

ISSN: 3023-7890

Türk Organoloji Dergisi

Cilt/Vol 2

Sayı/No 2

Eylül/September 2025



Genç Bilge
Yayıncılık

turkorganolojidergisi.com



Türk Organoloji Dergisi (TOD)
e-ISSN: 2822- 3195

Cilt 2 Sayı 2 Eylül 2025 (Sonbahar)

Türk Organoloji Dergisi Hakkında

Türk Organoloji Dergisi (TOD) (e-ISSN: 3023-7890), müzik aletlerinin özellikleri, sınıflandırılması, tarihsel gelişimi, etimolojisi gibi konular üzerinde araştırmaların yayınlandığı, ücretsiz, açık erişim, hakemli ve bilimsel bir dergidir. Dergide çift-kör hakemlik sistemi uygulanmaktadır. TOD, öncelikle bölgesel, sonrasında ise dünyada organoloji alanında yayın yapan ilk ve tek dergi olması sebebiyle, bu akademik disiplinin gelişiminde önemli bir platform olmayı hedeflemektedir. TOD, organoloji alanındaki araştırmacıların bilimsel yazma becerilerini, teknolojik araç kullanımını, müzik enstrümanı yapımı, tasarımı ve revizyon ustalığı gibi yetkinliklerini geliştirmeyi teşvik eder. Yayın dönemi Mart ve Eylül aylarıdır. Türk Organoloji Dergisi'nin yayın dili Türkçe ve İngilizce'dir.

Yayın Alanı

Türk Organoloji Dergisi'nin (TOD) kapsamı, organoloji alanındaki akademik araştırma konularıdır. Bunun yanında organoloji ile ilgili disiplinler arası konulara da yer verir. TOD; araştırma makaleleri, derleme makaleleri, kitap incelemeleri ve röportajlar şeklinde makaleler yayımlar. TOD'un kapsamı, müzik aletlerinin özellikleri, müzik aletlerinin tarihî gelişimi ve etimolojisi, müzik aletlerinin yapımı ve tasarımı, müzik aletlerinde revizyon ve geliştirmeler ile müzik aletleri üzerine disiplinler arası çalışmaları içerir.

İletişim

Editorial E-mail: turkorganolojieditor@gmail.com

Türk Organoloji Dergisi Künyesi

Dergi Adı	Türk Organoloji Dergisi/ Turkish Journal of Organology
Kısaltma	TOD
e-ISSN	3023-7890
Yayıncı	Genç Bilge Yayıncılık
Yayıncı Konumu	Türkiye
Posta Adresi	Bahçelievler Mahallesi 3015 Sokak No:9/1, Isparta, Türkiye
Editorial E-mail	turkmuzigieditor@gmail.com
Lisans	CC BY-NC-ND 4.0
DOI	10.5281/zenodo.
Destekçi/Sponsor	Uluslararası Rast Müzik Kongresi (IRMC)
Editör(ler)	Dr. Öğrt. Üyesi Emir Değirmenli
Yayın Süresi	Yılda 2 Kez (Mart-Eylül)
Yayın Ortamı	Elektronik
Dergi Web Sitesi	https://turkorganolojidergisi.com
İlk Basım Yılı	2024
Yayın Dili	Türkçe
İndekslenme	DRJI, Research Bible, ROAD, OpenAIRE , Google Scholar

Türk Müziği Yayın Kurulu

Baş Editör

Dr.Öğr. Üyesi **Emir Değirmenli**, Türkiye

Alan Editörleri

Doç.Dr. **Kibele Kıvılcım Çiftçi**, Türkiye

Doç.Dr. **Serkan Çelik**, Türkiye

Editör Kurulu Üyeleri

Prof.Dr. **Abbaskulu Necefzade**, Azerbaycan
DoçDr. **Yavuz Demirtaş**, Türkiye
Dr. **Memmedeli Mirel Memedov**, Azerbaycan
Dr.Öğr. Üyesi **Ufuk Güler**, Türkiye

Doç.Dr. **Sehrane Kasimi**, Azerbaycan
Dr.Öğr.Üyesi **Zafer Güzey**, Türkiye
Dr.Öğr. Üyesi **Mehmet Alan**, Türkiye

Asistan Editör

Dr. **Orkun Zafer Özgelen**, Türkiye

Mizanpaj

İlhan Baltacı, Türkiye



Editörden

Değerli Organoloji Araştırmacıları,

Türk Organoloji Dergisi'nin (TOD) 2(2) sayısını araştırmacıların dikkatine sunmaktan memnuniyet duyuyoruz. Organoloji alanında hem bölgesel hem de uluslararası düzeyde özgün katkılar üretmeyi hedefleyen dergimizin bu sayısı, geleneksel çalgı yapım ustalığından yenilikçi enstrüman tasarımlarına, kültürel mirasın korunmasından zanaatkarlık pratiklerinin belgelenmesine uzanan dört nitelikli çalışmadan oluşmaktadır. Her bir makale, müzik aletlerinin kültürel, teknik ve akustik boyutlarına dair değerli bilgiler sunmakta; organoloji literatürünün gelişimine anlamlı katkılar yapmaktadır.

Bu sayıda yer alan ilk makale, **Memmedeli Mirel Memmedov** tarafından kaleme alınan “*Tar müzik aletinin onarımı sırasında dikkat edilmesi gereken hususlar ve tar parçalarının görevleri*” başlıklı çalışmadır. Yazar, Azerbaycan tarının yapısal özelliklerini, malzeme seçimini, eşik ve perde sistemlerini, gövde-sap ilişkisini ve membran bakımı gibi kritik teknik süreçleri ayrıntılı biçimde ele almaktadır. Tarın her bir parçasının akustik işlev açısından taşıdığı önemi ortaya koyan çalışma, geleneksel tar yapım ve onarım uygulamalarının bilimsel temellerle aktarılmasına hizmet etmektedir. Bu yönüyle hem uygulamalı çalgı yapımcıları hem de organoloji araştırmacıları için temel bir başvuru niteliği taşımaktadır.

Sayının ikinci makalesi, **Bekim Ramadani** tarafından hazırlanan “*Arnavut halk müzik aletleri zanaatkarlığında geleneksel perspektifler ve yenilik: Gostivar'dan Usta Salla Shabani'nin atölyesi örneği*” başlıklı çalışmadır. Makale, Arnavut halk müzik aletleri üretim geleneğini etnografik bir çerçevede incelemekte; usta Salla Shabani'nin atölyesini örnek olay olarak ele alarak zanaatkarlığın kültürel kimlik, ritüel pratikler ve modernleşme süreçleriyle ilişkisini analiz etmektedir. Çalışma, geleneksel zanaat bilgisinin korunması ve gelecek kuşaklara aktarılması bakımından önemli bulgular sunmaktadır.

Üçüncü makale, **Orçun Çalkap** ve **Kibele Kıvılcım Çiftçi** tarafından kaleme alınan “*Birleşik Kanun: Türk ve Batı organolojisi perspektifinden yeni bir çalgı modeli*” başlıklı özgün bir çalışmadır. Yazarlar, iki kanunun tek bir gövdede birleştirilmesiyle tasarlanan “Birleşik Kanun”u organolojik, terminolojik ve icra teknikleri açısından kapsamlı biçimde incelemektedir. Hem Türk müzik kültüründe geleneksel adlandırma pratikleriyle hem de Hornbostel-Sachs sınıflandırma sistemindeki “combined/unified” yaklaşımıyla uyum sergileyen bu yeni model, organoloji literatürüne önemli bir yenilik ve tartışma alanı kazandırmaktadır.

Bu sayının dördüncü makalesi, İranlı luthier **Morteza Salimian Rizi** tarafından yazılan “*The art of crafting Iranian Tar and Setar: Personal experiences*” başlıklı çalışmadır. Makale, İran tarı ve setarının yapım sürecine ilişkin uzun yıllara dayanan ustalık deneyimini belgeler. Malzeme seçimi, gövde-sap oranları, ses tahtasının işlevi, boynuz ve ağaç tiplerinin tonal karakter üzerindeki etkileri gibi konular uygulamalı bir yaklaşımla ele alınmaktadır. Bu çalışma, İran çalgı yapım geleneğinin teknik inceliklerini bilimsel bir çerçevede aktarması bakımından hem bölgesel hem de uluslararası organoloji literatürüne değerli katkılar sunmaktadır.

Türk Organoloji Dergisi'nin bu özel sayısının, geleneksel çalgıların yapım, tasarım, yenileme ve kültürel işlevlerine dair disiplinler arası araştırmaları teşvik edeceğine inanıyoruz. Katkı sunan tüm yazarlarımıza ve hakemlerimize teşekkür eder, organoloji alanındaki yeni çalışmalara ilham olmasını dileriz

Saygılarımızla,
Türk Organoloji Dergisi Editörlüğü

From the Editor

Dear Organology Researchers,

It is a pleasure to present the second issue of Volume 2 of the *Journal of Turkish Organology* (JTO) to our readers. Aiming to contribute to the growth of organology both regionally and internationally, this issue brings together four scholarly articles that explore traditional instrument-making, innovative instrument design, cultural heritage preservation, and contemporary craft practices. Each contribution offers valuable insights into the technical, cultural, and acoustical dimensions of musical instruments, thereby enriching the field of organology with new and significant perspectives.

The first article in this issue, authored by **Memmedeli Mirel Memmedov**, titled “*Tar müzik aletinin onarımı sırasında dikkat edilmesi gereken hususlar ve tar parçalarının görevleri*”, provides a comprehensive examination of the Azerbaijani tar. The study details the instrument’s structural components, materials, string and fret systems, soundboard membrane, and maintenance techniques. Emphasizing the acoustic functions and mechanical significance of each component, the article serves as a substantial reference for both instrument makers and researchers working in the field of organology.

The second article, written by **Bekim Ramadani**, “*Arnavut halk müzik aletleri zanaatkârlığında geleneksel perspektifler ve yenilik: Gostivar’dan Usta Salla Shabani’nin atölyesi örneği*”, explores traditional perspectives and contemporary innovations in Albanian folk instrument craftsmanship. Focusing on the workshop of master craftsman Salla Shabani from Gostivar, the study employs ethnographic methods—interviews, observations, and field data—to analyze the cultural, ritual, and historical relevance of instrument-making within Albanian identity. The article highlights the importance of safeguarding traditional craftsmanship and transmitting artisanal knowledge to future generations.

The third contribution, by **Orçun Çalkap** and **Kibele Kıvılcım Çiftçi**, titled “*Birleşik Kanun: Türk ve Batı organolojisi perspektifinden yeni bir çalgı modeli*”, introduces an innovative instrument model known as the Unified Kanun. Designed by integrating two kanuns into a single body, this new instrument expands the technical possibilities of the traditional kanun, enabling novel performance techniques and multi-octave mandal manipulation. The authors contextualize the instrument within both Turkish naming traditions and the Hornbostel–Sachs classification system’s category of “combined/unified” instruments, positioning it as a valuable contribution to contemporary organological discourse.

The fourth article, “*The art of crafting Iranian Tar and Setar: Personal experiences*”, written by Iranian luthier **Morteza Salimian Rizi**, documents more than a decade of professional expertise in constructing the Persian tar and setar. The study provides an applied perspective on material selection, soundboard integration, neck curvature, tonal shaping, and structural features that influence resonance. By combining traditional craftsmanship with personal experimentation, the author offers rich insights into the preservation and sustainable transmission of Iranian instrument-making heritage.

We believe that this issue of the *Journal of Turkish Organology* will stimulate interdisciplinary research on the construction, design, restoration, and cultural significance of musical instruments. We extend our sincere thanks to all authors and reviewers who contributed to this volume and hope that these works will inspire further scholarship in organology.

With kind regards,

Journal of Turkish Organology Editorial

İçerik

No	Başlık	Sayfa
1	Traditional perspectives and innovation in Albanian Folk musical instrument craftsmanship: the case study of Master Salla Shabani's Workshop in Gostivar <i>Bekim Ramadani</i>	55-66
2	Repair of the tar musical instrument: points to consider and functions of tar parts <i>Memmedeli Mirel Memmedov</i>	67-76
3	Unified Kanun: A new instrument model from the perspective of Turkish and Western organology <i>Orkun Çalkap and Kibele Kıvılcım Çiftçi</i>	77-88
4	The art of crafting Iranian Tar and Setar: Personal experiences <i>Günay Mammadova</i>	89-91

İndekslenme

[DRJI](#), [Research Bible](#), [ROAD](#), [OpenAIRE](#), [Google Scholar](#)

Genç Bilge Yayıncılık

Bahçelievler Mahallesi 3015 Sokak No:9/1 Isparta, Türkiye

Web site: <http://gencbilgeyayincilik.com/> E-mail: gencbilgeyayincilik@gmail.com

Not: TM Uluslararası Rast Müzik Kongresi tarafından desteklenmektedir.

Uluslararası Rast Müzik Kongresi (IRMC) web site: <https://rastmusiccongress.org/>

Türk Organoloji Dergisi  açık erişimli ve  lisansı altındadır.

Research Article

Traditional perspectives and innovation in Albanian Folk musical instrument craftsmanship: the case study of Master Salla Shabani's Workshop in Gostivar

Bekim Ramadani¹

Faculty of Music, University of Tetova, Tetova, North Macedonia

Article Info

Submitted: 11 February 2025

Accepted: 3 July 2025

Online: 30 September 2025

Keywords

Albanian music culture
Craftsmanship
Folk musical instruments
Musical instrument workshop
Salla Shabani

3023-7890/ © 2025 JTO
Published by Genç Bilge (Young
Wise) Pub.Ltd. This is an open access
article under the CC BY-NC-ND
license.



Abstract

This study focuses on the analysis of traditional perspectives and innovation in Albanian folk musical instrument craftsmanship, with a particular emphasis on the workshop of master Salla Shabani from Gostivar. Using a wide range of methodologies, including detailed interviews, observations, and other field sources, we examine the history of musical instrument craftsmanship and its role in the context of Albanian culture. Furthermore, we analyze the impact of this craftsmanship on ceremonies, historical events, and the cultural identity of Albanians. In addition, we explore the effects of traditional musical instrument production techniques and innovation in this field, including the role of contemporary technology. By creating a complete portrait of Salla Shabani's biography, the aim of this study is to accurately understand the connection between craftsmanship, musical identity, and the dissemination of Albanian culture. In particular, we discuss the role of craftsmanship in preserving cultural diversity and promoting intercultural dialogue, and suggest possible steps for the continued preservation and promotion of the traditional musical instrument-making art in the future.

To cite this article:

Ramadani, B. (2025). Traditional perspectives and innovation in Albanian Folk musical instrument craftsmanship: the case study of Master Salla Shabani's Workshop in Gostivar. *Journal of Turkish Organology*, 2(2), 55-66. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17592580>

Introduction

Craftsmanship (handicrafts) is a profession that requires special skills. From a historical perspective, it refers to non-industrial, small-scale production. Craftsmanship has a long history in many cultures and societies, extending from ancient times to the present. Artisans have specialized through techniques and skills transmitted from generation to generation.

An analysis of the historical development of folk musical instrument craftsmanship within Albanian culture forms a fundamental part of this study, as it provides the necessary historical and cultural context for understanding the role and evolution of this craft over time. In this section, the development process of folk musical instruments in Albanian culture will be examined in light of significant historical periods and cultural events that have influenced it. The analysis will begin with traditional musical instruments unearthed in the ancient and medieval periods in present-day Albanian territories.

There is considerable evidence concerning the musical culture of the Illyrians. Information about this culture appears in the works of Aristotle, Plutarch, Titus Livius, Cicero, Athenaeus, Thalloczy, Calenus, and Pliny, and most notably in the Bible, considered the oldest document. The Bible notes that the instrument known as *Sirta* was widely used from

¹ Dr., Faculty of Music, University of Tetova, Tetova, North Macedonia. Email: b_ramadani@yahoo.com ORCID: 0009-0007-6108-1851

Babylon to Illyria in the ancient Babylonian Kingdom (4000 BCE), which possessed a deeply rooted culture. It is also recorded that “the Illyrians sang war songs accompanied by flute and bagpipe” (Thalloczy, 1916) and performed war dances with swords. The renowned French author and abbot Pierre Bauron (1888, p. 350) also emphasized the courage, patriotism, and peaceful relations of their ancestors with their neighbors in his works.

Furthermore, Aristotle (*Politics*, VII) advised his fellow citizens not to develop melodies played in the Phrygian mode (a modal scale consisting of two symmetrical tetrachords with a semitone between the 2nd–3rd and 6th–7th degrees), as this mode was considered one of the characteristics of Illyrian music and was performed on an instrument called *Bicurelja* (Gr. *Phrygian auloi*; Lat. *Tibiae phrygias*) (Ramadan Sokoli & Piro Miso, 1991, pp. 29–30).

In the 5th century, it was reported that Archbishop Jerome (Jerome) referred to dancers and rhythmic accompaniment using small metal instruments (*çamparet*) (Ankica Vitanova & Bekim Ramadani, 2014). The Runic Ocarina, a wind musical instrument from the Neolithic period, is considered the oldest musical instrument ever found in Kosovo. This artifact is a unique archaeological discovery not only for Kosovo but also for the entire region and beyond (Kraja, 2018, p. 1211).

One of the most significant instruments for Albanians from the Middle Ages to the present is the string instrument *lahuta*, used by highlanders to accompany epic songs from the *Kreshnikët Cycle*. During this period, Albanians also used other musical instruments such as idiophones (hammer, bell, cymbal, stone, tray), membranophones (drum, tambourine, pot, etc.), and aerophones (leaf, flute, *zurna*, etc.).

In ethnomusicology, a musical instrument is always evaluated with two distinct functions: as a tool for producing sound and as a tool for making music (Bose, *Ethnomusicology*, 2019, p. 91). Sound is the most important element in expressing the national code. For example, even if one plays motifs from Schubert’s symphonies on a *çifteli*, the timbre will still possess an authentically Albanian resonance (Ramadani; Adnan Aliu, renowned maker and performer of aerophone folk musical instruments, 2019, p. 30).

The Albanian people have inherited numerous musical instruments from their ancestors, remarkable in terms of craftsmanship, origin, usage, and expressive capabilities (Sokoli, 1991, p. 1). Many historical factors—migrations, the Ottoman occupation, and cultural interactions with other communities—have significantly influenced the formation and diversification of musical instruments. Before the Industrial Revolution (18th–19th centuries), craftsmanship was the primary mode of production. An exception to this was the manufacture-based production carried out with a more massive and organized division of labor, marking the transition from individual craftsmanship to the industrial era. Therefore, part of the blame for the disappearance of traditional crafts in our country may be attributed to this revolution (Penep, 2013).

In the late Ottoman period, many instruments such as *primi*, *karadyzeni*, *bugaria*, *gajda*, *surle*, and *davul* emerged. During the *Rilindja* (National Awakening) period, additional instruments such as *çifteli*, *sharki*, and various flutes were introduced.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, when examining the transformations and challenges faced by folk musical instrument craftsmanship in the context of globalization and general modernization, it becomes evident that Western-origin instruments such as mandolin, guitar, clarinet, *llautë*, violin, and accordion were incorporated into folk music ensembles. This development endowed Albanian folk music with both a new appearance and new content.

All these instruments, which have been part of Albanian folk musical culture for centuries, have undergone numerous transformations and changes in terms of construction, structure, timbre, and performance, adapting to the changing social and technological contexts.

The Role of Musical Instrument Craftsmanship in the Cultural Identity, Ceremonies, and Cultural Events of Albanian Regions

An essential part of this study aims to understand the impact of musical instrument craftsmanship on the cultural and social life of Albanians through history and traditions. Some of these impacts include:

Fulfilling ritual and ceremonial needs: Traditional Albanian musical instruments are an important part of various ceremonies and rituals in community life. For example, the *lahuta* often accompanies war songs and other ceremonial events, creating depth and a unique atmosphere.

Promotion of culture and cultural heritage: Artisans who meticulously produce traditional instruments such as *lahuta*, *çifteli*, and *sharki* preserve ancient knowledge and ensure its transmission to future generations.

Cultural identity and sense of belonging: Traditional musical instruments are powerful symbols of Albanian identity. Their use in ceremonies and cultural events strengthens the sense of belonging and cultural bonds.

Preservation of traditional skills: The continuation of traditional manufacturing techniques helps preserve an important part of cultural heritage.

Musical instruments have played a vital role in human life throughout history and have been an inseparable part of warfare. A well-known anecdote illustrates this: Prince Nikola of Montenegro asked General Mark Milani, “How is it that you cannot defeat Malësia (the Highland region)?” Milani replied, “The Highlanders are very strong, very sensitive, very patriotic, and they are determined to defend their land at any cost. But there is something else... Their allies are the mountains and the *lahuta* players.” When Nikola asked, “Why the *lahuta* players?” the general responded, “Because when I kill one of their Highlanders, a *lahuta* player composes a song for him, and these songs inspire hundreds of other Highlanders to join the war” (as recounted by *lahuta* player Jonuz Delaj, Mema, 2018).

Music, song, dance, entertainment, weddings, etc., performed with traditional instruments have a stronger impact on both performers and listeners. What would a wedding be like without music? The original lyrics of the famous song *Bjeri gajdes gajdexhi* also convey this importance:

Nuk ka dasëm o, pa daulle,
nuk ka valle o, pa valltar,
ju këndonit edhe vallëzoni,
sot kjo dasëm mos të pushoj!
(Gazeta Telegraf, 2021)

There is no wedding, oh, without the drum,
there is no dance, oh, without the dancer,
you sing and you dance,
may this wedding never stop today!”
(Gazeta Telegraf, 2021)

Musical instruments have also played a significant role in lament songs, from which *kaba*, a typical Albanian musical form, was born. According to legend, a dying woman asked her husband not to weep for her but instead to let the clarinet weep at the head of her coffin.

On the other hand, the *davul* (drum) and *surle* (shawm) have become indispensable components of weddings, celebrations, cultural events, and social gatherings. They are present at all types of assemblies, including sporting events. Therefore, the production of musical instruments contributes to the promotion and preservation of Albanian cultural heritage while reinforcing the sense of belonging and cultural identity.

Techniques, Skills, and Tools in Traditional Musical Instrument Making

The production of traditional musical instruments involves specialized techniques, skills, and tools aimed at creating high-quality instruments with beautiful timbres. Some of these include:

Material Selection: The materials used in musical instruments are of vital importance in terms of their quality and sound. Artisans carefully select wood, metal, or other materials suitable for the type of instrument they intend to craft. For example, to make a traditional *lahuta*, it is essential to choose strong and high-quality wood such as walnut, cherry, ash, maple, or olive.

Shaping and Carving: Artisans possess specialized carving skills to shape materials into appropriate forms and sizes. This process involves using traditional wood or metalworking tools to create the instrument's form and details.

Detail Work: Musical instrument production also includes adding traditional motifs, decorations, or personal details to the instrument. These embellishments enhance the instrument's aesthetic value (e.g., serpent figures, goat motifs, portraits of Skanderbeg, or the national flag).

Assembly and Fitting: Once the instrument is shaped and detailed, artisans assemble all the necessary components to make it functional. This involves installing strings, bridges, pegs, bows, rods, vibrating components, and other essential elements.

Testing and Refinement: After completion, artisans test the instrument's quality and sound. If necessary, they make minor adjustments to ensure the instrument produces a pleasing and satisfying sound.

Tools Used

Burgija (hand drill): for drilling wood.

Sakica: for cutting wood into different shapes.

Keser (adze): for cutting and carving wood.

Small hand saw: for more precise cutting and carving.

File: to make the wood more aesthetic and smooth.

Rakon: similar in function to a file, used for simpler shaping.

Sandpaper: for polishing and smoothing wooden products.

Tuning device: to determine the tuning and pitch range of the instrument.

Wood-cutting machines, specialized carving machines, engraving and decoration machines, etc.

Innovations in Musical Instrument Craftsmanship

Innovation in musical instrument craftsmanship refers to the use of technology, new materials, and other methods to improve quality, performance, and user experience. Some examples include:

New Materials: Using modern materials instead of traditional ones. For example, alongside wood, lighter and more durable materials such as synthetic fiber or hard plastic may be preferred.

Modern Technology and Equipment: Modern devices such as CNC (Computer Numerical Control) machines allow for more precise carving and the creation of complex details.

Innovation in Design and Form: Original instruments can be designed in different shapes or with personalized details.

Improving Performance and Sound Quality: Sound quality can be enhanced by using special materials and acoustic techniques for components such as strings, bridges, pegs, vibrating parts, skins, and mouthpieces.

Customization and Adaptation: Offering users the ability to choose materials, shapes, and design details according to their preferences and needs.

Traditional Musical Instrument Repertoire

The repertoire of traditional musical instruments belonging to the Albanian people is remarkably rich and diverse, manifesting itself across a wide spectrum of musical and social contexts. Through these instruments, three musical genres are expressed: epic, epico-lyric, and lyric—namely, epic and historical songs, love songs, songs of migration (*gurbet*), military songs (*nizam*), anniversary songs, and more. These instruments are also used to perform instrumental melodies such as *nibete* and *kaba*. Folk dances are likewise performed with their accompaniment. Imagine what the songs of the *Kreshnikët* epic, ballads, historical rhapsodies, songs of the *majekrabbu* type, and various traditional festivals would mean without folk musical instruments!

The use of traditional musical instruments belonging to the Albanian people varies according to musical style, genre, and cultural context. In some cases, these instruments are played solo, sometimes in pairs, and sometimes within ensembles to convey melodies and rhythms. Their repertoire can encompass a wide range of traditional songs and folk dances, as well as free improvisations that reflect the richness of Albanian folk music. Moreover, these instruments can be used in modern musical genres, adapting to styles such as pop, rock, or jazz. Thus, the repertoire of these instruments is vast and diverse, offering not only a rich variety of sounds and musical expressions but also a wide range of emotions.

Research Aim

This research aims to determine the role and importance of Albanian folk musical instrument craftsmanship in our culture by analyzing both traditional perspectives and innovation in this field. To this end, the workshop of master

craftsman Salla Shabani from Gostivar is examined, focusing on the traditional production techniques of folk musical instruments, the impact of innovation, and their place in the cultural identity of the Albanian people.

Research Questions

- What is the role of folk musical instrument craftsmanship in preserving Albanian cultural identity?
- What are the traditional production techniques of folk musical instruments in Albanian culture?
- What is the impact of innovation on the production and development of folk musical instruments?
- How can the history of folk musical instrument craftsmanship in the Gostivar region be defined?
- What are the unique characteristics of master Salla Shabani's workshop?
- How has Salla Shabani's craftsmanship influenced the production and promotion of folk musical instruments?
- How have folk musical instruments been used in ceremonies, historical events, and cultural activities in the Gostivar region?
- What are the challenges and opportunities for the future of folk musical instrument craftsmanship among Albanians?
- How can folk musical instrument craftsmanship contribute to intercultural dialogue and the promotion of cultural diversity in Macedonia?

Method

Interview with Master Salla Shabani

A fundamental part of this study consists of a detailed interview with Salla Shabani, a renowned craftsman in the production of traditional Albanian folk musical instruments. This interview provides a detailed understanding of production processes, traditional techniques, and innovations in craftsmanship.

Observation and Analysis of Other Sources

In addition to the interview, this study also includes the observation and analysis of other sources related to folk musical instrument craftsmanship in Albanian culture. These sources include previous research, documents, and online databases on local craftsmanship.

Findings

Biography of Salla Shabani

Salla Shabani was born on February 9, 1947, in the village of Strajan in Gostivar. It would be impossible to grow up in a home where song and authentic folk music flowed like an inexhaustible source and not preserve the treasure of folk culture. He began his involvement in folkloric music activities at the age of seven, first by playing the *kaval* and immersing himself in the melodies of folk music.



Photo 1. Salla Shabani interview video

The place where Salla Shabani was born is known as a cradle of folk music, where traditional musical culture has been preserved for centuries. His father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and many other family members across generations were producers of folk instruments. At the age of 8–9, he began playing the *çifteli* and *sharki*; at 10–11, he started playing the *kaval* and *gajda*. At 12–13, he attempted for the first time to produce some wind instruments (*kaval* and *gajda*),

and from the age of 14, he began making *çifteli*, *sharki*, and *kaval*. He inherited all these instrument-making skills from his father Lazami and his uncle Fejzulla Shabani, who were considered living legends of the *kaval* at the time.



Video 1. Salla Shabani, Master of Musical Instruments (Flaka, 2017, November 6)

He continued producing folk instruments until 1968, when he migrated to Germany for work and became a construction master. However, his love for folkloric music never diminished; in foreign lands, he invented a *kaval* titled *girnata*. A few years later, he developed a side-blown *kaval* with two scales that could be played from both ends. Until 1976, he both worked in construction in Germany and produced original folk instruments.

In 1976, he returned to his homeland and continued his craftsmanship. His passion for folk music did not end after returning from abroad; on the contrary, it continued with new inventions. In 1977, he invented a five-function *kaval* with additional components; in 1978, another *kaval* that could be played both as a *kaval* and a *gajda*. In 1979, he developed a wind instrument combining a *kaval* and a whistle-flute that could be played in the same scale. In 1980, he created a *kaval* with a whistle for beginners and a two-tone *kaval* with three scales; and in 1981, he developed a double-ended *kaval* with eight functions and additional components.

He continued producing these instruments until 1992, when he invented four types of curved-end *kaval*. He also developed a double-ended, dual-function cane. In 1994, he created a four-function, double-ended cane, and in 1998, a *kaval* with additional notes made from *girnata* parts. He continued producing traditional folk instruments until 2012, when he invented a six-function tempered *çifteli*.

As a producer of wind and string instruments (*çifteli*, tempered *çifteli*, *sharki*, *prima*, *karadizena*, all types of *kaval*, side flutes, whistle flutes, double-tone flutes, ocarinas, *surle*, double-tone *zurna*, *gajda*, *rake-take*, *gëreza*, *rëkeza*, etc.), Salla Shabani opened a new chapter in Albanian organology. In his own words, musical folklore is the strongest and most meaningful source of inspiration in his life (Bekim Ramadani & Florent Iseini, 2016).

Salla Shabani has performed with the following artists: Shefket Ismani (2020, 2022, Topestrada TV Tetova); Rizvan Sinani (2016, 2020, Alb Sound Production); Adnan Aliu (2012 Red Media, 2013 Uskanaify, 2017 Muzikë & Film Shqip); Emin Xhaferi (2013, 2022 Muzikë & Film Shqip); Hanife Sejfulla Reçani (2014 R.I.P.); Vëllezërit Dervishi (2004, 2013 BeniProduction); Vëllezërit Sejdiu (2014); Roven Hoti (2016); Izmit Salihu (2018 Televizioni Globi); Revajete Fazliu (2016); Lumturie Axhami (2016); Vëllezërit Limani (2014); Arif Madana (2016); Sevd Malsia (2016); Mejreme Kurti (1993 and 2014).

Participation in Television Programs

Salla Shabani has participated in various television programs, including:

- *Oda Kërçovare* (MUZIKE & FILM SHQIP, 2021) (BeniProduction, Vëllezërit Dervishi - Shkurte Vogel [Oda Kërçovare, TV Gurra] | *Këngë Kërçovare*, 2013)
- *Nga tradita* (TOPESTRADA TV Tetova, 2017; 2019; 2021 [twice])
- *Rreth oxhakut* (*Iso iso*, 2021)
- *Rrënjët tona* (Media, *Melodi me Gajde* - Salla Shabani, 2012) (Media, Salla Shabani - *Melodi me Kavall*, 2012) etc.

Awards, Honors, and Diplomas

Over the past 25 years, Salla Shabani has been highly active in folk music festivals and has been recognized with numerous awards, honors, and diplomas.

- In 2002, he received the “Veteran of Folklore” award at the Kaçanik Festival.
- In 2004, he was awarded a diploma for his valuable contributions at the national festival held in Gjirokaštër.
- In 2006, he received a diploma for Best Melody at the “Sharri Këndon” festival.
- In the same year, he was honored with the “Golden Plaque” award on the 35th anniversary of the AKVP “BESA” organization in Gostivar.

Artistic Activities

His intense artistic activities are also connected with the ensemble AKVP “BESA” in Gostivar, with which he has participated in various performances, presentations, events, and festivals. With this ensemble, he was awarded the “Career Diploma” at the “Sharri Këndon” Festival in 2007, and in 2008 he received the diploma for “Best Performer on the Kaval” in the “Malësia e Madhe” region of Montenegro. In July 2010, he won the “Best Melody of the Festival Performed with the Kaval” award at the “Këngë Jeho” Festival in Struga. In May 2011, he participated in the “Hasi Jehon” Folklore Festival in Kosovo and was recognized as a “Distinguished Instrumentalist.” In June 2011, he received the “Most Original Performer” award at the traditional “Sharri Këndon” folklore festival.

On July 16, 2011, he participated in the “Shepherds’ Festival” in Galičnik, and on August 31, 2011, he was named “Best Artist with the Kaval” at the “Kandilat e Bajramit” Festival in Skopje. On November 26, 2011, at the “Besa” Folk Songs and Dances Ensemble in Gostivar, he received the title “Veteran of Folklore” on the occasion of its 40th anniversary. On June 8, 2012, he was awarded “Best Instrumentalist on the Kaval” at the “Pece Atanasovski” Festival held in the city of Prilep (Dollnen). In the same month, he participated in the “Sharri Këndon” festival and, together with his ensemble, won the “Best Orchestra of the Festival” award. On April 13–14, 2013, he participated in the national typological folklore festival held in Lezhë and won the award for “Best Performer on the Kaval and Ney.”

On July 7, 2013, he received two awards at the 39th “Pece Atanasovski” National Festival held in Prilep: the “19th Century Plaque” for his invention of the six-function *çifteli* and the “Career Diploma on the Kaval.” From May 22–29, 2013, he participated in the “Revyal Festival De Saint – Florent Le – Vieil” International Traditional Festival in Paris, France. From August 16–18, 2013, he participated in the “Rapsha 2013” National Folklore Festival in Montenegro and was awarded the “Career Diploma.” In 2014, he once again won first place at the “Pece Atanasovski” Festival, earning the title of “Best Musician.”

In 2015, he participated in the National Folklore Festival held in Gjirokaštër from May 10–16, where he presented his three-function cane and double-tone *kaval*, and received the “Career First Prize” for his significant contributions to innovation, production, and craftsmanship in folk musical instruments. In the same year, he won the “Diploma and Pece Atanasovski Statue” awards at the “Pece Atanasovski” Festival. He also participated in the “Rreze Mali” - Bistër Festival, Argjiro Fest-On (*Gazeta Shqip*, 2015), and the national typological folklore festival in Lezhë (*Gazeta Metro*, 2016).

In July 2024, during the 50th anniversary of the “Pece Atanasovski” Festival of folk instruments and songs held in Prilep and Dollneni, he received two awards (“Plaque” and “Certificate of Appreciation”). In August 2024, he received a “Certificate of Appreciation” from Valbon Limani, Mayor of Gostivar, and Namik Durmishi, President of the Municipal Council, for his “long-term work and dedication to Albanian ethno-organology.”

Salla Shabani continues to contribute to the production and performance of musical instruments through technical and tonal innovations. His talent is not limited to wind instruments but also extends to string instruments. He possesses extraordinary talent in the field of traditional culture. His activities also encompass the pedagogical field, as he has lovingly passed on the art of playing the *kaval* to four *kavalists* — Hanif Demiri, Emin Xhaferi, Adnan Aliu, and Valon Aliu — who are interested in folk music and follow in his footsteps. These musicians have also participated in many folk music festivals (Flaka, 2017).

Conclusion

The analysis and interpretation of the research findings offer a profound perspective on the impact of musical instrument craftsmanship on Albanian culture, addressing the fundamental questions of the study and reflecting on the conclusions drawn. The following key points have emerged:

Impact on Cultural Identity

The research demonstrates that musical instrument craftsmanship has played a crucial role in the formation of Albanian cultural identity. The creation and performance of these instruments have been a fundamental aspect of the life of the Albanian people, instilling in them a deep sense of connection with their cultural heritage.

Creation of Cultural Bonds

Musical instrument craftsmanship has contributed significantly to the establishment and preservation of profound cultural bonds between generations. Through the transmission of traditional knowledge and techniques, masters such as Salla Shabani have facilitated the preservation of cultural heritage and promoted intergenerational dialogue.

Role in Festivals and Cultural Events

Traditional musical instruments produced by masters like Salla Shabani have become an integral part of festivals, museums, and cultural events. As representatives of cultural heritage, these instruments have contributed to the promotion of Albanian culture on both local and international stages.

Impact of Innovation and Technology

The findings reveal that musical instrument craftsmanship is in a constant state of evolution, incorporating innovations in production techniques and the use of modern technology. While these developments have led to changes in the characteristics and performance of musical instruments, they have also enabled the preservation of authenticity and cultural heritage.

Contribution of Salla Shabani

The analysis of the findings demonstrates that Salla Shabani's contribution to the field of musical instrument craftsmanship is extraordinary. By blending traditional knowledge with innovation and a passion for culture, he has profoundly influenced the development of this field and left a lasting mark on Albanian art and cultural history.

The summary of the results obtained in this study provides a broad perspective on the core findings and significant conclusions presented. Some of these results include:

The Role of Craftsmanship in Preserving Cultural Heritage

As presented in this study, musical instrument craftsmanship occupies an extremely important place in preserving and promoting Albanian cultural heritage. Through the practices of masters such as Salla Shabani, traditional techniques and cultural knowledge are transmitted from generation to generation.

The Impact of Innovation in Traditional Craftsmanship

The introduction of innovation and modern technology has influenced musical instrument craftsmanship in terms of production techniques and the materials used. However, these changes are not contrary to tradition; rather, they contribute to the preservation and development of the craft.

The Role of Craftsmanship in Cultural Identity

Albanian folk musical instruments are an integral part of the depth of Albanian cultural identity. These instruments not only shape traditional music but also represent an essential part of cultural identity and national history.

Salla Shabani's Individual Contribution and Dedication to Cultural Heritage

Salla Shabani's biography represents a remarkable journey in the field of musical instrument craftsmanship. His contribution to the creation and preservation of this cultural heritage is extraordinary and serves as a model for the future. One of the individuals who continues this craft with great dedication is undoubtedly his compatriot Adnan Aliu (Ramadani, 2019, pp. 29–42).

The Importance of Establishing a Museum

It is important that these instruments be exhibited within or near a cultural institution, such as a museum. Additionally, preparing catalogs containing photographs and descriptions of each instrument would be particularly valuable.

The Importance of Field Research and Cultural Collaboration

To fully understand musical instrument craftsmanship, it is essential to conduct field research and establish close collaboration between masters and local communities. This enables a deeper understanding of traditional practices and their influence on local culture and identity.

The results of this study present a clear and detailed summary of the main findings and conclusions, making a significant contribution to the field of ethnomusicology and cultural studies.

Biodata of Author



Dr. **Bekim Ramadani** was born in 1970 in the village of Orashje, near Tetova. He completed his primary and secondary education in his hometown. In 2001, he graduated from the Faculty of Music at Tetova State University. He completed his master's degree in Musicology in Tirana in 2006 and earned his PhD in Ethnomusicology in Skopje in 2018. He is currently a faculty member at the Faculty of Music, University of Tetova, where he teaches courses related to folk music and music cognition.

For over twenty years, he also worked as a music teacher at the "Kiril Pejčinović" High School in Tetova and successfully directed the school choir. As an active member and artistic director of the "Xheladin Zeqiri" folk dance ensemble in Tetova and as a co-founder of the group "Margaritarët," he has contributed to the promotion and preservation of Albanian folk music both locally and internationally. His research focuses on the documentation, transcription, and analysis of Albanian traditional music, as well as the cultural role of music in contemporary society. He has presented at numerous academic conferences and published articles in scientific and cultural journals. As the author, co-author, or translator of more than 20 books in the fields of ethnomusicology, traditional music, and music education, he has made significant contributions to the preservation and transmission of Albanian musical folklore. **Email:** b_ramadani@yahoo.com **ORCID:** 0009-0007-6108-1851 **Institution:** Faculty of Music, University of Tetova, Tetova, North Macedonia

Selected Publications:

- *Dasma shqiptare në nota – 100 këngë të dashurisë dhe të përjetësisë* (*The Albanian Wedding in Notes – 100 Songs of Love and Eternity*), Tetova: BIR, 2024.
- *Ajri Ismani dhe dëshmia e jetës së tij në krijimtarinë folklorike* (*Ajri Ismani and the Testimony of His Life in Folkloric Creativity*) (co-author), monograph, Tetova: BIR, 2024.
- *Hanife Sejfulla – Reçani dhe Shabindere Bërlajolli – Stafai: Dy zërat e paharrueshëm të këngës shqipe* (*Hanife Sejfulla – Reçani and Shabindere Bërlajolli – Stafai: The Two Unforgettable Voices of Albanian Song*), monograph, Tetova: BIR, 2023.
- *Медитација за мојата уметност* (*Meditation on My Art*), Tetova: BIR, 2021.
- *ShKASh "Xheladin Zeqiri" – Tetovë (1949–2019): Aurora dritëplotë* (*"Xheladin Zeqiri" Folklore Ensemble – Tetova (1949–2019): A Radiant Dawn*), monograph, Tetova: BIR, 2021.
- *Tradita e muzikës popullore shqiptare në Tetovë dhe rrethinat e saj* (*The Tradition of Albanian Folk Music in Tetova and Its Surroundings*), Tetova: BIR, 2020.
- *Традиционалната музичка култура на Албанците од Долни Полог* (*The Traditional Musical Culture of Albanians in Lower Polog*), Tetova: BIR, 2019.
- Translator: *Etnomuzikologjia – Fritz Bose* (*Ethnomusicology – Fritz Bose*), Tetova: BIR, 2019.
- *Meditim për artin tim* (*Reflections on My Art*), Tetova: BIR, 2016.
- *Fjalë pa këngë* (*Words Without Songs*), Tetova: USHT – Faculty of Music, 2014.
- Translator: *Metodika e mësimet të muzikës – Pavel Rojko* (*Methodology of Teaching Music – Pavel Rojko*), Tetova: USHT – Faculty of Music, 2014.

- Translator: *Për të bukurën muzikore – Eduard Hanslick (On the Beautiful in Music – Eduard Hanslick)*, Tetova: UShT – Faculty of Music, 2014.

References

- Alb Sound Production. (2020, April 26). *Sallah Shabani & Rizvan Sallahi - Mihane* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnXBgaFJSeE>
- Alb Sound Production. (2020, April 27). *Sallah Shabani & Rizvan Sallahi - Moj Kala* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROz-LzgorAI>
- Ankica Vitanova, & Ramadani, B. (2014). *Arti muzikor për vitin I të arsimit gjimnazial - Dispensë (Musical Art for the First Year of Gymnasium Education - Coursebook)*. Tetovë: BIR.
- Bauron, P. (1888). *Les Rives Illyriennes (The Illyrian Shores)*. Paris.
- Ramadani, B., & Iseini, F. (2016). *Punim diplome - Për veglat muzikore me frymë të punëtorisë së mjeshtrit gostivaras Sallah Shabani (Diploma Thesis - On the Wind Instruments from the Workshop of the Gostivar Master Sallah Shabani)*. Tetovë: Fakulteti i muzikës - UShT.
- BeniProduction. (2013, February 9). *Rizvan Sinani dhe Sallah Shabani me Vëllezërit Dervishi - Melodi me kavaj 2* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1WxRPCog4k>
- BeniProduction. (2013, February 19). *Rizvan Sinani, Sallah Shabani - Vëllezërit Dervishi - Melodi me kavaj - 2004* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qb01-EwyaCs>
- BeniProduction. (2013, December 12). *Vëllezërit Dervishi - Shkurte Vogel (Oda Kërçovare, TV Gurra) | Këngë Kërçovare (Kërçovare Song)* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ_bCWBRGlg
- BeniProduction. (2017, March 20). *Vëllezërit Dervishi - Bini Djemt e Shales (7 Shalat), (Festival: Les Orientales) France* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fv1xa-0epAQ>
- Bose, F. (2019). *Etnomuzikologjia (Ethnomusicology)*. Tetovë: Bekim Ramadani.
- Fejzullai, G. (2001). *Monografia e ShKA "Besa" 1971-2001 (Monograph of SHKA "Besa" 1971-2001)*. Gostivar: Niko Kompany - Shkup.
- Flaka. (2017, November 6). *Video Reportazh | Salla Shabani, mjeshtër i instrumenteve muzikore (Video Report | Salla Shabani, Master of Musical Instruments)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6vfurY5WU>
- Gazeta Metro. (2016, November 22). *Rapsodët tubohen në Lezhë (The Rhapsodists Gather in Lezhë)*. <https://gazetametro.net/rapsodet-tubohen-ne-lezhe/>
- Gazeta Shqip. (2015, May 18). *Argjiro Fest-On, dëshmi e një realiteti të ri folklorik (Argjiro Fest-On, Evidence of a New Folkloric Reality)*. <https://gazeta-shqip.com/2015/05/18/argjiro-fest-on-deshmi-e-nje-realiteti-te-ri-folklorik/>
- Gazeta Telegraf. (2021, March 17). *Flet këngëtari Artan Kola: Ja pse një vajzë kineze më kërkoi kasetën me këngët "Dasma e malësorit" (Singer Artan Kola Speaks: Why a Chinese Girl Asked Me for the Cassette with "The Highlander's Wedding" Songs)*. <https://telegraf.al/speciale/flet-kengetari-artan-kola-ja-pse-nje-vajze-kineze-me-kerkoi-kaseten-me-kenget-dasma-e-malesorit/>
- Hanife Sejfullai - Reçani R.I.P. (2014, November 28). *Hanife Sejfullai - Reçani: "Kënga e Hasimes" ("The Song of Hasime")* [Video]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=600814733356157>
- Iso iso. (2021, May 15). *Rreth Oxhakut - Interpretime me Kavalle nga Sallah Shabani dhe Adnan Aliu (Around the Hearth - Performances with Kavall by Sallah Shabani and Adnan Aliu)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tW3d-2fg-vc>
- Kraja, M. (2018). *Fjalori Enciklopedik i Kosovës Vëll. 2 (Encyclopedic Dictionary of Kosovo Vol. 2)*. Prishtinë: Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës.
- Media, R. (2012, May 4). *Melodi me Gajde - Salla Shabani (Melody with Bagpipe - Salla Shabani)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BIXTNDknMgI>
- Media, R. (2012, May 4). *Salla Shabani - Melodi me kavall (Salla Shabani - Melody with Kavall)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4WMqu8q5eo>
- Mema, M. (2018, December 22). *Gjurmë Shqiptare - Kush po e fal Eposin dhe Labutën? (Albanian Traces - Who Is Giving Away the Epic and the Labuta?)* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIEcUF_Kt_A
- MUZIKE & FILM SHQIP. (2017, May 4). *Rizvan Sinani, Salla Shabani & Adnan Aliu - Prej ne Diber ne Tirane (From Dibër to Tirana)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzQ0FsMJsKM>

- MUZIKE & FILM SHQIP. (2017, March 23). *Vëllezërit Dervishi, Sallah Shabani & Adnan Aliu - 30 Couca* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wW_hm51nplA
- MUZIKE & FILM SHQIP. (2021, May 16). *Musa Izeri, Dervish Dervishi, Sallah Shabani, Adnan Aliu, Dilaver Rexhepi - Improvizim Instrumental (Instrumental Improvisation)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMvGRyoXaO0>
- MUZIKE & FILM SHQIP. (2022, February 18). *Sallah Shabani & Emin Xhaferi - Melodi me Gajde (Melody with Bagpipe)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Go9813CgAz4>
- MUZIKE & FILM SHQIP. (2022, February 3). *Sallah Shabani & Emin Xhaferi - Udbes se Shullonit (melodi me kavalla) [On the Shulloni Road (Melody with Kavall)]* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRbqup1zIQs>
- Sokoli, R., & Miso, P. (1991). *Veglat muzikore të popullit shqiptar (The Musical Instruments of the Albanian People)*. Tiranë: ASHRPSSH.
- Ramadani, B. (2019). *Adnan Aliu, prodhues dhe interpretues i shquar i veglave muzikore popullore aerofone (Adnan Aliu, Distinguished Producer and Performer of Aerophone Folk Musical Instruments)*. Etnoalb, 3.
- Ramadani, B. (2023). *Hanife Sejfulla Reçani dhe Shabindere Bërlajolli Stafai, dy zërat e paharrueshëm të këngës shqipe (Hanife Sejfulla Reçani and Shabindere Bërlajolli Stafai, the Two Unforgettable Voices of Albanian Song)*. Tetovë: BIR.
- Thalloczy, L. v. (1916). *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen I (Illyrian-Albanian Research I)*. München und Leipzig.
- TOPESTRADA TV Tetovë. (2017, February 20). *Emisioni nga Tradita - Rizvan Sinani & Salla Shabani dhe Rovena Hoti (Program from Tradition - Rizvan Sinani & Salla Shabani and Rovena Hoti)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJZOrpAwDuk>
- TOPESTRADA TV Tetovë. (2020, December 5). *Salla Shabani & Shefket Ismani - Melodi me kavaj (Melody with Kavall)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqR4FXY05Ss>



Research Article

Repair of the tar musical instrument: points to consider and functions of tar parts

Memmedeli Mirel Memmedov¹

Research Laboratory for the Improvement of National Musical Instruments, Conservatory, Baku, Azerbaijan

Article Info	Abstract
Submitted: 21 March 2025 Accepted: 12 July 2025 Online: 30 September 2025 Keywords Tar Tar construction Tar repair 3023-7890/ © 2025 JTO Published by Genç Bilge (Young Wise) Pub.Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license. 	This article comprehensively examines the structure, components, material properties, and maintenance-repair methods of the tar, one of Azerbaijan's most important national musical instruments. The tar consists of a large and a small bowl carved from mulberry wood, a neck and head made of walnut wood, and fret and bridge systems reinforced with durable materials such as ebonite and capron. The cow heart membrane (skin) used on the bowl's surface plays a critical role in sound production. The simgir, a hook system, is designed to secure the strings and contains 11 tongues. The article details the impact of the bridge (xərək) structure and material choice on string vibration quality, the advantages of making the plectrum from ebonite, and the contribution of tying the frets with capron thread to playing comfort. It also describes the adjustment of the angle between the neck and the body, methods for correcting neck bends, techniques for attaching strings to the pegs, and the bird bridge system that ensures proper string passage. Protection methods to extend the life of the membrane, such as fish-skin patches, soft leather coverings, and the use of çiriş or RVA adhesives, are also discussed. In conclusion, each component of the tar is of great importance in terms of dimensional ratios, material selection, and assembly technique. Skilled craftsmanship and regular maintenance are essential for preserving sound quality and ensuring the instrument's longevity. This technical knowledge serves as an invaluable resource for preserving the traditional art of tar-making and passing it on to future generations.

To cite this article:

Memmedov, M.M. (2025). Repair of the tar musical instrument: points to consider and functions of tar parts. *Journal of Turkish Organology*, 2(2), 67-76. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17592613>

Introduction

The tar musical instrument is one of the masterpieces of the Azerbaijani people, and our nation approaches this instrument with great respect and affection. In general, our national musical instruments are an integral part of our people's culture. Reflecting the daily life, history, and social life of our nation, these national musical instruments serve as evidence of the richness and magnificence of our national music.

A turning point in the development of our national musical instruments began in the second half of the 19th century. It should be noted that development work is still ongoing today at the Scientific Research Laboratory of the Azerbaijan National Conservatory (ANC).

¹ Dr., Head of the Azerbaijan National Research Laboratory, Researcher, Restorer, Research Laboratory for the Improvement of National Musical Instruments, Conservatory, Baku, Azerbaijan. E-mail: mammadovmammadali51@gmail.com ORCID: 0009-0007-8339-3944

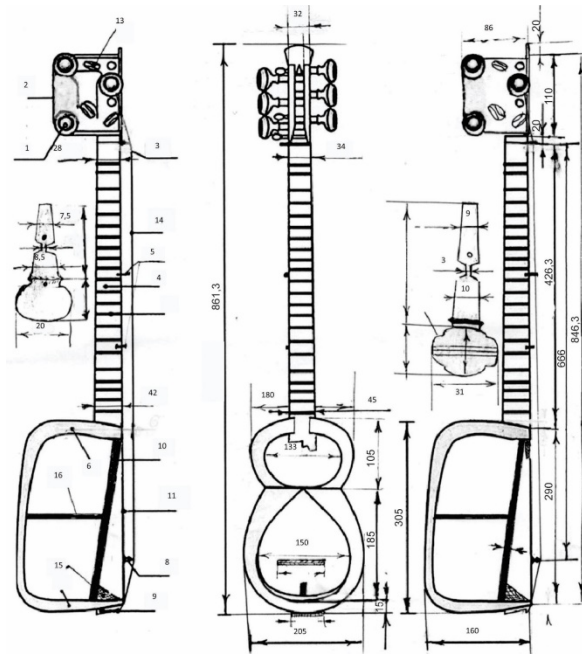


Figure 1. General structure of the *tar* musical instrument – body, neck, and head sections



Photo 1. The body (*bowl*) of the *tar* musical instrument – small and large bowl sections

In this article, we will discuss the repair of the *tar* musical instrument and the functions of its parts.

Body (Bowl): The body of the *tar* is usually made from mulberry wood. It consists of two parts: the small body and the large body.



Photo 2. Adjustment of the angle between the neck and the body (*tar fork*)

The part of the small body that connects to the neck is protruding. This projection is made to ensure a stronger connection between the neck and the body.

The total length of the body is 29 cm (290 mm), and its height is 160 mm. The length of the large body is 185 mm, while the length of the small body is calculated as $290 \text{ mm} - 185 \text{ mm} = 105 \text{ mm}$.

One important point is that the thickness of the back part of the body should be 2–3 mm thicker than the wall thickness where the small body connects to the neck. Otherwise, when adjusting the inner neck and the *tar fork* (the angle between the neck and the body), it would not be possible to adjust the angle due to the thinness (weakness) of the back wall of the body. In other words, the neck cannot be moved up or down using the adjustment lever.



Photo 3. Bowl surface – bovine heart membrane (*membran*)

The surface of the body (*membrane*) is made from the membrane of a cow's heart (Photo 3). The most important point to consider when stretching the membrane over the body is that there should be no depression in the center of the membrane. In other words, when the membrane is stretched over the body, it should form a perfectly flat surface.

The membrane is a tensioned, vibrating surface used in some musical instruments to produce sound. More precisely, when we touch different areas of the membrane with our fingers, we should feel the same level of tension.

A “simgir” (hook) is attached to the back of the body (Photo 4). The function of the simgir is to hold the attached strings. The simgir consists of 11 tongues.

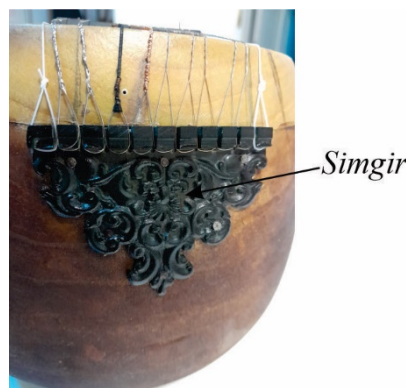


Photo 4. *Simgir* (hook) – the part where the strings are attached

To keep the bridge free, rods are inserted into the right and left tongues (Photo 5), while the remaining nine tongues are used to attach the strings.

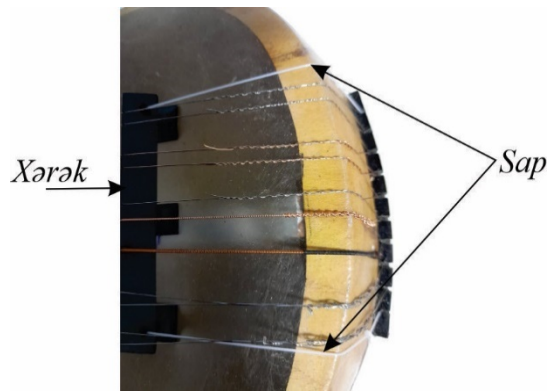


Photo 5. Bridge (*xarək*) – three-legged structure, parts where bass and treble strings rest

The bridge consists of three legs. The distances between the legs differ. The distance (between the legs) where the bass (*zeng*) strings rest is smaller than the distance between the legs where the treble (*ağ*) strings rest, because the pressure of the bass strings is greater (Photo 5).

The height of the bridge is about 16 mm (Photo 5). The angle between the neck and the body is greater than 180 degrees. If this angle is larger or smaller, the height of the bridge may vary. The length of the bridge is approximately 70–75 mm. The bridge is made of ebonite material.

Before using the body surface membrane (*perde*), it must first be cleaned of surface oils (fat layer) and excess tissue. It is recommended to soak the membrane in clean water for 8–10 hours so that any blood stains are completely removed. To make it more shiny (transparent), it should be washed with soap and dried with a very clean cloth. After this, glue is first applied to the part of the large body where the membrane will be attached, and then the membrane is glued onto the large body. The same procedure is then applied to the small body.

When the *tar* is played with a plectrum (*mızrap*), the plectrum slides from the string and strikes the membrane, causing the membrane on the body surface to tear prematurely. The plectrum is also made of ebonite, a material with high density (Photo 6).



Figure 6. Plectrum (*mızrap*) – playing tool made of ebonite

For this reason, the performer is often forced to replace the membrane (*perde*). To eliminate this problem, a patch made of fish skin is applied to the area where the plectrum continuously strikes; this allows the membrane to be used for a much longer period (Photo 7).

In another case, the area of the body where the wrist comes into contact during performance is exposed to sweat. As a result, the membrane becomes wet, which leads to its rapid deterioration.

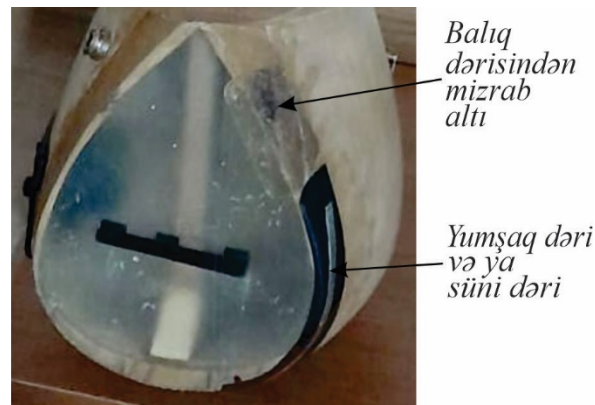


Photo 7. Fish-skin patch – protecting the area where the plectrum strikes

To solve this problem, a piece of soft leather or thin and flexible synthetic leather is glued to the relevant area. This method prevents the membrane (*perde*) on the body surface from wearing out quickly. Glue or RVA-type adhesives are generally preferred for attaching the membrane to the body. High-quality glue obtained from the *çiriş* plant is commonly used in our country to secure the membrane of the tar instrument.

After the membrane is glued onto the body, damp paper is placed over the adhesion points. This ensures that the body surface dries slowly from the glued areas. Otherwise, if the surface dries too quickly, excessive tension and slipping may occur along the glued edges, which can cause the membrane on the body surface to loosen.

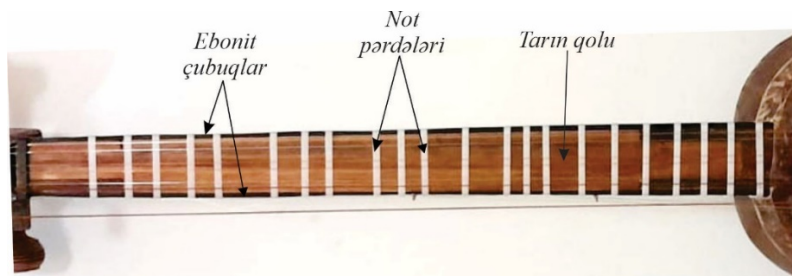


Photo 8. Professional tar neck – ebonite rods and fret ties

The length of the neck of a professional tar is $1.47 \times 290 \text{ mm} = 426.3 \text{ mm}$ and it is made of walnut wood. Ebonite rods are inserted along the edges of the neck to allow the fret ties on the neck to slide easily (Photo 8). There are 22 fret ties on the neck, made of capron (*jilka*) material. The number of windings is usually 7–8 turns, and the diameter of the capron string is 0.4–0.5 mm. Some performers may increase the number of frets according to their performance requirements. At the point where the neck connects to the body, its width is 4.5 mm and its height is 42 mm.

At the head of the neck, the width is 34 mm and the height is 28 mm. At the junction between the neck and the head, there is a “top nut” (sometimes called a “bird nut”), named so because its shape sometimes resembles a deer’s or bird’s head (Photo 9). The function of this nut is to guide the strings coming from the tuning pegs and direct them parallel over the neck to the body. The distance between the strings exiting the bird nut and the neck should be minimal to avoid putting excessive pressure on the fingers during performance. The cross-section of the neck is triangular in shape (Photo 10).



Photo 9. Bird nut (*quş xərək*) – the component that adjusts the distance between the neck and the strings

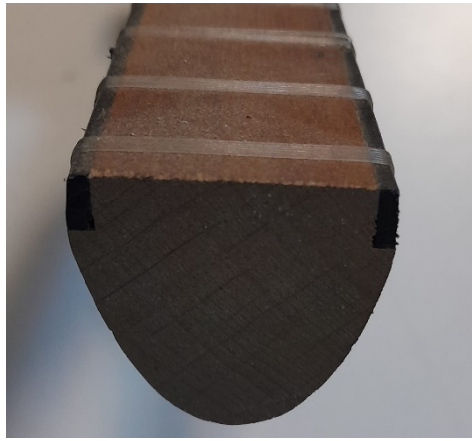


Photo 10. Triangular cross-section of the neck

The cross-section is shown in Photo 10. From the part where the neck connects to the body, a protrusion (tongue) extends toward the direction of the small body (Photo 11).



Photo 11. The tongue of the neck extended toward the small bowl

The length of the tongue may vary. In some cases, it extends all the way to the large body. The purpose of this extension is to increase the instrument's tonal range.

Eliminating the weakness between the neck and the body (Figure 2).

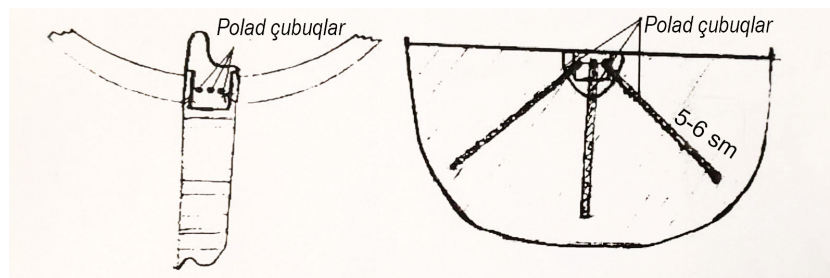


Figure 2. Method of eliminating the weakness between the neck and the body (bowl)

Eliminating problems that may occur in the neck (Figure 3)

In some cases, the neck of the tar instrument may become warped. To correct this curvature, we have developed a mechanism. This system is very important for both plain and mother-of-pearl (*sedef*) tar instruments. Previously, when the neck of a mother-of-pearl tar bent, we had to remove the inlays, plane the neck to straighten it, and then reinstall the inlays.

With this new system, the neck curvature can be corrected without removing the inlays. If one or two inlays become dislodged during the correction process, they can be reattached with adhesive afterward.

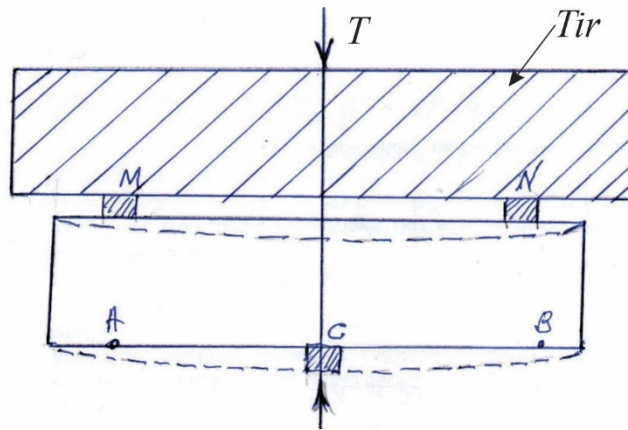


Figure 3. Mechanism for correcting neck curvature

First, the distance between points (A) and (B) is moistened (Figure 3). Then, wooden cushions (M) and (N) are placed on the neck. On top of these cushions, a beam thicker than the neck itself is positioned. Cushion (C) is placed on the back side of the neck and tightened in the direction of (C, T). The tightening process continues until the curvature is observed to shift in the opposite direction. The instrument should remain in this state until the neck dries completely. This process may take about 2–3 days. The head of the tar instrument is made of walnut wood (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Tar head – front surface covered with ebonite, made of walnut wood

The head consists of two parts: the right and left sides (Figure 4). The protrusions at points (A) and (B) are designed to connect the neck and the head more securely.

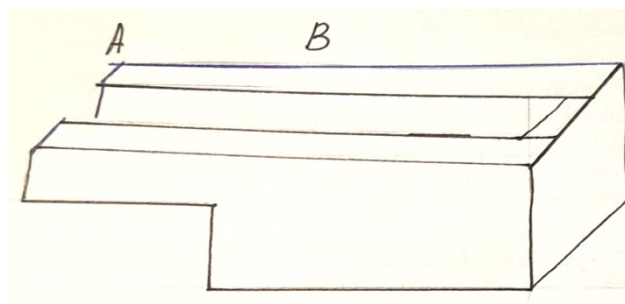


Figure 4. Tar head – structure and connection of the right and left parts

Both sides of the head are fixed together from three directions using walnut wood to ensure that there is no movement between the parts when the tuning pegs are installed (Photo 14). The tar's head contains a total of 9 tuning pegs: 6 large ones and 3 small ones. Two of the large pegs are used to adjust the *zeng* (bass) strings, keeping 4 strings in tune (Photo 13).



Photo 13. Securing the head body – structure reinforced with walnut pieces

The strings are wound onto the tuning pegs via the string wire (*tros*). See Figure 5.

- In case (A), the string passes through a hole drilled in the string wire and then goes to the *simgir* (hook).
- In case (B), the string passes over a pulley (*rolik*) placed at the end of the string wire before reaching the *simgir*.

Tuning the strings is much easier in option (B), because in case (A), the strings become deformed, making the tuning process more difficult. In option (B), the string slides smoothly over the pulley, allowing for easy tuning.

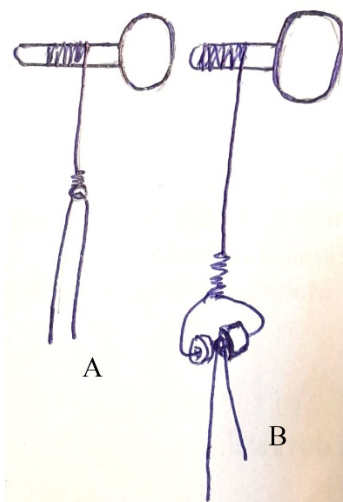


Figure 5. Methods of attaching the strings to the tuning pegs (Type A and Type B connections)

The strings are threaded through the holes prepared at the ends of the string wires, passed under the frets of the neck, and secured to the *simgir* (hook) on the back of the body by passing over the *zeng* (bass string) bridge. The tapered diameters of the tuning pegs are 10–9 mm for the large pegs and 8.5–7.5 mm for the small pegs.

To ensure the strength of the right and left sides of the head, pieces made of walnut wood are used (Photo 14).



Photo 14. Fixing the head body – structure reinforced with walnut pieces

The front surface of the tar's head is decorated with ebonite material to give the head an aesthetic appearance (Photo 12). This decoration can also be made from mother-of-pearl, bone, or plastic materials. The conical shape of the tuning pegs must match the conical shape of the holes drilled in the head to ensure a monolithic connection between the head and the pegs. This way, when the strings are tightened or loosened via the tuning pegs, the tension force of the strings is reliably maintained.

Some notes:

- The bird bridge (*quş xərək*) should hold the tone string at such a height that the strings coming from the *zeng* (bass) string bridge do not come into contact with each other during vibration.
- As the tone string exits the tuning pegs, it rests on top of other pegs, which causes interference during tuning. For this reason, a tone string adjuster is installed (Photo 15), allowing the tone string to pass freely and without obstruction through the bird bridge and the upper bridge of the body before being attached to the *simgir* (hook).



Photo 15. Tone string adjuster – a mechanism that allows the strings to pass through the bird bridge (*quş xərək*) without obstruction

- A channel with a depth and width of 1 mm is carved on the front side (soundboard) of the neck to make it easier to wrap the fretting ties (note frets) around the neck.
- The distance between the plane of the body and the plane of the neck should be 4–5 mm.

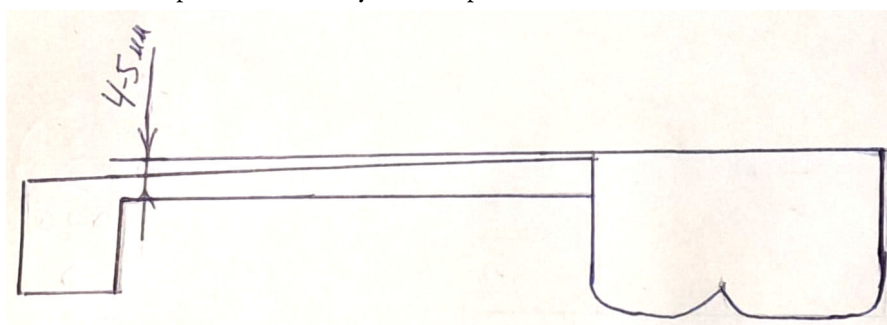


Figure 6. Passing the strings under the neck frets and attaching them to the *simgir*

Conclusion

The tar is one of Azerbaijan's most valuable national musical instruments, structurally requiring high craftsmanship and delicate workmanship. In this study, through visuals from Figure 1 to Figure 15 and Diagram 1 to Diagram 6, the main components of the tar, the materials used in its construction, assembly techniques, and maintenance-repair methods have been examined in detail. The large and small sections of the bowl carved from mulberry wood, the membrane (*pərde*) that determines sound quality, and the *simgir* that holds the strings all have their own specific dimensions and material characteristics. The design of the bridge (*xərək*) directly affects the tension and vibration quality of the strings, while the plectrum made of ebonite contributes to both durability and tonal color.

The walnut wood used in the neck, the ebonite rods, and the kapron frets provide long-lasting structure while increasing playing comfort. Special parts such as the bird bridge (*quş xərək*) ensure proper string alignment and reduce finger pressure during performance. Various techniques shown in the diagrams have been developed to eliminate

weaknesses between the neck and the body, correct neck warping, and ensure proper string attachment. Additionally, methods such as applying a fish skin patch, using soft leather protection, and selecting suitable adhesives are employed to extend the lifespan of the membrane.

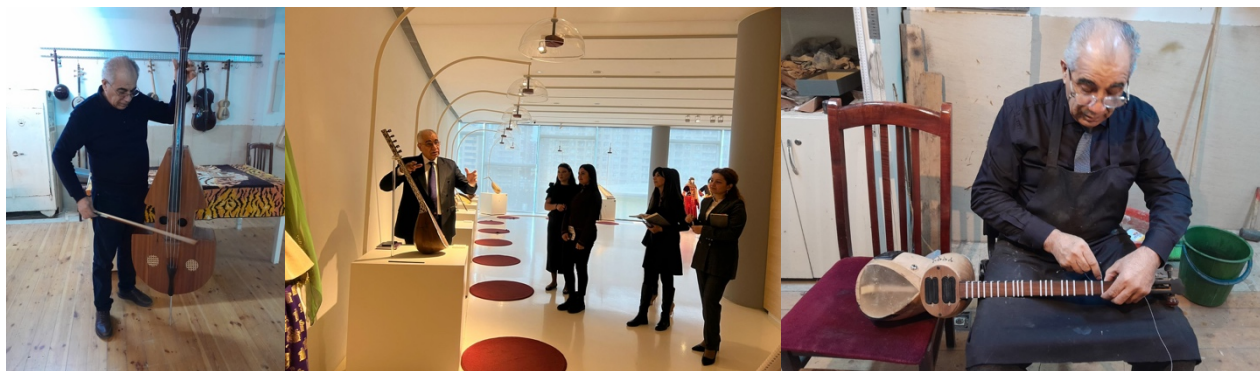
In conclusion, every part of the tar is of great importance in terms of material selection, dimensional proportions, and assembly techniques. Master craftsmanship and regular maintenance are the main factors that determine both the sound quality and the longevity of the instrument. This technical knowledge serves as an indispensable guide for preserving traditional tar making and passing it on to future generations.

Biodata of Author



Dr. **Mamedali Mirali Mamedov**, music researcher and musical instrument restorer. Since 2010, he has been working as the head of the “Improvement of National Musical Instruments” (*Milli Musiqi Alətlərinin Təkmilləşdirilməsi*) research laboratory at the Azerbaijan National Conservatory (*Azərbaycan Milli Konservatoriyası*). Over the years, 64 of Mamedali Mamedov’s scientific works have been registered with the Copyright and Intellectual Property Agency (*Müəllif Hüquqları və İntellektual Mülkiyyət Agentliyi*), and dozens of scientific articles and conference materials have been published. The ensemble “In the Footsteps of Time” (*Zamanların İzində*), consisting of ancient musical instruments, was founded by Mamedali. Mamedali Mamedov has created a four-cornered drum (*dördguşəli nağara*), a square drum (*kədrat nağara*), and a “chovgan” (*çovqan*, conductor’s baton) for the National Military Band (*Milli Hərbi Orkestr*). In addition, he has developed new musical instruments that produce sounds at different registers and registered them in the database of Azerbaijani musical instruments in collaboration with the Copyright Agency. In 2018, the book “Improvement of Azerbaijani Folk Musical Instruments” (*Azərbaycan Xalq Musiqi Alətlərinin Təkmilləşdirilməsi*) was published.

E-mail: mammadovmammadali51@gmail.com



References

- Hacıyev, A. (2010). Azerbaijani musical instruments (*Azərbaycan musiqi alətləri*). Baku: Sharq-Gharb Publishing.
- Quliyev, M. (2007). The art of tar and its development history (*Tar sənəti və onun inkişaf tarixi*). Baku: Elm.
- Rustemov, R. (2005). Azerbaijani folk musical instruments (*Azərbaycan xalq çalğı alətləri*). Baku: Tehsil Publishing.
- During, J. (1991). The art of Persian music (*Fars musiqisi sənəti*). Washington, DC: Mage Publishers.
- Mammadov, E. (2018). Structural features and timbre capabilities of the Azerbaijani tar (*Azərbaycan tarının konstruktiv xüsusiyyətləri və tembr imkanları*). *Musiqi Dunyasi*, 2(78), 45-53.
- Aliyev, Z. (2015). Methods for conservation and restoration of national musical instruments (*Milli musiqi alətlərinin konservasiyası və bərpası üzrə metodlar*). Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, Scientific Articles Collection of the Institute of Architecture and Art.
- Azerbaijan National Conservatory (*Azərbaycan Milli Konservatoriyası*). (n.d.). Official website. <http://www.conservatory.edu.az>
- Heydar Aliyev Foundation (*Heydər Əliyev Fondu*). (n.d.). National Musical Instruments (*Milli musiqi alətləri*). <https://heydar-aliyev-foundation.org>
- Azerbaijan State Museum of Musical Culture (*Azərbaycan Musiqi Mədəniyyəti Dövlət Muzeyi*). (n.d.). Official website. <http://azmusicmuseum.az>
- UNESCO. (2012). The art of Azerbaijani tar performance (*Azərbaycan tar ifaçılığı sənəti*). Intangible Cultural Heritage List. <https://ich.unesco.org>

Note: All photos and illustrations are from the author’s personal archive.

Research Article

Unified Kanun: A new instrument model from the perspective of Turkish and Western organology¹

Orkun Çalkap² and Kibele Kıvılcım Çiftçi^{3*}

Ankara Music and Fine Arts University, Faculty of Performing Arts, Department of Instrument Education, Ankara, Türkiye

Article Info

Submitted: 25 June 2025
Accepted: 19 August 2025
Online: 30 September 2025

Keywords

Hybrid instruments
Instrumental innovations
Organology
Turkish musical culture
Unified Kanun

Abstract

This study focuses on a new instrument model developed within the framework of Turkish musical culture and the science of organology, called the Unified Kanun. Designed by integrating two kanuns into a single body, this instrument transcends the performance possibilities of the traditional kanun, offering expanded technical capacities. This article examines in detail the rationale behind the emergence of the Unified Kanun, the patenting process, and findings based on academic research. The fundamental feature of the Unified Kanun is that the playing responsibility of both hands can be undertaken by a single hand, while allowing simultaneous modification of levers (mandals) in different octaves. This innovation facilitates polyphonic performance and makes it possible to play works from diverse musical disciplines, including guitar and piano repertoires. From the perspective of Turkish organology, the naming of the Unified Kanun aligns with traditional naming practices observed in instruments such as the Yaylı Tanbul and the Cümbüş. From the perspective of Western organology, it corresponds to the “combined/unified” instrument approach described in the classification system of Curt Sachs and Erich von Hornbostel. In this regard, the Unified Kanun maintains terminological accuracy in both local and universal contexts. The Unified Kanun is not only a technical innovation but also an original model that contributes to the literature of organology. This article thus introduces a novel approach with the potential to enrich both Turkish musical culture and the international field of organological studies.

3023-7890/ © 2025 JTO
Published by Genç Bilge (Young
Wise) Pub.Ltd. This is an open access
article under the CC BY-NC-ND
license.



To cite this article:

Çalkap, O., and Kıvılcım Çiftçi, K. (2025). Unified Kanun: A new instrument model from the perspective of Turkish and Western organology. *Journal of Turkish Organology*, 2(2), 77-88. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17592650>

Introduction

This study represents a significant breakthrough in the field of organology both in Türkiye and worldwide. It is noted that national inventions in the field of music in Türkiye began in 2002, and there were 20 inventions between 2002 and 2018. According to the information presented in the light of statistical data, the scarcity of studies conducted in the field of organology is noteworthy (Şakalar, 2024: 44). Based on the fact that any kind of organological research will contribute to the field, a new instrument was created through a physical and technical innovation applied to the *kanun* instrument.

The attempt to use a different playing technique on the *kanun* and the consideration of its organological structure to suit this technique can be regarded as the reason and justification for the emergence of this new instrument. In the intended technique, the new instrument was expected to allow both hands to change levers (*mandals*) in different octaves. Moreover, this instrument was designed with the idea that a single hand could perform the tasks normally

¹ This study is derived from the first author's doctoral dissertation

² Lecturer PhD., Faculty of Fine Arts, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, Nevşehir, Türkiye. E-mail: orcuncalkap@nevsehir.edu.tr ORCID: 0000-0002-4264-7254

³ Corresponding Author: Assoc. Prof. Dr., Ankara Music and Fine Arts University, Faculty of Music and Performing Arts, Department of Turkish Classical Music, Ankara, Türkiye. ORCID: 0000-0001-7838-1112

carried out by both the right and left hands. The inability of the traditional *kanun* to provide this capability and to meet these needs made such a structural change necessary. Accordingly, a new instrument was designed by connecting two *kanuns* via the bottom block.

The technical work on the “Birleşik Kanun” (*Unified Kanun*) began in 2004, and its patent was obtained in 2017. In Çalkap’s (2019) master’s thesis related to this instrument, five expert *kanun* performers (academics and State Artists) were selected. Three pieces (*Rast Saz Semaîsi* by Benli Hasan Ağa, *Nihavent Sirto* by Göksel Baktagir, and the *Carmen Habanera* section by Georges Bizet) were recorded and shown to the experts. No technical details on how the instrument was performed were provided, and no exercises were demonstrated. The videos were shown to the experts, questions were asked, and the answers were analyzed.

In this thesis study, the name “Useful Model Kanun,” registered at the patent institute, was used, and no additional name was assigned. In this article, however, a new model different from the initial prototype is presented. Over time, the organological shortcomings and errors identified in the first prototype were corrected, and this new instrument was rebuilt with the desired structure.

Organological Basis of the Term “Birleşik Kanun”

From the Perspective of Turkish Organology

In the Turkish organological tradition, it is observed that structural innovation in newly developed instruments is directly reflected in their names. For example, *Yaylı Tanbur* is a version of the classical *tanbur* played with a bow, and *Cümbüş* is a hybrid instrument born from the combination of the *ud* and the *banjo*. Similarly, the term “birleşik” (*unified*) has been used in models such as the “*Birleşik Ney*,” which emerged from the combination of *neys* of different sizes.

In this context, naming the new instrument — which emerged from the organological integration of two *kanuns* into a single body — as “Birleşik Kanun” (*Unified Kanun*) can be considered a consistent approach in line with the Turkish organological tradition.

From the Perspective of Western Organology

In Western organology, one of the fundamental references is the classification system *Systematik der Musikinstrumente* (1914), developed by Curt Sachs and Erich Moritz von Hornbostel. In this system, instruments are classified as “simple,” “composite,” and “combined/unified.”

For example, in cases like the *double harpsichord* or *combined lutes*, where multiple instrument structures are integrated into a single body, the terms “combined” or “unified” are used to describe them (Sachs & Hornbostel, 1914). Thus, the term “Birleşik Kanun” (*Unified Kanun*) is also compatible with the terminology of Western organology.

The Importance of the Term “Birleşik Kanun”

The name “**Birleşik Kanun**” represents an approach that integrates both the naming tradition seen in Turkish organology and the classification terminology of Western organology. This name clearly and scientifically reflects:

- Its organological innovation (the combination of two *kanuns*),
- Its patent and utility model background,
- Its terminological compatibility recognized in international literature.

In this respect, “Birleşik Kanun” stands out as an appropriate term that can be used in both local and global organological literature.

The Necessity of the “Birleşik Kanun” Instrument

The *kanun* instrument, with its polyphonic structure and the advantage of using ten fingers, makes the performance of many different musical genres possible. With this advantage, the *Birleşik Kanun* introduces an even richer organological structure compared to the traditional form. The developed *Birleşik Kanun* has been designed to be suitable for a wide range of repertoires, from guitar literature to piano repertoire and many different genres and disciplines of music.

The dual-use nature of the instrument allows lever changes in different octaves to be performed simultaneously. Along with this feature, the *Birleşik Kanun* provides significant convenience and advantages, such as reading double treble clefs, performing certain piano works, and incorporating some stylistic characteristics of *bağlama* playing techniques.

Organology of the Birleşik Kanun

In the instrument classification introduced by Curt Sachs and Erich von Hornbostel, the founders of organology and pioneers of instrument classification, the kanun is categorized under chordophones, specifically composite chordophones and plucked chordophones (Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, 1914: 554–590). The kanun model proposed in this study, due to its physical structure formed by the combination of two kanuns, belongs to the group of instruments in which the strings, the way they are held, the materials used to pluck them, and their integration with a resonator or soundbox are considered together. Therefore, the proposed Combined Kanun is thought to belong to the same group as the traditional kanun in the instrument classification by Curt Sachs and Erich von Hornbostel.

In this study, which presents the physical structure and technique of the Combined Kanun in detail, the physical structure of the Combined Kanun will first be described. With its physical structure, the Combined Kanun is clearly distinguished from the traditional kanun at first glance. Unlike the traditional kanun, the Combined Kanun is an organological structure formed fundamentally by connecting two kanuns to each other with a single membrane and a single bridge, with their inner cavities left open and facing one another.



Photo 1. The first prototype made for experimental purposes in 2004 (Çalkap, 2019, p. 10)

The first double-kanun prototype shown in Photo 1 was protected by obtaining its patent on 21/07/2017 and its design registration certificate on 15/06/2016.

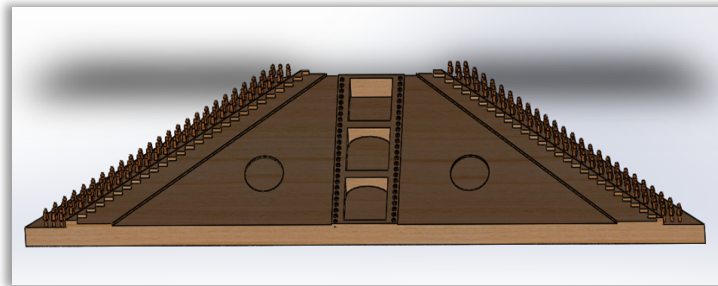


Photo 2. 3D drawing of the Unified Kanun instrument

The 3D drawing shown in Photo 2 differs from the first prototype. With a time span of thirteen years between the first prototype and the Unified Kanun, the instrument has been tested in every aspect organologically, measured, and redesigned in accordance with the possibilities of the developed techniques and the dynamic structure of the instrument. For this reason, there are changes in the 3D drawing shown here compared to the drawing in the patent document of the first prototype. The Unified Kanun was built based on this newly designed 3D model.



Photo 3. Final version of the Unified Kanun instrument

Photo 3 shows the designed and completed final form of the Unified Kanun.



Photo 4. Skeleton form of the Unified Kanun during the construction stage

Photo 4 shows the skeleton form of the Unified Kanun, where the pegboards of both kanuns are fixed to the upper and lower edges together with the internal braces.



Photo 5. Unified Kanun with the back cover attached

As seen in Photo 5, the internal braces are carved in such a way that sound can be transmitted into the sound chambers of both kanuns. This allows the sound to be distributed evenly from both instruments.



Photo 6. Close-up view of the Unified Kanun with the back cover attached

As seen in Photo 6, both kanuns are connected to each other through internal braces. In the construction of the Unified Kanun, two long longitudinal braces were added to these internal supports to increase structural strength.



Photo 7. Unified Kanun with the top boards attached and the tuning peg boards glued

In the Unified Kanun shown in Photo 7, there is a plywood panel covering the area where the skin will be stretched, creating a raised section. This part is designed to be more durable, as it is where the strings will be attached and the pegs will be seated.



Photo 8. Final state of the middle section of the Unified Kanun before drilling the pegs

As seen in Photo 8, the Unified Kanun is designed with three sound holes. It can also be designed with four sound holes, depending on preference. This variation changes according to the sound color the player wishes to achieve on the instrument.



Photo 9. Close-up view of the pegs through which the strings pass in the Unified Kanun

The pegs shown in Photo 9 are made of fiber material, and holes have been drilled in them for the strings to pass through. These cylindrical pegs have a notch or an incomplete circular gap on the side facing the tuning peg area after the strings are inserted. The purpose of this feature is to allow the peg to be easily removed from its position, enabling it to be lifted and taken out of its slot without difficulty.



Photo 10. Glued and painted leather part of the Unified Kanun

In Photo 10, the leather of the Unified Kanun is shown after being glued and varnished. Following this stage, the positions of the pegs will be marked and drilled, the tuning peg holes will be opened, and the strings will be attached and tuned. Once the tuning of the kanun is fully stabilized, the installation of the levers (mandals) will begin.



Photo 11. Drilled area for the placement of plugs in the Unified Kanun

In Photo 11, the area where the plugs will be placed has been reinforced and elevated with a plywood section to ensure durability and structural strength.



Photo 12. The drilled area where the plugs will be placed in the Unified Kanun

In Photo 12, the area designated for the plugs has been reinforced and elevated with a plywood section for durability.



Photo 13. Close-up view of the right side of the Unified Kanun

In Photo 13, the close-up image of the right side of the kanun shows the state of the plug areas before drilling. Additionally, the painted and leather-covered Unified Kanun is visible.

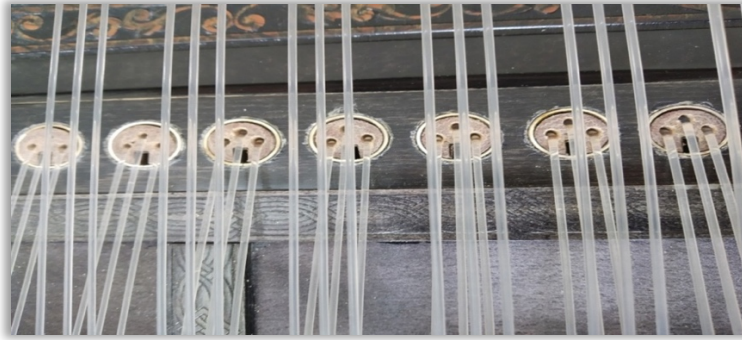


Photo 14. Strings attached to the plugs on the Unified Kanun

In Photo 14, the string connection plugs leading to the kanun on the left side are shown. To make the plug areas more durable, rings have been inserted into the plug holes. This application has created a more resistant area against the pulling force of the plugs.



Photo 15. Strings attached on both sides of the Unified Kanun

In Photo 15, the strings on the right and left sides of the kanun pass through each other at the same level as they cross the bridge. The bridge of the Unified Kanun is designed to be thicker than that of the traditional kanun. It is a bridge built to withstand the weight and pressure of the strings attached from both sides.



Photo 16. The pegs and strings attached on the right side of the Unified Kanun

In Photo 16, a close-up image of the pegs on the right side of the Unified Kanun is shown. In addition, the levers (mandals) have been installed, tuned, and the instrument has reached a playable condition.

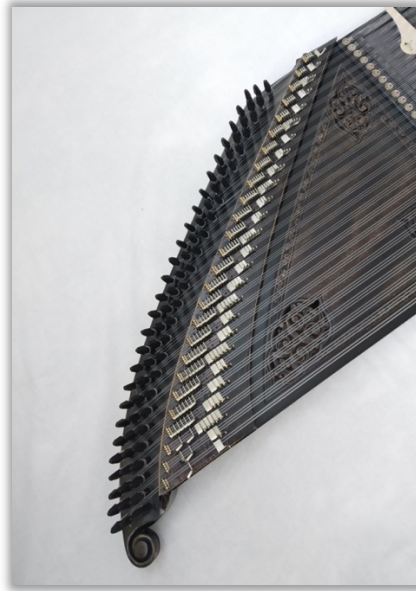


Photo 17. The levers and strings attached on the left side of the Unified Kanun

In Photo 17, the levers on the left side of the kanun are shown installed using a six-lever system. This system is the same as the lever mechanism used in the traditional kanun instrument.



Photo 18. The levers and strings attached on the right side of the Unified Kanun

In Photo 18, the levers on the right side of the kanun are shown installed using a six-lever system. This system is the same as the lever mechanism used in the traditional kanun instrument.



Photo 19. Close-up view of the central part of both sides of the Unified Qanun

Photo 19 shows a close-up view of the final version of the Unified Qanun, constructed with three membranes and interconnected inner chambers. The produced Unified Qanun uses a pin system. Without using the pin system, end blocks can be placed on both sides of the central part, allowing the strings to exit from the back. In such a system, the inner chambers would remain more enclosed, making the instrument more suitable for use as an electro-acoustic system. Although the acoustic sound level would be relatively low, magnetic pickups placed on the bridges would allow the instrument to produce a sound close to an acoustic tone through the connected amplification system.



Photo 20. Close-up of the Strings Intersecting Each Other in the Unified Qanun

In Photo 20, it can be seen that the strings of the qanun on the right and the strings of the qanun on the left pass through each other as they cross the bridge. This method of application differs from the first prototype. In the arrangement created in the first prototype, there was a 3 mm distance between the corresponding strings of the right and left qanuns. In the Unified Qanun, this distance was precisely calculated, and the strings of both qanuns were prepared at the same distance, running parallel to each other. As a result, the Hüseyini pitch on the right qanun and the Hüseyini pitch on the left qanun are aligned along the same axis.



Photo 21. The Completed Form of the Unified Qanun

In Photo 21, it can be seen that the Unified Qanun has a significantly high volume level, meaning its sound intensity is quite strong. Elements such as the string attachment points, the evenly distributed sound, the use of the bridge, the shared bridges inside the soundbox, and the shortening of string lengths in the lower registers all contribute to an organological structure that differs from the traditional qanun.

Conclusion

This study introduces a remarkable innovation in the field of organology, both in Turkey and internationally. The “Unified Qanun,” which represents an important example of the increasing number of national musical inventions since the 2000s, is an instrument created by combining two separate qanuns into a single body from an organological perspective. This innovation is of great significance as it enables the performer to change levers (mandals) in different octaves simultaneously, thereby expanding the traditional performance limits of the qanun.

The documentation of this instrument through the patent process and academic theses demonstrates that it is not merely an individual experiment but a contribution to the field of organology. The name “Unified Qanun” aligns with the naming tradition in Turkish organology (e.g., Yaylı Tanbur, Cümbüş, Birleşik Ney) and also corresponds to the “combined/unified” terminology used in the Sachs and Hornbostel classification system in Western organology. This shows that the naming of the instrument is based on both local and universal foundations.

The findings of this study indicate that the “Unified Qanun,” with its adaptability to various musical genres—especially guitar and piano repertoires—can open new horizons in performance practice. With its polyphonic structure and technical advantages, this instrument offers a creative breakthrough in Turkish musical culture and makes a significant contribution to the development of organology. In conclusion, the “Unified Qanun” is not only an instrumental innovation but also an original model that can be evaluated within the context of musical performance and the theoretical framework of organology.

Biodata of Author



Lecturer, Dr. **Orçun Çalkap** was born in 1982 in Ereğli, Zonguldak. He completed his primary and secondary education in Ereğli. He began learning the qanun instrument on his own in 1999. In 2001, he took and passed the Turkish music entrance exam held by Müjdat Gezen Art Center. He studied in Istanbul for one year and had the opportunity to benefit from esteemed teachers such as Semahat Özdenes. He taught for five years in the Ereğli Municipality Turkish Music Ensemble and for four years in the Public Education Center Turkish Music Ensemble. He served as a contracted qanun performer for six years in the Turkish Music Ensemble of Bülent Ecevit University. Since 2002, he has had the opportunity to work on and reflect upon different techniques for the qanun. In 2016, he graduated from the Turkish Music Department of Sakarya University State Conservatory. In the same year, he started his master's degree at Sakarya University Institute of Social Sciences and completed it in 2019 in the field of Basic Sciences / Music Sciences. In 2020, he was admitted to the Proficiency in Art program at Ankara Music and Fine Arts University, Faculty of Performance. He is currently working as an Instructor in the Department of Performing Arts, Music Program at Hacı Bektaş Veli University Faculty of Fine Arts. **Institution:** Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, Faculty of Fine Arts **Email:** orcuncalkap@nevsehir.edu.tr **ORCID:** 0000-0002-4264-7254

Website: <https://biz.nevsehir.edu.tr/orcuncalkap>

Academia.edu: <https://independent.academia.edu/OÇalkap>



Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Kibele Kıvılcım Çiftçi** was born in 1979 in Ankara, Türkiye. She completed her undergraduate studies in the Department of Turkish Classical Music, Qanun Major, at Selçuk University State Conservatory in Konya. She received her master's degree from Selçuk University Institute of Social Sciences in the Turkish Classical Music Master's Program with Thesis. She completed her Ph.D. studies in the Music Education Doctoral Program at Necmettin Erbakan University Institute of Educational Sciences. She has worked as a lecturer at Fırat University State Conservatory and Selçuk

University Dilek Sabancı State Conservatory. She is currently serving as a faculty member in the Department of Turkish Classical Music, Instrument Education Major, at the Faculty of Music and Performing Arts, Ankara Music and Fine Arts University. She actively participates in national and international artistic events as a qanun performer and produces scholarly publications in her field. **Institution:** Ankara Music and Fine Arts University, Faculty of Music and Performing Arts, Department of Turkish Classical Music, Instrument Education Major **Email:** kibeleciftci@mgu.edu.tr **ORCID:** 0000-0001-7838-1112

Website: <https://www.mgu.edu.tr/personnel/doc-dr-kibele-kivilcim-ciftci>

Academia.edu: <https://independent.academia.edu/KibeleKıvılcımÇiftçi>

References

- Çalkap, O. (2019). *Kanun çalgısı için geliştirilen faydalı model ve icra şeklinin uzman görüşlerine göre değerlendirilmesi* (Evaluation of the useful model developed for the qanun instrument and its performance technique based on expert opinions). Master's thesis. Sakarya University, Sakarya, Türkiye.
- Çalkap, O. (2004). *Faydalı model kanun prototip çalışması* (Prototype study of the useful model qanun).
- Şakalar, G. Y. (2024). *Türkiye'de organolojiye çalgılar ve aksesuarları ile ilgili müzikte yenilik çalışmaları ekseninden bakış* (A perspective on organology in Türkiye from the axis of innovation studies in music related to instruments and accessories). *Turkish Journal of Organology*, 1(1), 39–51. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11193807>
- Çalkap, O. (2025). *Yeni bir kanun modelinde icra tekniğinin geliştirilmesi ve farklı müzik türlerine ait seçilmiş eserlere uygulanması* (Development of performance technique in a new qanun model and its application to selected works from different musical genres). Doctorate in art thesis. Ankara Music and Fine Arts University, Ankara, Türkiye.
- Sachs, C., & Hornbostel, E. M. von. (1914). *Systematik der Musikinstrumente: Ein Versuch* (Systematic Classification of Musical Instruments: An Attempt). *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 46, 553–590.

Research Article

The art of crafting Iranian Tar and Setar: Personal experiences

Morteza Salimian Rizi¹

Sapp Saz (Independent Platform Promoting Handcrafted Iranian Musical Instruments), Zarrin Shahr, Iran

Article Info

Submitted: 17 August 2025
Accepted: 21 September 2025
Online: 30 September 2025

Keywords

Acoustic wood
Instrument making
Iranian music
Luthiery
Setar
Tar

3023-7890/ © 2025 JTO
Published by Genç Bilge (Young
Wise) Pub.Ltd. This is an open access
article under the CC BY-NC-ND
license.



Abstract

This article presents the personal craftsmanship experience of Morteza Salimian Rizi, a master luthier and founder of Sapp Saz, an independent Iranian instrument workshop in Zarrin Shahr, Iran. Drawing on more than a decade of professional practice, Salimian Rizi documents the complete process of crafting two central instruments of Persian classical music: the Tar and the Setar. The study explores the careful selection of materials such as mulberry wood, specialized construction techniques, and structural decisions that affect tonal quality and resonance. It analyzes the organological differences between the Tar's double-bowl, six-string design and the Setar's lighter, four-string structure, addressing challenges such as neck curvature and soundboard integration. Combining traditional craftsmanship with innovative approaches, Salimian Rizi reflects on how personal experimentation enhances sound production and contributes to preserving Iran's musical heritage. This work aims to transmit valuable artisanal knowledge to future generations, enrich the academic field of organology, and support the cultural sustainability of Persian musical traditions.

To cite this article:

Rizi, M.S. (2025). The art of crafting Iranian Tar and Setar: Personal experiences. *Journal of Turkish Organology*, 2(2), 89-91. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17592680>

Introduction

Since childhood, I have been a passionate player of the Iranian Tar, always captivated by its structure and sound. At the age of 25, I met a master luthier whose craftsmanship inspired me to transition from playing to making instruments. This article narrates my journey from a dedicated musician to a skilled luthier specializing in Tar and Setar, including detailed insights into the materials, tools, and techniques involved in this art.

Early Experiences in Tar Making

The first time I stepped into the master's workshop, I was fascinated by the variety of tools and types of wood. Despite my lack of experience, the master encouraged me to give instrument-making a try. In just 20 days, I crafted my first Tar—a feat that even surprised my teacher. Later, I rented a small workshop and sold my first semi-finished instrument before it was completed, which motivated me to continue. Over the next decade, I honed my craft and gained recognition in my hometown.

¹ Master Luthier and Iranian String Instrument Maker, Sapp Saz (Independent Platform Promoting Handcrafted Iranian Musical Instruments), Zarrin Shahr, Iran.
Email: Mortezasalimian83@gmail.com



Figure 1. Raw mulberry wood prepared for carving



Figure 2. First stage of Tar body carving



Figure 3. Finishing work with hand tools

Transition to Setar Making

Driven by curiosity, I ventured into Setar making despite the lack of formal training. I started experimenting with minimal tools and tested various woods including walnut, spruce, maple, and eventually mulberry—traditionally used for its exceptional resonance. Setar making proved to be even more challenging and rewarding than Tar due to its acoustic sensitivity and craftsmanship standards.

Key Considerations in Setar Making

Wood Selection: Primarily mulberry and walnut for their acoustic and durable qualities.

Soundboard Material: Mulberry wood is used traditionally for its high resonance capability.

Essential Tools: Chisels, hammers, bending irons, and sanding tools are essential. Precision and patience are crucial.

Technical Features and Differences between the Iranian Tar and Setar

The Iranian Tar and Setar, while closely related, differ in their construction, acoustic qualities, and performance roles:

Body (Bowl): The Tar has a larger double-bowl body traditionally made of mulberry, with a thin animal skin stretched over its top. The Setar, by contrast, has a smaller single-piece bowl, usually carved from mulberry or walnut, with a wooden soundboard. **Strings:** The Tar is strung with six strings arranged in three pairs. The Setar has four strings—two single strings and one pair—giving it a softer, more intimate tone. **Sound and Tone:** The Tar produces a powerful, resonant, and vibrant sound, making it suitable for large performances and ensemble playing. The Setar, however, is valued for its subtle, delicate, and meditative timbre, often used in solo or spiritual contexts.

Function in Music: The Tar is considered the “mother of Iranian instruments,” representing strength and versatility in Persian classical music. The Setar, by contrast, has long been associated with mysticism and personal expression. These distinctions not only highlight the diversity of Iranian luthiery but also demonstrate the cultural and musical roles of the instruments within Persian music tradition.

Challenges and Rewards

Crafting these instruments requires balancing artistic intuition with technical understanding. It demands patience, deep knowledge of materials, and constant refinement. The greatest reward is hearing musicians bring these instruments to life on stage.

Based on my personal experience, mulberry wood has always been the most pleasant and aesthetically suitable choice for crafting both the Tar and the Setar. For centuries, the people of Iran have listened to the sound of these instruments resonating from the heart of mulberry wood. I have also crafted custom Tars from walnut wood, which, although visually more attractive than mulberry, showed a noticeable difference in tonal quality and beauty compared to Tars made from mulberry.

In the case of the Setar, however, with some tolerance, many makers—including myself—sometimes use other woods for the body, such as walnut, maple, padauk, or rosewood, and occasionally a combination of different woods to enhance the visual appeal. Nevertheless, for the soundboard of the Setar, mulberry remains the standard choice because of its superior resonance.

The most challenging part of Setar-making is achieving the ideal sound quality through years of trial and error. It is commonly said among luthiers that “it should sound like a Setar, not like a Dotar or a Tanbur.” The same is true in Tar-making, where a master luthier gradually learns through countless attempts how to adjust the thickness of different parts of the bowl. For example, I have often taken the carving process of a Tar’s body to the final stage, only to see the bowl crack due to the slightest impatience or lack of precision, losing several days of work.

Equally important in both Tar and Setar construction is the joint between the neck and the body, which we call the “neck angle.” Without exaggeration, half of the instrument’s beauty and tonal quality depends on this factor, and luthiers achieve mastery when they can produce tones that are both soft and powerful. In the adjustment stage (*reglaj*), there is little difference between Tar and Setar, since both have necks of similar length and share similar fret arrangements.

Among Iranian instruments, the Tar is regarded as the most majestic—indeed, many consider it the “mother of Iranian instruments.” Without undue bias, I share this belief. The Setar, on the other hand, is a companion for solitude and introspection, a friend to both maker and player. It is no coincidence that many prominent musicians, such as Kayhan Kalhor, who is best known for his Kamancheh, also play the Setar.

The years I have spent crafting the Tar and Setar have been the sweetest period of my life. In moments of despair, it is the scent of wood and the sound of chisels and planes that encourage me to continue. A voice from within tells me that music is eternal, and that I, too, am a small part of it.

Conclusion

This journey from musician to luthier is a story of passion, tradition, and expertise. Sharing this path helps safeguard Iranian musical heritage and may inspire new generations to embrace this noble craft.

Biodata of Author



Master Luthier and Iranian String Instrument Maker, **Morteza Salimian Rizi** is a founder of Sapp Saz, an independent platform promoting handcrafted Iranian musical instruments. With over a decade of experience, he specializes in crafting Tar, Setar, and other stringed instruments. He holds official certifications in luthiery from the Iranian Technical and Vocational Training Organization. Affiliation:

Sapp Saz (Independent Workshop for Iranian Musical Instruments), Zarrin Shahr, Iran. Email: Mortezasalimian83@gmail.com

Web site: <https://www.sapsaz.com/>

References

- Acoustic Centre (2023). Spruce Varieties in Acoustic Instruments.
 Pourtahmasi, H. (2008). Wood as a cultural heritage in Iranian musical instruments. *Cité de la Musique Research*.
 SoundPure (2023). Tonewood Properties: Maple.
 TFOA (2023). Tonewood Spotlight: Walnut. *The Fellowship of Acoustics*.

İçindekiler

Traditional perspectives and innovation in Albanian Folk musical instrument craftsmanship: the case study of Master Salla Shabani's Workshop in Gostivar

Bekim Ramadan

Repair of the tar musical instrument: points to consider and functions of tar parts

Memmedeli Mirel Memmedov

Unified Kanun: A new instrument model from the perspective of Turkish and Western organology

Orkun Çalkap and Kibele Kivılcım Çiftçi

The art of crafting Iranian Tar and Setar: Personal experiences

Morteza Salimian Rizi

