about his dates" (Bowra 1952: 524).

Interpretation of anachronistic connections in the light of singers' tendency to simplify and generalize is only one of manifold aspects of this intricate problem. Epic hero, through his historical prototype, can be closely linked to some historical event, and his chronological span in epic can be more limited and concrete, but even then he could be associated with characters that belong to different epic-historical periods. We can refer to variants about the heroic death of Vojvoda Prijezda and the fall of Stalać in Serbia, which bring up different names of Ottoman sultans (Murat, Mehmed, Sulejman, Selim). The fall of Stalać is a historic event: Constantine the Philosopher (Kostenečki) in the biography of Serbian Despot Stefan Lazarević (written in 1431-32), mentioned that Sultan Musa in 1413 laid siege to the Stalać fortress. A nameless nobleman held out until the end, when he was burned in fire in his tower, "valiant like someone of old champions"[7] (Константин Филозоф 1989, 115; Куев 1986, 410). Local topography kept the memory of Vojvoda Prijezda in the site of "Prijezdino selo" (Prijezda's village), which

was registered in the 14th century in the vicinity of Stalać. A possible historical prototype of the same name, Prijezda, is found in nearby Kosovo, in the person of brave defender of Novo Brdo fortress in 1436. Nonetheless, in historical legends and in some epic songs the town of Stalać is associated with Vojvoda Todor of Stalać as well. The tower of Vojvoda Todor is located in the area of Stalać fortress too, so variation and reduplication of similar motifs and models don't come as a surprise. Obviously Todor and Prijezda are both linked to Stalać and therefore their names vary in tradition, even in the same epic model. All mentioned records and historical correlations bring even more confusion if we consider the fact that Vojvoda Prijezda (as well as Vojvoda Todor) is faced with four different sultans. In Serbian epic Turkish sultans are passive, stock characters, very limited in the scope of their narrative functions. Since they are not individualized, their names appear in tradition with little regularity. As for chronology, they vaguely correspond to the pertinent epic-historical period, but there is internal hierarchy in tradition regarding their general image and ruling. Apart from variations on the plane of personal names, there is also a variation in localization of action: instead of the name Stalać, we come across the town of Solun (i.e. Thessaloniki), and village of Kalofeo. These changes in nomenclature should be considered as forms of adaptation of tradition, when singer adapts the song to his own milieu and culture – not as "mistakes" in internal chronology of events. In the adaptation process, names of persons and places are first to be modified and assimilated. However, selection of names of Ottoman sultans cannot be ascribed only to the general process of adaptation and acculturation, since it implicitly refers to epic-historical epoch and type of rule. The name of sultan is chosen to fit into the abstract, conventional and conditional temporality of the epic epoch in a particular song, and then it was harmonized with other relevant elements of concretization, elements in the main course of action, details in the background, ambience, etc. To illustrate, we can refer to one chronologically relevant moment, presented in some variants, but not in all – it is the supporting role of Turkish helper or a spy who converted to Islam. He accepted the religion of Turks for social reasons: he was impoverished due to harsh taxes imposed during the building of Smederevo fortress (between 1428 and 1430). Historically and traditionally, the building of Smederevo is linked to the last segment of old epic period and the reign of Serbian Despot Đurđe Branković and his wife Despotica Jerina (Eirene Kantakouzene), so the siege of Stalać (1413) is pushed forward in time, in order to condense epic period of the fall of the Serbian Kingdom.

The fusion of epic periods, as well as compacting and elasticizing of epic time, is strongly connected with the internal structuration of the epic world and hierarchy of characters. Poetic structure of internal spatio-temporal epic system can be observed on different planes. On synchronic level, characters of two generations are interacting in typical epic relations, like: father / son, uncle / nephew, godfather / godson, foster father / foster son, ruler or lord / champion who fights for his senior. On diachronic level, temporal circles or cycles, strings of ruling families and epic biographies of individual heroes are formed, but their sequencing is chronologically restricted on two or three generations.

Epic time moves in "leaps and bounds" (Неклюдов 1972), so interacting epic relations and sequencing of generations can be rearranged and that creates the impression of synchronicity (characters are arranged in a straight temporal line), or continuity (characters are arranged in a continuous or connected series). In the scope of conventional traditional relations in the same epic period, heroes may enter different opposing relationships: Vojvoda Momčilo and Marko Kraljević are blood brothers, as well as uncle and nephew; three heroes of Kosovo battle Miloš Obilić, Milan Toplica and Ivan Kosančić can be represented as senior and servants, peer blood brothers, and peer best men. If characters roles (functions in epic action) are also contradictory, time condenses: though Marko Kraljević and Janko Sibinjanin (János Hunyadi) belong to separate epic generations, they fight a duel, or collaborate in a wedding procession. Time condenses also when chronological sequences overlap: king Vukašin and Herceg Stjepan are included in catalogues of the Kosovo epic, or Marko Kraljević and Mihailo Svilojević (Mihály Szilagy) fight together against the Turks.

Elastic epic time is characteristic of many songs and legends about Marko Kraljević. In Serbian folk tradition Marko lived for 300 years and dominated in old and, partly, in middle epic period, whereas his historical prototype had died in the battle of Rovine (in Romania) in 1395. Owing to a long epic life, extraordinary heroic status and peculiar relation to the Turkish sultan, it was acceptable to correlate Marko to chronologically unequal (younger or older) epic heroes. Marko's diverse epic encounters add to impression of specific atemporal and omnitemporal dimension of his figure. The flexible dimension of time in a circle of themes, or a cycle, transfers on a particular song, especially when that epic song has features of non-epic genres. In ballads and lyric Marko's character is different, sometimes even contradictory, in comparison with standardized epic Marko. Balladic and lyrical compositional models transform epic hero's traditional image and identity in accord with the internal logic of the line of action, namely: the course of epic action overpowers and suppresses typical, prevalent image of that hero in tradition. This process of genre modifications is parallel to oral-traditional and cultural processes, like adaptation and acculturation. In Marko's case, we can refer to "bugarštica"[8] song written down in 1555 by Petar Hektorović, the Humanist of the Adriatic island Hvar. The song is subtle ballad, created mostly in the form of a monologue of Marko's dying brother Andrijaš, whom Marko killed because of a horse, in a quarrel over a booty. Andrijaš is superior in heroic virtue and he forgives his brother, so Marko's idealistic epic reputation is quite ruined. This kind of shift or reorientation manifests when epic-historical heroes names enter ballads, lyric, or some fictitious narrative genres. From the temporal aspect, when hero is attached to family and kinship themes, his epic biography widens and time flows irrespective of the strict line of action, becoming "open".

In epic, Marko defeats his enemies and his adventures seem to be endless series of events. Epic singers sometimes use the "freezing" technique and thus creating an illusion of "open" time and impression that action will continue in the future, as long as heroes live. In one song that Vuk Karadžić noted down from blind Živana, Marko is described in a conventional superior heroic manner, as winner on a shooting tournament. Marko's challenger Alil-aga besought Marko to become blood brothers, and generous Marko

pardoned him and accepted his plea, so they continue to live on good terms and assist each other in the military service in cooperative, friendly way:

"And afterward they carried on with their lives,
They protected the frontier for the Emperor:
Wherever the frontier was to be protected,
Alil-aga and Marko did it together;
Wherever towns were to be captured,
Alil-aga and Marko captured them together."[9]

The "opening" of epic time in poems endings by the freezing technique provides the impression that chronological time had withdrawn in order to facilitate "eternal presence" of perpetuating, ever-lasting action to begin. In this way, time sequencing is formally stopped in one carefully chosen moment which will immortalize a heroic exploit. Epic poet is urged to preserve that moment and keep it for the future and heroic commemoration.

While the freezing technique stops the time, the repetitive sequencing technique tends to encircle, embrace the time in its continuum. This poetic device is characteristic of chronicles and genealogies, so one can think of the possibility that the impulse for the fusion of epic periods could have come from these historiographic and literary genres.

In epic, within the scope of one period, characters and events are sequenced in what is thought to be the most truthful and logically justified clusters. However, those clusters are not sequenced in series, like in chronicles and genealogies. Alteration of epic sequences and mobility of heroes in time can be motivated ideologically due to the influence of literature, historiography, or contemporary political circumstances. Medieval chroniclers and genealogists emphasize or construct kinship relations of leading feudal lords with the ruling dynasty of Nemanjić, or enlarge national genealogies by including persons and events from general Roman and Biblical history.[10] We can refer to attempts in genealogies and in oral tradition as well to link Serbian ruling families of Nemanjić, Lazarević and Branković with Hungarian rulers through marital or other relations. In a poem written down in the 18th century (Геземан 1925, № 58), several generations are condensed. It is related how King Milutin proposed to a lady and soon afterwards he had died of illness. His betrothed had mourned in traditional way for a proper period of time, and thus she had proved her nobleness and loyalty. She was rewarded by the "good fortune", when King Matijaš proposed to her. By correlating historical prototypes of Serbian king Milutin (1253-1321) and Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus (1443-1490), epic singer symbolically fuses two separate epic-historical segments and indicates the idea of succession. The similar kind of ideological link is observed in songs and legends about Serbian Despot Stefan Lazarević (1377-1427), who is represented as a father of Janos Hunydi (c. 1487-1456) and grandfather of dete Sekula (János Székely, +1448).

In epic tradition, genealogical and pseudo-genealogical constructions are designed to link isolated heroes and generations in the late medieval period and offer traditional interpretation of important historical events and relations. Some forms of tradition inventing can be included in the more elaborated construction of oral-traditional themes and network of explanations regarding relationship of cause and effect. For example,

new relations and motifs were added to the theme of the fall of Serbian kingdom with the intention of "explaining" the tragic series of events. The Emperor Uroš V (1336/7 - Dec. 2/4, 1371), the last ruler of Nemanjić dynasty, in folk tradition was represented as a victim killed by his epic godfather King Vukašin (d. Sep. 26, 1371) and alleged usurper to the throne. This legend was very durable though in reality Uroš died naturally two months after Vukašin's death in the Battle of Marica. Nevertheless, because of these imaginary sins King Vukašin was greatly disliked in tradition. A part of Vukašin's burden of disfavour was transferred to his son Marko. According to Tronoški rodoslov (Genealogy of the Monastery Tronoša, the first half of the 18th century)[11], Marko disagreed with Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović (c. 1329 - Jun 28, 1389) and plotted against him, so eventually he made an alliance with Turks and brought them to Kosovo in 1389. Construction of marital and interfamilial relations is also one of the traditional strategies for providing a grid of desirable lineage. Prince Lazar in history and in tradition married princess Milica, who is descended from the house of Nemanjić by the peripheral line of Nemanja's son Vukan. However, for epic tradition that bond was not impressive enough, so Lazar was related directly to the Emperor Stefan Dušan (1308-1355) as his illegitimate son. If the logic of this invented sequencing would have been followed, Lazar and Uroš had become brothers – but such pseudo-combination has never been used in tradition. Instead, consequently, the house of Lazarević was linked to Hungarian kings (Knez Lazar – Despot Stefan Lazarević – Janos Hunydi – King Matthias Corvinus), and to the houses of Branković and Jakšić. The pseudo-genealogical construction which links the royal Nemanjić dynasty with the line of Branković family indicates the idea of legitimacy of hereditary lands of Serbian nobles in Hungary. One of them is Despot Vuk Grgurević (c. 1438-1485), King Matthias's dependent ruler in Vojvodina on the Ottoman frontier, celebrated in oral tradition as Zmaj Ognjeni Vuk (i.e. Dragon Fire Wolf). In epic, Despot Vuk is characterized as King Matthias's senior, but there are songs which refer to Prince Lazar as Despot Vuk's sovereign. Because Vuk had protected Princess Milica from the Dragon of Jastrebac Mountain, Prince Lazar rewarded him with the district of Srem ("Sremska banovina"), and they made pledges to fight together against Turks, although there is a time difference of around hundred years between them.

Recurring themes, narrative patterns, elements of poetic structure, attributes, social and kinship relations, formulas in wide sense of the word can have intertextual function in fusion of epic-historical periods. It means that analysis of variants and establishing the parallels can help to cast light on the problems of temporality and historicity. For example, two battles of Kosovo in 1389 and 1448, and the battle of Varna in 1444, have many analogous structural and narrative elements. Some common themes: betrothal and gifts to a fiancée prior to battle, prophecy in the form of visions and dreams, attempts of female characters to prevent their brothers and husbands from going to the battle, confrontation of traitor and slandered hero, hero gives pledge to kill enemy ruler and daringly fulfills his oath, death of "our" ruler in the battlefield by a fall from a horse, reports about tragic outcome of battle, identifying hero's identity by his hand and ring, mother's heart breaks with sorrow for her sons, death as a wedding, mourning for heroes killed in battle. The toponym of Kosovo Field also contributes to structural parallelism and fusion

of epic periods. From mytopoetic point of view, Kosovo Field has strong symbolic as element of open space. However, in Christian and Serbian national perception and consciousness, Kosovo is the place which corresponds to the Heavenly Kingdom, chosen by Prince Lazar before the battle as a site of heroic sanctification of Serbian warriors. In the second half of the 15th century there was a monumental marble column with a poetic inscription, built on the spot where Prince Lazar was captured and beheaded. On the other hand, in Turkish sources Kosovo Field is sanctified to some extent given that Sultan Murat I died in a war for religion. As Murat had fulfilled a religious commandment, he became a Muslim martyr, "shaheed", and earned his place in paradise. His entrails were buried in "turbe" (tomb) on Kosovo Field, while the rest of his body was moved to Bursa. While the marble column disappeared, Murat's turbe remained and turned to a place of Muslim pilgrimage. Prince Lazar's remains were moved many times (from Kosovo Field to the Metropolitan Church of Priština, and to Lazar's memorial Monastery Ravanica near Ćuprija; in 1690/91 to the Monastery Vrdnik in Srem, in 1942 to Belgrade and in 1989 back to Ravanica), and his cult was kept continually by the Serbian Orthodox Church and local population. As indicated by historical and literary sources and oral tradition, Kosovo battlefield, with two monuments and two cults, gained symbolic status of holly field for both sides. Since Kosovo plane continued to serve as battlefield for a long time, and history repeated itself in many ways, in time the name Kosovo became universal designation for the epic battleground.

Intensive fusion of epic periods can occur when time sequences of different epic-historical events overlap. For example, the period of the fall of Serbian Empire is "prolonged" due to opposing epic explanations which are referring to different chronological events. One explanation is related to the treason of Vuk Branković and the defeat on the battle of Kosovo (1389). The other explanation is linked to Despotica Jerina, traditionally disliked wife of Despot Đurđe Branković. Jerina was cursed, among other things, because she had allowed the marriage of her daughter Mara and the Ottoman Sultan Murad II (1437). According to one song, when Jerina gave her daughter away, "with her all the land and towns were lost". There are also theological-like explanations that relate to divine punishment: God sent the Turks as a punishment for Christian sins. God's anger is aimed especially at degenerated nobles who had disregarded religious, ethical and habitual norms and caused general decay. The state of social and ethical disorder is interpreted as "the last days" ("poslednje vreme") which will introduce the end of the world as eschatological theme. Since this motif is associated with the battle of Kosovo, the parallelism between the end of the world and the fall of the Serbian Empire is obvious. In temporal sense, empirical time and mythical-eschatological time are overlapping and that gives the quality of timelessness to the actual epic-historical event. The battle of Kosovo is placed in symbolic, atemporal section of epic period and isolated from other events due to its special temporal status.

The overlapping of epic periods can compress the time flow and give the impression of coherence of different epic periods. In well-known song by Filip Višnjić about the start of Serbian revolt against the Turks, the Serbian uprising in 1804 was correlated to the battle of Kosovo (1389) through the motif of holy books ("knjige starostavne") which

preserved the knowledge about the past. In a sort of a flashback narration, Sultan Murat I from his deathbed gave detailed instructions to his subordinates about the righteous rule. However, Turkish military governors in Serbia didn't obey his dying words and their harsh and cruel regime led to Serbian revolt. This song ends with the open perspective of time. Karađorđe Petrović, the leader of the First Serbian Uprising, liberated Serbian lands and "brought the people all beneath his wing". Then he turned to the river Drina, which divides Serbia from Bosnia, and vowed to set free Serbian people of Bosnia:

"O River Drina, noble boundary
Dividing Bosnia from Serbia!
The time will come, and it will not be long,
Before I pass across your flowing stream
And step on honorable Bosnia's soil!"[12]

The open ending takes part in the process of fusion of epic periods by extending the time perspective. Such open ending is characteristic of songs with a legend added or built in the epilogue. In one variant of "The Building of Ravanica", Prince Lazar was dazzled by the white, shiny church, and his horse reared up and threw him off. Because of this incident, "the place where he fell was called 'The Tsar's Great Bruise' – and so it is today!"[13] Local legends about toponyms Carevo Bupilo (i.e. lit.: The Tsar's Great Bruise) and Bubnjic, which are registered in the area of the Monastery Ravanica, was included in the song with the same function that they have in legends – the function of proving the authenticity of narrated event. Similarly, in "The Building of Skadar", a young woman was walled-up alive in the town's foundations, and a master mason took pity on her and left a window that she could nurse her baby. A miracle was expressed by prolonging a time dimension and integrating mythical and empirical time. Although the poor mother stopped to call for her child after a week, the milk of innocent victim continued to flow for the whole year:

"As it was then, so it remains today.
The milk still flows today as it did then.
That milk is charmed; it works miraculous cures
For all women who have no milk to nurse."[14]

The endings of local and historical legends are distinctive for their opening up to the moment of performance. Narrator gives evidence and proves authenticity of the subject. Legends are generally considered to be true tales and narrator calls upon that belief. The editor of this song Vuk Karadžić testified in 1823 that he had witnessed himself a chalky liquid which oozes from Skadar's walls. He reported also that peasant women used this liquid believing that it will help them to conceive[15]. Fieldwork research conducted in 2006 in the area of Podgorica confirmed that this belief is still alive and kicking[16]. To bring the evidence that exists in narrator's present, serves as time reference in relation to the theme of the song. In a way, narration breaks through from the past into present moment, and enters the "eternal now", so the time perspective opens to the present.

The problem of the fusion of epic-historical periods is many-sided and in this paper only some particular aspects could be examined. Epic temporality should be

studied further, especially in relation to universal poetic and cultural categories, epic subgenres and other oral and written genres. In heroic epic, the fusion of epic-historical periods should be viewed as epic singers' interpretation of national history which reflects communal traditional knowledge. In order to retell the national history accurately and relate heroic past with the present, epic singers use different structural, poetic and rhetorical techniques, and manage to create the framework of epic temporality in a broad sense which will adequately correspond to their sense of history.

NOTES

[1] Cf.: Лихачов 1972; Неклюдов 1973; Пропп 1976; Finnegan 1981; Pešić 1984; Samardžija 1986; Путилов 1988; Munn 1992; Гуревич 1994; Merilai 1997; Ilomäki 1998.

[2] Hatto adduced: I. mythic time, with sub-divisions: pristine, cyclic, and deviant time; and II. heroic time, with sub-divisions: end-stopped and open-ended time, with a possible futuristic prolongation, in: Hatto 1998: 198.

[3] Vojna Krajina (or: Vojna Granica, Serhat, Militärgrenze, Confin) refers to different territories in different historic periods, but in the most common sense it indicates special military provinces, borderlands of the Habsburg Monarchy opposed to the Ottoman Empire from the 16th to the 19th century, along rivers Sava, Tisa and Moriš (Croatia, Slavonia, Banat, Transylvania).

[4] Геземан 1925, № 92.

[5] The catalogue brings together Bogdan Jugović, Marko Kraljević, Sibinjanin Janko – old style champions; Radivoj, Novak, Grujica – middle style, "hajduci" – in the first segment; and in the second segment: three Kozatović brothers – middle style; nine Jugović brothers – old style; vojvoda Meršan Bertarić (Brdarić), uskok Radojica – middle style; Stefan Musojević – old style; arambaša Pavle – middle style.

[6] Apart from a flagman ("barjaktar"), in wedding procession there are leading heroes and a group of brigands ("uskoci"), a reconnoiterer "samohod Sima" who communicates with fairies ("vila") in mountains, and a very skilled scout Aleksa Primorac, who can speak twelve languages and orientate himself in unfamiliar terrain.

[7] "V' kulě že ouzdrža se grad' s'bl'udaei blagorod'n' někyj mouž' syj, dondeže s' kuloju s'gore i t'. Eliko kto ot drevnyj dobl'estvovav'", Куев 1986, 410.

[8] "Bugarštica" is a special kind of epic song in lines of fifteen to sixteen syllables, in opposition to more common decasyllabic epic. English translation in: Miletich 1990.

[9] Караџић 1988, No. 61 (my translation).

[10] С. Ћирковић 1999: 625-626.

[11] Шафарик 1853.

[12] Locke 2002: 212.

[13] Locke: 29.

[14] Holton 1997: 86.

[15] Holton 1997: 86.

[16] In the scope of the Folklore Project Course, which I held at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, Serbia, Miss D. Belošević "Fieldwork collection from the vicinity of Podgorica", collected and presented in 2006 (includes essay, camera taped oral interviews, full transcript of oral interviews, facts about informants and bibliography, archived at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade), showed that it is still believed in the same legend.

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