



## Research Article

# Migration songs and their sensibility as a social phenomenon in Kosovo

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### Article Info

**Received:** 7 February 2025

**Accepted:** 28 March 2025

**Online:** 30 March 2025

### Keywords

Kosovo culture

Kosovo music

Kosovo songs

Migration

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### Abstract

Migration has been an integral aspect of the lives of Kosovars. The reasons behind the widespread phenomenon of migration are multifaceted, with each factor holding significant importance. This study will explore and analyze three characteristic musical pieces that focus on the theme of migration, aiming to provide not only an analytical overview of these pieces of creation but also to convey the spiritual dimension they embody. It is this very dimension that renders these songs an authentic expression of the thoughts and emotions of the Kosovar people. These songs serve as a voice for its concerns rather than its tangible benefits. It was these songs that were instrumental in sustaining the painful anticipation of mothers, sisters, and women in the early last century. Furthermore, these songs act as a balm for the wounds that remain open for the Kosovar people even today. It is precisely these songs that flow from sources imbued with a remarkable sensitivity, akin to the magic of a legacy passed down through generations.

### To cite this article

Doli, K. (2025). Migration songs and their sensibility as a social phenomenon in Kosovo. *Journal of Kosovo Music and Culture*, 1(1), 15-20. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15512646>

## Introduction

Migration has been an integral aspect of the lives of Kosovar people. The reasons behind the widespread phenomenon of migration are multifaceted, with each factor holding significant importance. Considering the specific circumstances and conditions of our society, it becomes evident that the leaving of Kosovars has not been a voluntary escape, but rather a forced exodus driven by certain social factors, primarily economic ones. This situation has turned migration into a tragedy for the entire society, with the primary characters of this drama being the members of Kosovar families.

In this context, the poignant and realistic framework is uniquely expressed through folk creations that, for an extended period, resonated more closely with people than anything else, often serving as a voice for their thoughts and aspirations.

The drama of migration is conveyed in the form of an artistic message that aligns with the issues and concerns faced by each human as an individual, family members, and society as a whole. With their genuine and relatable content, these songs come naturally and sincerely, devoid of exaggeration—a characteristic that accompanies many other themes of the folklore (Minga, 2006:79).

Migration due to economic reasons has profoundly impacted Kosovar society, as evidenced by the significant number of musical creations dedicated to this very theme. In light of the current situation, where many individuals have left the country to work and live abroad primarily for economic reasons, I would like to focus on these songs. They not only hold significant scholarly value as folkloric material but they also resonate with contemporary issues, revealing commonalities with the present time. Furthermore, these new perspectives do not merely reside within historical

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contexts or current realities; rather, by comparing them, they foster new avenues for thought and appreciation within the boundless realm of musical art.

Inspired by folk poetry, Ismail Kadare depicts a rural environment from that era imbued with romantic characteristics. He notably, inter alia, mentions: *“A great road that leads to migration. Along this road, he states, the men of the village depart, and news from the world arrives”* (Kadare, 2002:86). This simple piece of information transforms into a profound symbol; a symbol that, along with many others, is immortalized within the songs of migration.

How does folklore portray migration? What do the songs of migration reveal?

Migration has been uniquely addressed within traditional Kosovar songs. This theme has also been woven into our songs, reflecting the wound that has remained open in the battered body of the Kosovar nation for over a century. The people have sung about pain and sacrifice with remarkable eloquence, offering through songs a narrative that is both poignant and sublime, making this genre of social lyrics a missionary vehicle for recounting the struggles and sufferings of the Kosovar people.

Generally speaking, these songs are short creations, yet despite their consistent content, they evoke distinct emotional states through a concentrated use of artistic figures, melody, and authentic musical expressions. We encounter these elements at every turn: in songs of departure for migration, in songs of separated families, and in songs celebrating the return from migration. Such a division of events, which follow one another in distinct stages, takes on the characteristics of a ritual, which at every moment is marked by various elements and specific experiences.

The researcher Mikaela Minga, inter alia, states that *“in the migration songs, three main characters are more frequently encountered: the migrant, the mother, and the bride or maiden in specific portrayals”* (Minga, 2006: 81). The characters in migration songs employ various methods of expression, which differ from one song to another. The narrative, dialogue, and monologue are presented both in individualized forms and intertwined with one another, enriching the artistic expression and simultaneously creating an internal rhythm. This trio (the migrant, the mother, and the bride) mentioned earlier forms the core of the Kosovar family, constituting the focal point for all events depicted in these migration-themed songs. The anonymous creator communicates through these characters within this seemingly confined environment, yet managing to be complemented with numerous stylistic features, resulting in an original depiction and a natural expression.

In a general overview, folkloric creation represents a symbiosis where the aforementioned characteristics pertain solely to its literary aspect. However, this creation is basically a song, and as such, music constitutes another significant component of it.

When making a comparison, poetry, due to its inherent qualities, is more direct and communicates easier with the reader, while music appears more abstract, fostering a different kind of relationship with the audience.

Among the various migration songs we examined, we chose to analyze three specific songs in this study. Our aim is not only to provide an analytical perspective on these musical creations within the realm of social lyrics but also to convey the spiritual dimension they embody. It is precisely this dimension that renders these songs an authentic expression of the thoughts and feelings of the Kosovar people.

In the selected migration songs that we have chosen as a model, we encounter the realities of life, the struggles and suffering faced by migrants in their daily tasks, the hardships of living, and the deep longing for family members and for oneself. All three chosen pieces are characterized by an elegiac tone, where powerful feelings and emotions related to the theme of migration are vividly expressed through folkloric creation.

A perfect example of the direct transfer of poetic form into musical form, distinguished by their harmony, is the first selected piece, the Shkodra song *“Vaj, si kenka ba dyrnjaja”* with lyrics and music by Ndrek Vogli. All three stanzas of the song are based on the same melody.

*Vaj, si kenka ba dyrnjaja*

Lyrics and music: Ndreke Vogli

Performed by: Ismet Peja

Vaj si kenka ba dyr njaja mos me

7  
t'u ba me ken gjallë un o mje ri fu ka

13  
ra ja pas kam ndo llun pa ik ballë

I	II	III
Vaj si kenka ba dyrnjaja Mos me t'u ba me ken gjallë Un, o'i mjeri, fukaraja Paskam ndollun-o pa ikballe.	Gjith prej hallit, prej sikletit M'u ba borxh me dalë me tretë Mora rrugat e gyrbetit, Selametin për m'e gjetë.	Rrugën mar me lot e lava Der sa mrrina jabanxhi, Zemra m'tha gjithmonë se kjava Qysh'i vogël-o der n'pleqni.

The musical form is directly connected to poetry, meaning that the melodic outline of the musical material aligns with the rhyme, incorporating slight variations that enhance the chromatic melodic formula with melancholic nuances. The A vocal phrases utilize the same melodic structure, cadencing in the dominant interval, while the B vocal phrases, constructed in the higher registers of vocal range, cadences in the tonic interval. *This harmonic analysis of the musical material is viewed from a more modal perspective rather than a tonal one, indicating that the cadential scheme of the final note (finalis) is regarded as the tonic, with the chromatic pentachord is positioned between the first and fifth degrees of the vocal range* (Shuteriqi, 1985:85).

Another selected musical example that also demonstrates a direct connection between poetic form and musical expression is the Shkodra song "*N'bash t'zamanit të djelmënisë*." The complete lyrics of the song consists of seven stanzas (Taipi, 1998:182-293), but it is noteworthy that in our celebratory settings, it is typically performed with three or four stanzas, depending on performing singers. For our analysis, we have chosen four stanzas from this migration song as performed by the singer Edi Furra. The interpretation of this song is characterized by profound feeling, where melancholic notes highlight the pain and longing associated with this deep wound in the Kosovar society.

***Bash n'zaman të djelmënisë***  
Originating from the city of Shkodra

Bash n'za man të djel më ni së

5 por sa mbu sha o nji zet vjet ko ka shkru prej

10 pe rën ni së me marr rru gën o për gur bet

I	II
N'bash t'zamanit të djelmënisë Për pa i mbushun 20 vjet Koka konë prej perendisë Me marrë rrugën për gurbet.	Ky gurbeti fort o i randë, Jabanxhi në dhe të hu'j Për pa njoft as hiq kërkend-e Një sahat më bahet një muj.
III	IV
U mundova gajret bana Mos me i shtu vetit siklet Der n'Triestë me shokët shkova E për mu o ilaq s'u gjet.	Dallëndyshe kah flut'roni Po ua la një porosi N'shehër timin kur kaloni Thu'ni ka vdekë qaj djal o i ri.

The selected musical material concerned addresses the theme of the loss of life experienced by migrants in foreign lands. Instances of death among migrants, attributed to various causes such as illnesses, challenging working conditions, and perilous journeys, are often intertwined with the typical experiences of jobs that do those who migrate. *This is one of the reasons that explain why songs about the loss of life among migrants frequently conclude with such themes, resonating even today as they evoke memories from the past* (Dibra, 2010:50). It is a well-recognized fact that songs often emerge from feelings of distress and sorrow. The loss of their sons, both historically and in contemporary times, is particularly profound, especially when it occurs while the migrant is away from home in migration.

Another musical example that naturally combines poetic form with musical expression is the song “*Kur prej teje u ndava*”, written and composed by the Gjakova artist Mazllom Mejzini, which exemplifies this harmony.

### Kur prej teje u ndava

Lyrics by: Mazllom Mejzini

Composed by: Mazllom Mejzini

Kur prej te je u nda va qysh se në kur bet

5 Me gjithë se u lar go va a man një dash ni na mbet

I	II
Kur prej teje u ndava, Që për në kurbet, Megjithëse u largova aman, Një dashni na mbet.	Kur ti nga Gjakova, një letër ma çon, dhe unë një ta shkrova aman, ma nuk më harron.
III	IV
Kur erdhi pranvera, si stinë dëfrimtare, t'shikojsha kah dera aman si një arsimtare.	Por gjithnjë n'ty mendjen që e kam, lule lermë të vie aman, Bashkë me ty të jam.

The third musical example, selected through the focus on artistic figures, melody, and authentic musical expressions, induces a unique emotional state. The lyrics, melody, and carefully chosen musical expressions by the song's composer, Mazllom Mejzini, unfold in distinct stages, embodying the characteristics of a drama that conveys longing, worries, and the challenges faced by individuals living a life divided amidst.

Despite the passage of years, migration remains an integral aspect of Kosovar life and its sensitivities. The onset of a new and different life, marked by phenomena such as integration and adaptation to a different society, as well as the exploration of new cultures, customs, and traditions of another new country, are themes experienced by individuals who have undergone emigration, who consequently lead to specific emotional responses in them.

In conclusion of this paper, it can be asserted that the lyrics of migration songs, in their current application, largely preserve traditional artistic expression. These songs serve as a voice for its concerns rather than its tangible benefits. It was these songs that were instrumental in sustaining the painful anticipation of mothers, sisters, and women in the early last century. Furthermore, these songs act as a balm for the wounds that remain open for the Kosovar people even today. It is precisely these songs that flow from sources imbued with a remarkable sensitivity, akin to the magic of a legacy passed down through generations. When viewed in their entirety, migration songs not only depict a shared drama but, more importantly, they illustrate the individual struggles faced by each person who has endured the consequences and challenges of a life divided amidst.

### Conclusion

In Kosovo music folklore, migration songs reflect the collective pain, work and emotional outlook of a people shaped by forced displacement. These Kosovo songs serve not only as a historical record but also as a powerful artistic expression

of loss, longing and strength in their cultural diversity. The lyrics of these songs, through simple yet profound lyrics and melodies, portray the roles of superiors who transmit personal and social trauma across generations. This study focuses on three traditional Kosovo migration songs: "Vaj, si kenka ba dyrnjaja" by Ndreke Vogli, "N'bash t'zamanit të djelmënisë" by Edi Furra and "Kur prej teje u ndava" by Mazllom Mejzini. Each song embodies emotional depth, cultural identity and personal migration narratives. As shown in this figure, migration pieces blend poetic and musical elements to give voice to those left behind and those who left. As a result, these Kosovar songs also provide emotional consolation to the lost cultural memory and the young Kosovar nation marked by constant separations and enduring hopes.

### Biodata of Author



Dr. **Krenar Doli** was born in 1985 in Gjakova. He completed his primary and secondary education in his hometown. In 2007, he earned his bachelor's degree from the Academy of Arts in Tirana, Faculty of Music, Department of Musicology. In 2014, he completed his master's degree at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies, Albanology Studies Center, specializing in Ethnomusicology within the Department of Ethnology-Folklore. In 2021, he obtained his PhD in Turkish Folklore from Hacı Bayram Veli University in Ankara. He currently works at the Albanology Institute in Pristina, in the Department of Folklore. His research interests include various musical practices in the Balkans and the multifaceted connections between music, art, and socio-cultural spheres. **E-mail:** krenar\_doli@hotmail.com **ORCID:** 0000-0003-1506-6291i So far, he has published the following works:

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