



Research Article

Compilation of volumes by Little Qamil (Qamili i Vogël): an important document tracing the traditional Albanian musical culture¹

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Abstract

In addition to his invaluable role as a singer-songwriter and performer of traditional Albanian songs, this paper will focus on the contribution of Little Qamil [Qamili i Vogël] as to the arrangement and compilation of his 11 volumes containing various traditional songs from all the regions inhabited by Albanians. In the presentation of this paper, we will delve into the ethnomusical aspect of the extensive collection of nearly 400 songs from various Albanian regions featured in the pages of the volumes concerned. What are the songs from the Albanian areas outlined in these 11 volumes? What is the harmonic and rhythmic structure of these songs? Why is it crucial to preserve, document, and systematize all this creative work of Little Qamil [Qamili i Vogël] contained in these volumes for the benefit of future generations? Questions as such will help us uncover the connections and intersections that Little Qamil [Qamili i Vogël] has had with the Albanian musical tradition. The paper will also underscore the significant role played by the entire repertoire collected by him, serving as a primary and crucial reference to the concept of originality, as well as for its gradual musicalization and accompaniment with musical instruments, eventually becoming a significant part of the Albanian civic song.

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Introduction

When examining and analyzing this content from an ethnomusicological perspective, all this material including its authored songs and materials gathered from various Albanian regions, it addresses a significant issue regarding necessary generalizations concerning the history of traditional Albanian music. As ultimately, to establish a structured historical account for the future generations so they could comprehend past and present musical endeavors more clearly, this form of documentation and systematization is an imperative.

Ethnomusicologist Bahtir Sheholli, in his work “*Melopoetic features of traditional singing*”, published by the Institute of Albanology to commemorate the 10th anniversary of his passing. In his essay on Little Qamil [Qamili i Vogël] entitled “*The tradition of our musical folklore as a spiritual link with the creativity of Little Qamil [Qamili i Vogël]*”, Sheholli, *inter alia*, recalls, I quote: “*I still have fresh memories regarding the conversations we had at the Institute of Albanology of Prishtina just few months prior to his [Little Qamil's] death, where he expressed his regret for not being able to bring his songs to life as he had hoped for so long, not only by recording them on audio and video cassettes, but also by melographing them*” (Sheholli, 2020:247). Therefore, the melographing of Little Qamil's [Qamili i Vogël] 10

¹ Within the folklore session of the Albanology Week held on June 9th, 2022, I made a presentation regarding Little Qamil's [Qamili i Vogël] significant contribution to volumes where love-themed lyrics are examined. This paper is more complete and relates to all the materials contained across the 11 volumes concerned.

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volumes, because the first volume entitled “*Bylbyli në Çabrat* [The Nightingale in Çabrat]” issued in 1957 and reissued in 1961, was melographed by Professor Lorenc Antoni. The availability of gramophone discs, audio, and video recordings has made it easier and possible to melograph these songs, providing valuable material for a comprehensive monograph on Little Qamil [*Qamili i Vogël*] as an excellent songwriter and performer of our traditional songs.

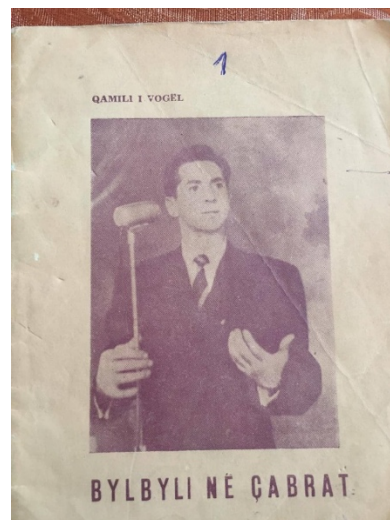


Photo 1. The Volume “*Bylbyli në Çabrat* [Nightingale in Çabrat]”, from 1957³

At first glance, it is easy to understand that love is the predominant motif in most of the songs of Little Qamil [*Qamili i Vogël*] published in his 11 volumes, and represents a great approach and variety in the treatment of love as a feeling. These were the songs which he performed with a masterful ease throughout his life and activity. The lyrical songs in this collection exhibit a clear and discrete incorporation of complex and intricate themes in their melodic aspect of their form. If we refer to the analysis of the form of these musical materials we notice that the basic motif has evolved into fuller and more elaborate themes, especially in his later creations. The love-themed songs in the creativity of Qamili e Vogël are regarded as some of the richest, most cultivated and most embraced forms of our folk lyrics. This is because they directly express human soul and depict the sensory world, transcendent of place, time, and space where the unit concerned was created and practiced. As love songs everywhere express the most intimate feelings of an adult person, reflecting a fundamental inherent physiological need closely tied to the love of life, thus being permeated with a rich artistic figurative representation, yet remain grounded in realism, devoid of excessive elements, generally with acceptable undertones for every kind of cultural setting (Xhagolli, 2007:273).

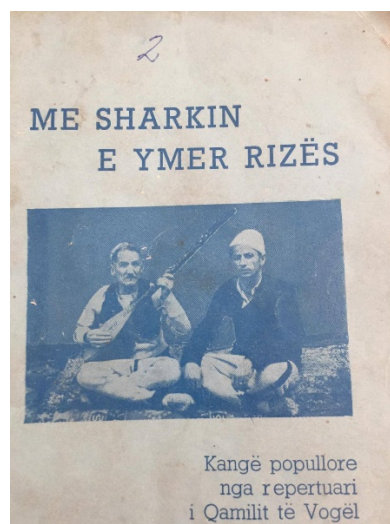


Photo 2. “*Me sharkinë e Ymer Rizës*” [With Ymer Riza’s shargia], issued in 1959 (reissued in 1961), 50 songs in total.

³ This volume contains 19 music materials authored by Little Qamil [*Qamili i Vogël*]. It is the only volume melographed by the ethnomusicologist, Lorenc Antoni.

In our popular psychology, being attracted by the beauty has been consistently associated with positivity, encompassing both outward and inward beauty. As a result, the artistic essence of these songs was brought to life by highlighting the most exquisite elements from the common artist's humble surroundings. Furthermore, these musical compositions exhibit a blend of monologues and dialogues, conveying poetic-musical sentiments that resonate with themes of life, love, and the accompanying struggles: undeniably, the renowned events and figures from our history, play a significant role in all of the artist's creative and interpretative endeavors.

The most notable collection of songs by Little Qamil [*Qamili i Vogël*], like many in our traditional folklore, consist of lyrical songs with elegiac undertones, depicting various aspects of spiritual state of people. In light of this observation, ethnomusicologist Bahtir Sheholli would comment that: *“most of the songs created by Little Qamil [Qamili i Vogël], depict a particular atmosphere both synchronically and diachronically, suggesting a chronological sequence for them. Hence, the classification of the songs by Little Qamil [Qamili e Vogël] merely offers a descriptive and structural representation of the poetic and musical extensiveness, claims that need to be implemented through systematization by ethnomusicologists”* (Sheholli, 2020:247).

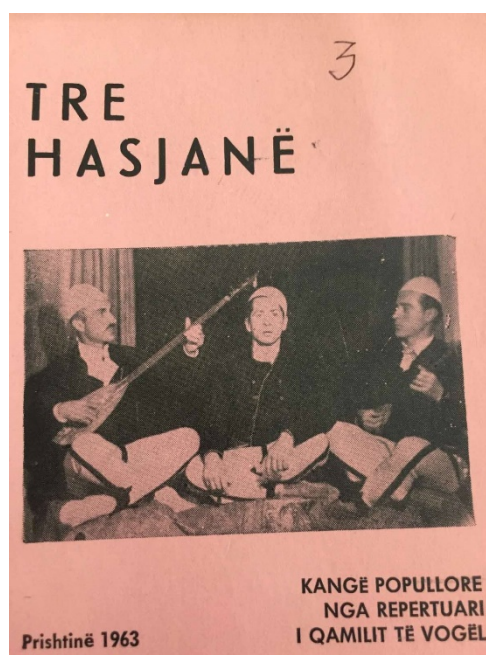


Photo 3. “Tre Hasjanë” [Three Hasjans] (1963), 35 songs in total.

The songs originating from Northern Albania region showcase musical elements that have played a significant role in shaping the being of our national identity. Crucial factors indicate that, apart from diatonic components, chromatic components also appear as a feature of their tonal and modal system. Factors like alteration, grafting, and modulation of certain scale degrees for a semitone up or down; b) a double use of the melodic-harmonic structure both as in a natural and/or altered state of certain degrees of the musical scale, etc. As far as the tonal system is concerned, the traditional music of Northern Albania shares similarities with traditional civic music (*single-voice* civic musical grouping): in both cases, there is a double modal/tonal system: either diatonic and/or chromatic at times.



Photo 4. “Lulet e Beharit” [Flowers of Springtime] (1960), 50 songs in total

In the volumes of Little Qamil [*Qamili i Vogël*], we would also come across traditional songs from Central Albania. The traditional civic song(s) of Central Albania represents the musical style of traditional Albanian civic music in various aspects such as melody, rhythm, modal and tonal system, and structure, etc. Concerning the style of the songs originating from this region, i.e., the traditional songs of the Central Albania, ethnomusicologist Spiro Shetuni would argue that: *if you want to study the style of songs from this region, it means gaining a somewhat clear understanding of the fundamental material-substantial features and structural-formal elements of the traditional Albanian civic music as a whole* (Shetuni, 2011, 142).

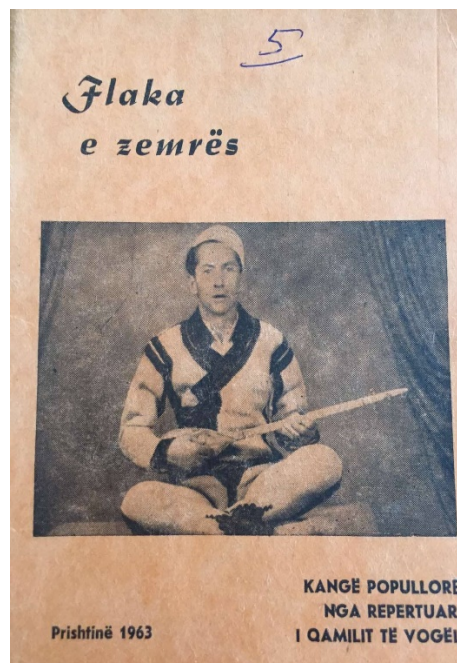


Photo 5. “Flaka e zemrës” [Flames of the heart] (1963), 30 songs in total

The ashik [*love-themed*] songs are also present in the volumes of Little Qamil [*Qamili i Vogël*]. These songs, inspired by the ideas of Aljamiado literature⁴, are characterized by a melostrophic structure, with alternating rhyme and verses, which is rather uncommon in Albanian traditional folk poetry. The musical compositions include refrains with developed forms, typically performed within oriental musical scales, under various maqāms, be it in simple and

⁴ The literature concerned was composed in bayt (two-line verses) format and in international academic circles is recognized as aljamiado literature (derived from the Arabic term *al-ajamiyya*, meaning: foreign, non-Arabic). This form of poetic expression was prominent during the 18th century, preceding the emergence of the national literature of the Albanian National Renaissance.

compound and transposed *maqāms* [rhythmic cycles], accompanied by musical instruments of oriental origin such as shargia, bugarija, daire, etc.



Photo 6. “Këndojnë bylbylat” [The singing of nightingales] (1973), 35 songs in total

Upon careful examination of the songs featured on the pages of these volumes, we have to emphasize that they primarily focus on the recognition and celebration of our traditional songs not only in a realm of patriotic, warlike expression, but also in a sensible and a cultured context of its sensitivity. It is important to highlight this aspect as we have either passionately or dispassionately tried to identify ourselves with the wars we have fought, the blood that has been shed, and have, in some way, neglected certain elements that make up human life at an educational and scientific level, elements pertaining to conscience, the soul of individuals and their sentimental world. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the content that is contained in these volumes is not limited to specific moments, given once and for all in close chapters of musical life. They span throughout our entire history, bearing witness of the invaluable heritage we have inherited in this regard.

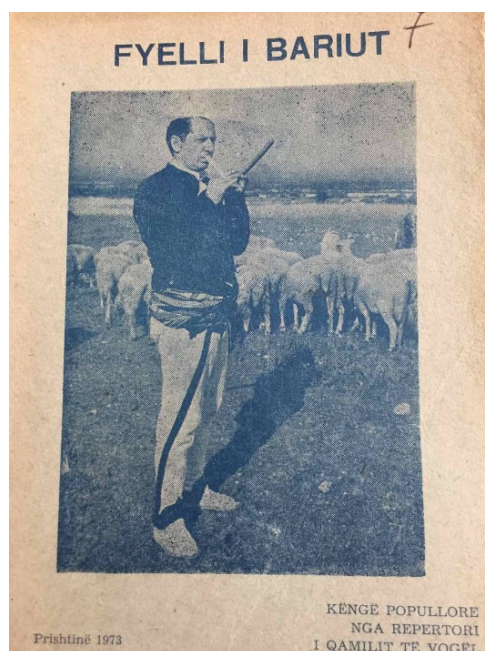


Photo 7. “Fyelli i bariut” [The shepherd's flute] (1973), 35 songs in total

If we look into the creative and interpretative work of Little Qamil [*Qamil i Vogël*], it is important to highlight the fact that his artistic singing was always clear, visible, and enduring. Professor Hamide Stringa, a researcher in Musicology

and Belcanto, in one of our meetings during my studies, about the vocal qualities of Little Qamil [*Qamili i Vogël*] would say the following: *the genuineness and originality of his brilliant vocal made his singing have a powerful impact, as well as an enjoyable musical experience. She stated that he also showcased a high level of flexibility in his voice, allowing him to capture the nuances of elaborate ornamental melodies and achieve his artistic objectives with an extremely refined taste* (Stringa, 2007: Tirana). His voice exuded a powerful, clear, and pure intonation, both while interpreting old musical pieces or creating new original songs. Almost all original songs of Little Qamil [*Qamili i Vogël*] are performed with the traditional folk orchestra of the civic tradition, often combined with traditional musical instruments such as chiftelia, shargia, shepherd's flute, and daire, etc., according to which principle he preserved authentic national soundings and intonations.

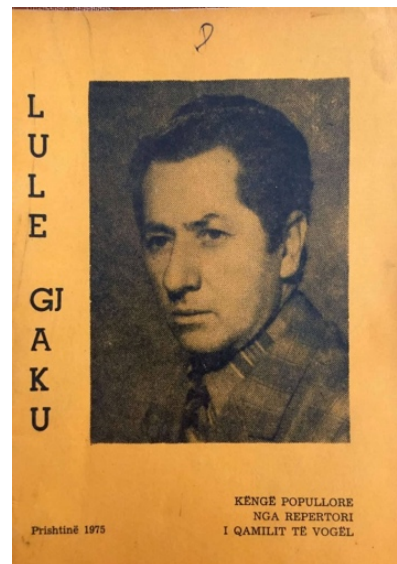


Photo 8. “Lule gjaku” [Flowers of Blood], (1975), 34 songs in total

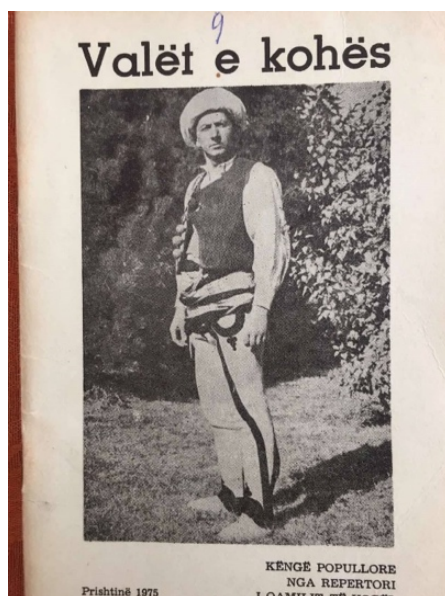


Photo 9. “Valët e kohës” [Waves of time]⁵

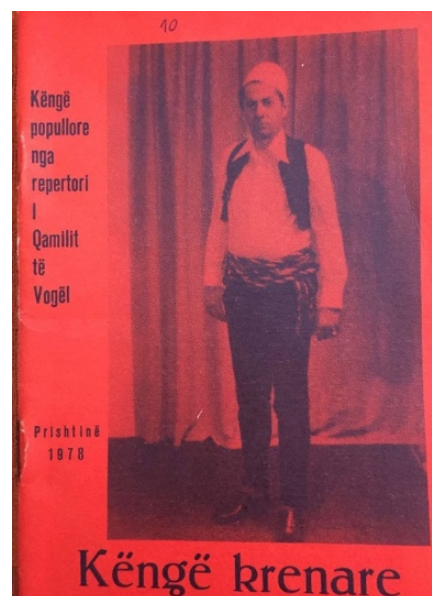


Photo 10. “Këngë krenare” [Proud songs]⁶

⁵ The volume 9 titled: “Waves of time” (1975) by Little Qamil [*Qamili i Vogël*] contains 33 traditional songs in total.

⁶ The volume 10 titled: “Proud Songs” (1978) contains 32 traditional songs in total.

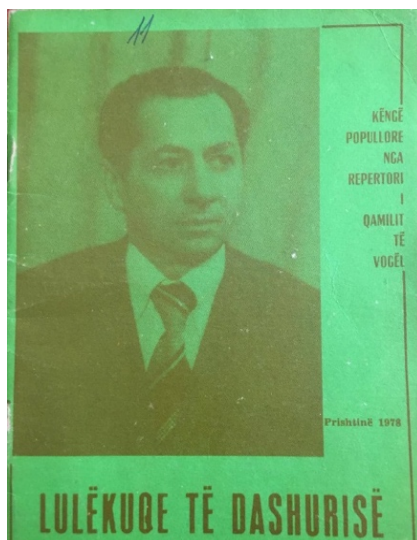


Photo 11. “Lulëkuqe të dashurisë” [Poppies of love]⁷

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that all the materials provided in these 11 volumes, with nearly 400 traditional Albanian songs, serve as a significant contribution to our Albanian folklore as a whole. This compilation will continue to serve as a crucial resource for documenting the various aspects of traditional Albanian musical culture, sung with passion, longing, and dedication, as well as for purposes of analyzing the origins, forms, structures, and characteristics of traditional Albanian songs in general. In this context, all the subjects covered in these volumes are of interest and contribute to forming generalizations about authentic national cultures (which is highly crucial). As these generalizations serve as a foundation for drawing further conclusions, because these values are well-documented. However, if they are not properly documented, or achieved, over time they would risk losing their significance. Conversely, when values are documented and approached with due care and dedication, they retain their value even in contemporary times.

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:

Muzika në refleks të kohës, a selection of works, “Erpoprint,” Gjakova, 2007.

Gjakova brenda muzikës, monograph, “Erpoprint,” Gjakova, 2010.

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Gjurmë të Qamilit të Vogël në muzikë, monograph, Artini, Pristina, 2024. Affiliation: Institute of Albanology of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo

⁷ The last volume, “*Poppies of love*” (1978), contains 35 traditional songs originating from the Albanian-speaking regions.

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