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A Model for the Surface Level of Narration of the Theme "Combat" in South Slavic Epic Songs

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"Combat" is the basic narrative theme in South Slavic epic songs. The author intends to build its complete syntagmatic model, as the first step in the description of the whole repertoire of themes. The plot-model for the combat can be divided into three main parts (preparation for the combat, the battle / duel, aftermath of the combat), which can be further subdivided into several narrative sections. These sections are the basic units of the narrative description. They comprise the singer's comments, his addresses to the audience and information about the epic plot. After describing the abstract sintagmatic model, which consists of the list of tale roles and of the summary of narrative sections, the author applies the model on the Croatian epic song "The Battle at Kosovo".

0. Introduction

0.1. A *syntagmatic model* is presented here which intends to describe the surface narrative patterns of the basic plot in South Slavic epic oral folk tradition. The model has been worked out on South Slavic epic songs and should be regarded to fit solely the description of this particular epic tradition. Much further investigation is needed and many more traditions have to be analyzed before more general models can be tackled.

0.2. We use the *concepts* and *tools* developed for the analysis of prose oral literature by the Russian Formalists at the beginning of this century to build a description of the basic theme's plot (see Nikiforov 1927/73, Propp 1928/68, Erlich 1955, Pomorska 1968, Jason 1977b). These tools have been amended by Jason (1971, 1975, 1977a, 1984; see also Jason and Segal 1977, Dan 1977 and Drory 1977).

0.3. "*Epic*" is here used as a label for an ethnopoetic genre, an oral work of literature, in verse or in prose, in which man confronts his fellow in strife and combat. The combat is fought mostly as a physical struggle and less often by use of cunning and magical means (after Jason 1975, pp. 49-51). As defined here, the genre exists in the Euro-Afro-Asian cultural area (encompasing Christian Europe, Moslem North Africa, Near East and Central Asia, and (non-tribal) India (Moslem and Hindu) and in cultures strongly influenced by these three umbrela cultures, like Budhist Tibet and Mongolia).

0.4. The South Slavic repertoire of oral epic features many *narrative themes*. The author considers the basic theme to be the description of a combat and therefore analyzed this theme as a first step. It is supposed that various combinations of sections from this basic theme, amended by additional narrative sections shall make it possible to describe the whole repertoire of themes. The author plans to describe these at a future time.

Two types of combat are found in the South Slavic materials: the battle between groups of characters and the duel between champions. The battle can be fought between two groups of characters ranging in size from a small band of brigands, a wedding procession, to an organized small army, as in fights and raids between villages and all the way to the large army an empire can muster. A combat can also take place between two champions as a duel, or between a champion and a group of characters. Our model will follow the large battle as this description of a duel, while a duel does not use all narrative units which the battle features.

0.5. *The plot-model for the combat* can be divided into three main parts: preparation for the combat

the battle/duel

aftermath of the combat.

Each of these three parts can be subdivided into several *narrative sections*. Section can be of four kinds: some of them are (1) *functions* and others are (2) *connectives* (in space, time, state and information connectives); (3) *comments* of the singer on the narrated events and (4) his direct *addresses* to the audience punctuate the narrative. These four kinds of units are *not* neatly divided in their function in the narrative. Thus, a function can be expressed through a connective. Such are narrative sections

nos. 3(b), (c) and (e) which are space connectives (sp con), while nos. 2, 3(d), 11(d) and 24(c) are information connectives (inf con). Narrative function "1, Prediction" can be executed as a comment of the singer (the omniscient narrator): section 1(C). On the other hand, section 24, "Notification" is basically an information but can be developed into a complex and many-layered function and appears often as a separate song (such as the "Death of the Mother of the Jugovići").

0.6. *Epic symmetry.* Usually, there is a confrontation between "good" and "evil" in oral literature. The narrating community identifies with the "good", "virtuous", "smart" characters. These defeat the "evil", "stupid" characters (see Jason 1988). The genre of epic seems to divide its characters somewhat differently. The characters are very much clearly divided into "we, our" and "they, them" who are the enemy. Yet, both sides can be either positive or negative: in so far as a warrior adheres to the knight's code of behavior, he is positively valued, irrelevant to which side he belongs and even irrelevant to whether he won or lost the combat (and has been killed). In some songs about a duel it is not clear who is the "hero" of the song, both warriors having fought equally bravely (see, e.g., King's-son Marko's duel with Musa (or Mina): *Hrvatske narodne pjesme*, vol. 2, nos. 42, 43, 47, and 48; Karadžić 1935, vol. II, no. 66).

The same symmetry holds for the action of the two parties. The full account of a duel specifically emphasizes this symmetry: the description of the duel is composed of completely parallel actions by the two champions (narrative section 20). The reader will also notice the possibility of inversion of the "we" and "they" characters between the subject and the object narrative roles in sections nos. 3 and 13-18. Actions nos. 21, 22, 24, 25 and 26 are equally applicable to both sides of the combat. Therefore we abstained from using the term "hero" as a label for a tale role.

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In the following, a short description of the narrative sections and the tale roles shall be given in chapter I. For the sake of demonstration, a work from the South Slavic tradition is analyzed in full in chapter 2.

1. Summary of the model

1.1. Tale roles

All tale roles double, and are found once for each side in the combat, i.e., each role can appear twice in a work, each time filled with characters from one of the sides - "we" or "they" (= the enemy).

Roles of the model-variant "Battle":

(1) The army, with its various subdivisions (it is a "group character"). The army is composed of a leader and its retinue and the mass of anonymous soldiers.

(2) Leader of army (emperor, king, prince; sultan, pasha, vazir; chief of a band of brigands; commander-in-chief).

All the other roles can be regarded as the retinue of the leader.

(3) Subordinate leaders (feudal lords, administrative commanders in the Ottoman empire, generals, chiefs of clans, etc.)

(4) Champion/warrior as part of an army; may have his own retinue, such as family, servants, comrades.

(5) Helper (an ally, a supporting army, a supernatural being)

(6) Spy

(7) Traitor

(8) Messenger

(9) Servant/esquire

(10) Family (mother, sister, wife, bride, daughter)

(11) Encoder of prediction (usually supernatural)

(12) Decoder of prediction

(13) Medium for message of prediction

(14) Addresse of prediction

Roles of the model-variant "Duel"

(1a) Champion A ("hero") (1b) Champion B ("adversary")

(2a, b) Servant/Esquire

(3a, b) Helper

(4a, b) Traitor

(5a, b) Family (mother, sister, wife)

1.2. Narrative sections

The tale roles act in narrative functions. A function consists of a subject role which acts on/in relation to an object tale role. Narrative sections which are built differently are not functions (see, for instance, sections nos. 2 and 12, which have the form of information connectives).

Table 1: Summary of narrative sections

Number	Subject of action	Action	Object of action
Preparation for the confrontation			
1 Prediction			
1.1	Encoder of message	sends message to	Medium
1.2	Medium	asks for explanation	Decoder
1.3	Decoder	explains message to	Medium
2 Social gathering - framework for action (inf con 2)			
3 Challenge			
3(A)	"Our" side - - - - - - - - Enemy	challenges	Enemy - - - - - - "Our" side
3(B)	Senior/peer of "our" side	challenges (to avenge previous injury)	Junior warrior of "our" side
3(C)	Champion	sets task to	Himself
3(D)*	"Our" side - - - - - - - Enemy	attacks directly	Enemy - - - - - - "Our" side

* 3(D) = 14, Attack

In detail:

(a)	Challenger (Leader, Champion)	calls for an action	Opponent (Leader, Champion)
(b)	Challenger	sends out a messenger (sp con)	Opponent
(c)	Challenger's messenger	arrives to (sp con)	Opponent
(d)	Messenger	delivers message to (inf con 1)	Opponent
(e)	Opponent	sends messenger back to (transfer in space)	Challenger
4 Taking counsel			
	Leader (of the attacker or of the attacked)	consults in critical situation (in face of challenge)	His following or Himself
5 Answer to challenge			
	Opponent	answers to the challenge	Challenger
6 Planning of action			
	Leader of party	plans action of attack or defence	Opponent
7 Gathering of army			
7(A)	Senior leader	issues call to gather army to	his Junior leaders
7(B)	Junior leaders	gather army for	Senior leader
8 Marshalling of army / Equipping of champion			
8(A) Marshalling of army			
8(AA) Marshalling of army at assembly point			
	Junior leader(s)	organize the army for march	Senior leader
8(AB) Battle array			
	Leader of army	organizes army for battle	Opponent

8(AC) Defence arrangements			
	Leader	arrays his forces for defence	Opponent
8(B) Equipping of champion			
	Champion	equips himself for battle	Opponent
9 March to the battle field (transfer in space)			
10 Speech to own army			
	Leader	encourages for combat	His followers
11 Reconnaissance			
11(a)	Leader	sends to do reconnaissance	His followers
11(b)	Follower (Spy)	spies in the enemy camp and brings back report	Leader
11(c)	Leader	responds to the report	Opponent

12 Description of the size and the might of the army (of either side) - see 8 and 11 (inf con 1)

The combat

13 "War of words"

"Our" leader/champion	exchange	Enemy leader/champion
	(a) verbal attacks	
Enemy leader/champion	(b) verbal counterattacks	"Our" leader/champion

14 Attack

"Our" side	attacks	Enemy
Enemy		"Our" side

15 Reaction to attack			
	"Our" side - - - - - - - Enemy	(A) defends itself (B) stages counterattack	Enemy - - - - - "Our" side
16 Stratagem			
	"Our" side - - - - - - - Enemy	(A) uses a ruse (B) commits an error which the other side can use to defeat the adversary	Enemy - - - - - "Our" side
17(a)	"Our" side - - - - - - - Enemy	asks for help	Helper
17(b)	Helper	(A) comes to help (B) fails to come to help	"Our" side - - - - - - - Enemy
18 Treason			
18(a)	"Our" side - - - - - - - Enemy	calls for betrayal of opponent	Individual of opponent's side
18(b)	Traitor	(A) betrays his own side (B) refuses to betray his own side	"Our" side - - - - - - - Enemy
18(c)	"Our" side - - - - - - - Enemy	(A) rewards (B) punishes	Traitor

19 Conclusion of combat			
	"Our" side - - - - - - - Enemy	(A) is victorious (B) is defeated	Enemy - - - - - "Our" side
20 Duel			
20(a)	"Our" champion - - - - - Adversary	figths	Adversary - - - - - "Our" champion
20(b)	"Our" champion - - - - - Adversary	calls for help	Helper
20(c)	Helper	helps	"Our" champion - - - - - Adversary
20(d)	"Our" champion - - - - - Adversary	uses ruse	Adversary - - - - - "Our" champion
20(e)	"Our" champion - - - - - Adversary	(A) is victorious (B) is defeated	Adversary - - - - - "Our" champion

Aftermath of combat

21 Reward for the warrior			
21(A)	"We" and "They"	grant fame to	"Our" and "Their" warrior
21(B)	"Our" side	"gives" spoil to	Victor of enemy
	Enemy		Victor of "our" side
22 Testament of duying warriro			
22(a)	Duying warrior	orders his last will	Warrior's retinue
22(b)	Retinue (family, comrades, "X")	executes the last will of	Duying warrior
23 March home from the battle field (sp con)			
24 Notification of the family/folk (of either side) about the outcome of the combat (inf con 1)			
	(a) Messenger	arrives (sp con)	Family (of leader), Folk
	(b) Family	questions about combat the	Messenger
	(c) Messenger	reports to (inf con 1)	Family, Folk
	(d) Messenger	confirms his report by pointing out material evidence (inf con 1)	Family, Folk
	(e) Family, Folk	reacts to the report (see section 25)	Army, Warrior(s)
25 Lament (of either side)			
	Family, Folk	bewail(s) its	Dead champions
26 Death of a warrior - result of action			
27 Burial/Funeral of the killed warriors			
	Retinue	buries	Dead warriors
28 Performer's comment on the events in the narrative			
29 Performer's address to the audience (such as opening and closing formulae)			

2. Analysis of a sample text: "The Battle at Kosovo" (*Hrvatske narodne pjesme*, vol. 1, no. 58)

Note: The text is given in summary form; lines in italics are direct quotations of the text.

Table 2: Sample analysis

Number	Lines	Summary of the narrative	Episode	Narrative section	Connectives	Performer's comments	Performer's address to audience
1	1- 9	Two emperors vie for the same empire: Sultan Murat and Prince Lazar of Serbia			inf con 2		
2	10- 25	10a *Then sultan Murat*	1 a	3(B)			
3		10b *in his Istanbul*			sp con		
4		11 Murat writes a letter to Lazar					
5		12 *To emperor Lazo sends it, to the monastery*			sp con		
6		13-25 Letter calls for the battle at Kosovo to divide the empire	1 b	3(B)(d)			
7	26- 28	Lazar receives the letter		5(A)			
8	29- 37	Lazar accepts the challenge			inf con 1		
9	38- 39	Murat receives the answer	2 a	7(a)			
10	40- 43	Murat calls up his army		12	inf con 2		
11	44- 49	Description of Murat's might		7(b)			
12	50- 56	Murat's army commanders receive his call		7(c)			
13	57- 58	Army is levied		9	sp con		
14	59	*They led it (=army) to Kosovo, the battle field*	2 b	7(a)			
15	60-112	Lazar calls up his feudal vassals: King Vukašin, Doge of Venice (!), Jugović family, Vuk Branković, Miloš Obilić					
16	113-117, 119-124	All five levy their armies		7(c)			
17	118, 125	All the armies arrive at Lazar's monastery		7(d)	sp con		

Number	Lines	Summary of the narrative	Episode	Narrative section	Connectives	Performer's comments	Performer's address to audience
18	126	*And they started out for Kosovo, the battle field*		9	sp con		
19	127	*When they were at the first night's lodging*			time con		
20	128-132	Royal banquet; attend Lazar, Vuk and Miloš	3 a	2			
21	133-182	133-135, Vuk boasts of own fidelity vs. Miloš's treachery		3(D) / 18			
		138-152 Miloš is Lazar's son-in-law			inf con 2		
22		136-137 *When Lazo these words has understood*			inf con 1		
23		153 Lazar challenges Miloš according to Vuk's accusations		3(C)			
24		154-165 *When Miloš these words has understood*			inf con 1		
25		166 Miloš boasts of his own fidelity and accuses Vuk of treachery		3(D)			
26		167-182 *Also sultan Murat levied his army*	3 b_1	7			
27	183	Army A arrives		7(d)	sp con		
28	184-185, 197						
29	186-196	Murat's commanders pledge support to Murat		7(b)			
30	198-200	Sultan's banquet for the commanders		2			
31	201-203	Army B arrives	3 b_2	7(d)	sp con		
32	204-215	Murat's commanders pledge support to Murat		7(b)			
33	216-232	Sultan's banquet for his commanders		2			
34		219-223 Sultan encourages his commanders		10			
35		224-232 Sultan plans march to Kosovo		6			
36	233-244	Murat's army prepares for march		8(AA)			

Number	Lines	Summary of the narrative	Episode	Narrative section	Connectives	Performer's comments	Performer's address to audience
37	245	*When they arrived at Kosovo, the battle field*			sp con		
38	246-252	Description of the size of Murat's army		12	inf con 2		
39	253	*Also, Lazo Kosovo has approached*			sp con		
40	254	*On Kosovo he noticed the Turks*			inf con 1		
41	255	*Beneath it (=Kosovo) he the camp put up*			sp con		
42	256-315	Royal banquet	4	2			
43		256a *In the camp*			sp con		
44		256b-276 Lazar asks for a volunteer to explore the Turkish army		11(a)			
45		277-278 Nobody volunteers		11(b)=5(C))			
46		279-291 Miloš challenges Vuk to do the reconnaissance		11(a)			
47		292-293 Vuk keeps silent		11(b)=5(C))			
48		294-296 Miloš volunteers to explore the Turks		11(b)=5(A))			
49		297-315 Miloš self-imposes task: to kill Murat		3(D)			
50	316	*But the good gray-horse he (Miloš) took hold of*		8(BB)			
51	317-319	Miloš and Sijepan ride to Kosovo		9	sp con		
52	320-390	Miloš poses as traitor to Serbian side, gains access to Murat and kills him	5	16			
53	391	*From the tent to the horse he (Miloš) did run*			sp con		
54	392-420	Miloš fights Turks and is successful	6	14			
55	421-441	Old Woman advices Turks to put swords into the ground in Miloš's way so that his horse be wounded		17(A)(b)			

Number	Lines	Summary of the narrative	Episode	Narrative section	Connectives	Performer's comments	Performer's address to audience
56	442	*When the Turks the voice have understood*			inf con 1		
57	443–446	Turks do as advised; Miloš's and Stjepan's horses fall		16			
58	447–451	Turks attack, kill Stjepan and wound Miloš		15(B), 19(B_1)			
59	452	*Did hear Lazo on Kosovo a quarrel*			inf con 1		
60	453a	*At this time*			time con		
61	453b	*also he (Lazar) arrived (at the battle field)*			sp con		
62	454–464	Lazar attacks the Turks	7	14			
63		455–461 Lazar has sent Vuk to the other side to attack, but Vuk leaves the battle field with his people		18			
64	462–463	Miloš is defeated		19(B_2)			
65	464–466	Lazar is defeated		19(B_3)			
66	467–475	Miloš is defeated and captured		19(B_4)			
67	476–482	Murat orders army to capture Lazar		3(C)			
68	483–484	Lazar's army is defeated		19(B_5)			
69	485–486	Singer's exclamation to audience		29			x
70	487–491	Singer's comment on the carnage in the plot		28		x	
71		489 *Because them betrayed has Vuk Branković*			inf con 2		
72	492	Lazar is captured		19(B_6)			
73	493–495	Three of Lazar's troups [are defeated] and run away		19(B_7)			
74	496–503	Lament (insert)					

Number	Lines	Summary of the narrative	Episode	Narrative section	Connectives	Performer's comments	Performer's address to audience
75		496 *Look at that great woe!*					x
76		497-500 Lament					
77		501-503 Singer's address to the audience		29			x
78	504-507	Turks lead wounded Lazar to Murat	8		sp con		
79	508-509	The three leaders, Murat, Lazar and Miloš, all mortally wounded, lie together			inf con 2		
80	510-519	Lazar's testament: curse on Vuk Branković		22(D)(a)			
81	520	*That he said and let his soul depart*		26			
82	521-523	Lazar's curse comes true till this day		22(D)(b)	inf con 2		
83	524-531	Murat's testament: order of burial of the three		22(C)(a)			
84	532-534	Murat dies		26			
85	535	*Also, Miloš the Turks killed.*		26			
86	536-538	Turks bury the three as Murat ordered		22(C)(b)(=27)			
87	539-541	Reflections of the singer on the carnage		Closing formula			x

3. Distribution of characters in tale roles in the sample text

Tale role	Character	
	We	They
(1) Army	South Slavic army	Turkish army
(2) Leader	Lazar	Murat
(3) Subordinate leaders	Vukašin, Vuk Branković, Miloš Obilić, Jugovići, Doge	dukes, pashas
(4) Champion	Miloš	Murat
(5) Helper	---	Old woman
(6) Spy	Miloš, Stjepan	---
(7) Traitor	Vuk Branković	---
(8) Messenger	---	---
(9) Servant	Stjepan	---
(10) Family	---	---
(11) Encoder	---	---
(12) Decoder	---	---
(13) Medium	---	---
(14) Addresse	---	---

ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES

ABBREVIATIONS

inf con - information to the character in the narrative (inf con 1) or to the listener to the narration (inf con 2)

sp con - transfer in space of characters or change in stage on which the characters move

time con - specification of the point of time in which the events of the story take place or time lapse empty of events

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