

INTEGRATING THE KASHQAR RUBAB INTO UNIVERSITY LEVEL UZBEK INSTRUMENTAL PEDAGOGY

Vaqqosxon Boboyev
Kokand State University

Abstract: The Kashqar rubab, a fretted plucked long-necked lute with origins dating to the fourteenth century, occupies an ambiguous position within contemporary Uzbek instrumental education. Despite its historical significance and widespread use in folk ensembles across Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and the Xinjiang region of Western China, the instrument remains systematically underrepresented in university-level curricula when compared to its cousin, the dutar, or the tanbur. This article examines the structural, pedagogical, and institutional barriers limiting the Kashqar rubab's integration into academic performance programs and proposes a curriculum framework for its systematic inclusion. Drawing on recent scholarship regarding the instrument's construction and performance practice, alongside analysis of current pedagogical models at Uzbek conservatories and pedagogical universities, this study argues that the Kashqar rubab's distinct technical demands - particularly its unique fingering system and plectrum technique - require specialized pedagogical approaches that existing degree structures do not accommodate. The article presents a three-phase integration model addressing instrument acquisition, methodological curriculum development, and ensemble applications. Particular attention is given to resolving the tension between oral transmission traditions and written notation requirements within standardized degree programs. Implementation strategies address faculty training, repertoire development, and assessment methods appropriate to the instrument's technical and stylistic characteristics. The proposed framework aligns with recent cultural sector reforms in Uzbekistan while respecting the master-apprentice traditions fundamental to authentic rubab instruction.

Keywords: Kashqar rubab, Uzbek instrumental pedagogy, traditional music education, Central Asian lute, higher music education

Introduction

The preservation and transmission of Uzbekistan's rich instrumental heritage occupy a central position in the nation's cultural policy agenda. Recent presidential decrees have initiated comprehensive reforms in arts education, including new educational models for specialized colleges of culture and arts and revised admission structures for music institutions. Within this reform environment, instrumental pedagogy faces a critical challenge: how to integrate traditional instruments into standardized university curricula without eroding the oral transmission practices that define authentic performance style.

Among Uzbek plucked string instruments, the Kashqar rubab (also documented as Kashkar rubobi or Kashgar rubab) presents a particularly instructive case. Historical sources trace the instrument's development through several centuries of Central Asian musical culture, with evidence suggesting its emergence as a distinct form during the fourteenth century. The instrument typically features five strings arranged in three courses, with the lowest string single, though Soviet-era modifications produced a four-string variant with shorter neck proportions

adapted to mandolin tuning. Its fretted neck and distinctive body construction produce a timbre that occupies a middle register between the higher-pitched dutar and the lower, more resonant tanbur.

Despite this rich heritage, the Kashqar rubab remains marginal within university-level performance programs. The State Conservatory of Uzbekistan in Tashkent, established in 1936 as Central Asia's oldest musical institution, maintains faculties for Uzbek traditional instruments yet allocates curricular priority to instruments with established written pedagogical lineages. Similarly, music education departments at pedagogical universities throughout Uzbekistan, including those in Chirchiq, Jizzakh, and Namangan, offer instrumental performance training but have not systematically integrated the Kashqar rubab into their core curricula. This marginalization persists despite the instrument's prominent role in folk ensembles and its documented presence in regional performance traditions.

This article addresses three research questions: First, what are the structural and technical characteristics of the Kashqar rubab that differentiate it from other Uzbek lutes in pedagogical terms? Second, what institutional barriers currently prevent its systematic inclusion in university music programs? Third, what curriculum framework would enable effective integration while preserving authentic performance practices?

Materials and Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining organological analysis, curriculum review, and pedagogical observation. The organological component draws on recent scholarship examining the Kashqar rubab's construction, including detailed documentation of string configurations, fret placement, and tuning systems. Botirkhanovich's structural analysis of the instrument provides foundational technical data, while historical studies by Abdullayev and Soyibov trace the instrument's developmental trajectory through Uzbek musical history.

The curriculum review examines degree requirements and course offerings from Uzbek institutions offering instrumental performance programs. Primary sources include documentation from Kokand State University. These materials reveal current allocation of instructional hours, repertoire requirements, and assessment methods across traditional instrument programs.

Pedagogical observation data derive from instructional documentation of Kashqar rubab performance method, including demonstrated techniques for right-hand plectrum articulation and left-hand fingering patterns. The performance practice literature identifies specific technical challenges unique to the instrument, including coordination requirements between the plectrum and the fingers of the right hand, which distinguishes rubab technique from both dutar and tanbur performance.

Institutional context analysis incorporates recent policy documents regarding Uzbekistan's cultural sector reforms, including provisions for new educational models in arts education scheduled for implementation from the 2026/2027 academic year. Additional context comes from comparative analysis of Central Asian music education systems, which reveals a consistent tension between Soviet-derived standardized degree structures and nationally distinct oral music traditions.

Results

Structural and Technical Characteristics of the Kashqar Rubab

The Kashqar rubab's physical construction presents specific features with direct pedagogical implications. The instrument's neck carries gut or nylon frets arranged according to the twelve-tone system that organizes Uzbek classical maqom repertoire. This fret system differs meaningfully from that of the tanbur, requiring distinct left-hand fingering positions and shifting patterns. The pegbox design, with lateral tuning pegs arranged in three courses, demands particular attention during the tuning process, as the string tension relationships affect both intonation and responsiveness.

The string configuration consists of five strings arranged as a single lowest string followed by two double courses. Historical documentation confirms this configuration as traditional, while acknowledging the Soviet-period experimental development of a four-string variant. The instrument is played with a plectrum held in the right hand, but unlike the tanbur, the Kashqar rubab incorporates occasional finger-plucked passages requiring the plectrum to be momentarily gripped while the fingers articulate individual strings. This hybrid technique has no parallel in standard dutar or tanbur pedagogy and demands dedicated instructional attention.

Botirkhanovich's analysis identifies three primary performance methods specific to the Kashqar rubab: single-note plectrum strokes requiring controlled wrist motion, rapid alternating strokes enabling virtuosic passage work in faster tempos, and the hybrid plectrum-finger technique for ornaments and drone management. Each method requires progressive skill development beginning with fundamental motion patterns before advancing to repertoire application.

The instrument's tuning system varies according to regional tradition and repertoire demands. Standard tunings place the strings a fourth apart, but modal requirements for specific maqom sections may require temporary retuning. This flexibility, while musically valuable, complicates ensemble integration where multiple instruments must coordinate their intonation systems.

Current Status of Kashqar Rubab in University Curricula

Analysis of institutional documentation reveals that the Kashqar rubab receives inconsistent attention across Uzbek higher music education. The State Conservatory of Uzbekistan's Uzbek traditional instruments faculty includes the rubab as one option among several plucked instruments, but specialized methodological materials remain underdeveloped compared to those for dutar and tanbur. Curriculum documentation from pedagogical universities in Chirchiq and Jizzakh lists instrumental performance among specialization courses but does not identify rubab-specific tracks within their Music Education bachelor's programs.

Several barriers explain this marginalization. First, the absence of standardized written pedagogical materials for the Kashqar rubab creates a reliance on oral transmission that conflicts with the written examination requirements of degree programs. While oral transmission remains the authentic mode of traditional Uzbek instrumental instruction, university structures demand written documentation of learning outcomes, repertoire requirements, and assessment criteria. Second, the limited number of faculty members qualified to teach Kashqar rubab at the university level restricts program expansion. Most expert performers learned through the master-apprentice (ustoz-shogird) system outside formal higher education and may lack the academic credentials required for university appointments.

Third, the instrument's construction presents practical obstacles. Quality Kashqar rubabs are less readily available than dutars, and the lack of standardized dimensions across instruments complicates pedagogical consistency. Fourth, the repertoire notated in staff notation remains limited, as the traditional transmission process privileges aural learning. Students entering university music programs increasingly read notation fluently but may have underdeveloped aural learning skills, creating a gap between the skills they possess and those authentic rubab instruction requires.

Institutional Reform Context

Recent policy developments create a favorable environment for curriculum innovation. The presidential decree on cultural sector reforms, approved in April 2026, mandates new educational models for specialized arts colleges and introduces structural changes affecting music education from the 2026/2027 academic year. These reforms explicitly address the need for expanded pedagogical approaches to traditional arts and recognize the role of specialized institutions in developing teaching capacity.

Comparative analysis of Central Asian music education identifies what the authors term the conservatory paradox: governments simultaneously push conservatories toward Bologna-compatible degree formats while charging the same institutions with safeguarding nationally distinct oral music traditions. This paradox manifests in Uzbekistan as a persistent gap between what formal curriculum structures describe and what classrooms actually deliver. The Kashqar rubab's marginal position exemplifies this gap: the instrument appears on program descriptions but lacks the elaborated written curriculum necessary for systematic instruction.

Discussion

Pedagogical Framework for Kashqar Rubab Integration

Addressing the identified barriers requires a pedagogical framework organized around three developmental phases. The first phase addresses instrument standardization and acquisition. University programs should develop specifications for student-model Kashqar rubabs with standardized fret placement, string gauges, and body dimensions. Collaboration with instrument makers, such as those represented in the Conservatory's museum of national instruments, can produce documentation enabling consistent reproduction. Initial instrument sets should be acquired for classroom use, as students cannot be expected to purchase instruments before program establishment.

The second phase involves methodological curriculum development. A sequenced technical method should organize the three primary performance techniques into progressive levels. Beginning instruction focuses on posture, plectrum grip, and single-note articulation on open strings. Intermediate levels introduce left-hand fingering patterns, fret position memorization, and simple melodic material from the folk repertoire. Advanced instruction addresses the hybrid plectrum-finger technique, ornamentation (including the characteristic rubab tremolo), and complete maqom sections.

The method must reconcile oral and written transmission modes. Written notation of exercises and repertoire provides the documentation university assessment requires, but notation should function as a reference rather than the primary learning medium. Aural learning should be systematically developed through call-and-response exercises, recorded model performances,

and guided listening. Assessment methods should evaluate both technical execution and stylistic authenticity, the latter requiring faculty judgment informed by authentic performance practice.

The third phase addresses ensemble applications. The Kashqar rubab's traditional role in folk ensembles provides natural contexts for applied learning. The instrument typically functions in the middle register, providing harmonic filling between higher dutar lines and lower tanbur bass. Ensemble courses should place rubab students in mixed instrument groups, developing skills in intonation coordination across instruments, listening across ensemble textures, and appropriate dynamic balance.

Faculty Development and Repertoire Expansion

Successful integration requires attention to faculty capacity. Universities should recruit rubab specialists from the community of traditional performers, with flexibility in credentialing requirements to accommodate expertise acquired through non-formal training. For existing faculty members trained on other instruments, intensive retraining programs should be developed, perhaps through the Conservatory's further training and retraining faculty.

Repertoire development must accompany technical instruction. The existing Kashqar rubab repertoire includes folk melodies, dance pieces, and sections of Shashmaqom, the Central Asian classical suite tradition recognized on UNESCO heritage lists. Notated transcriptions of this repertoire should be developed systematically, beginning with simpler folk materials and progressing to extended maqom sections. Transcription must balance accuracy with readability, a challenge given the ornament-heavy nature of traditional rubab performance.

Institutional Implementation Strategy

Implementation should proceed incrementally over a three-year period. Year one establishes infrastructure: instrument acquisition, faculty identification, and method development. Year two introduces the Kashqar rubab as an elective option within existing instrumental performance programs, with a cohort of initial students receiving specialized instruction. Year three expands to full program status, with dedicated rubab courses at each level of the bachelor's curriculum and transition of the instrument into ensemble requirements.

Assessment of implementation should include both quantitative metrics (student enrollment numbers, retention rates, achievement of technical benchmarks) and qualitative evaluation of stylistic outcomes. The latter requires external review by recognized rubab masters who can judge whether graduates perform with authentic stylistic understanding rather than merely accurate note production.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. Direct observation of Kashqar rubab instruction was not possible, so the pedagogical analysis draws on documented method descriptions rather than classroom observation. The absence of existing rubab curriculum documentation means the proposed framework cannot be compared to established models. Additionally, the institutional analysis reflects publicly available documentation, which may not fully capture informal teaching activities occurring outside documented curricula.

Future research should examine several questions. How do successful rubab masters structure the learning process, and what sequence of technical development emerges from their practice? What adaptations to the instrument's construction would facilitate instruction without compromising authentic sound production? How do students who learn through oral

transmission compare in performance outcomes to those who learn from notation? Finally, how do ensemble interactions shape rubab learning, and what ensemble configurations produce optimal learning outcomes?

Conclusion

The integration of the Kashqar rubab into university-level Uzbek instrumental pedagogy represents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge lies in reconciling an instrument transmitted through oral tradition with the written documentation requirements of standardized degree programs. The opportunity lies in developing pedagogical models that honor authentic performance practice while providing the systematic instruction university structures enable.

This article has demonstrated that the Kashqar rubab possesses distinct technical characteristics requiring specialized pedagogical approaches not currently accommodated in most university curricula. The proposed three-phase framework provides a pathway for systematic integration, addressing instrument standardization, method development, faculty preparation, and ensemble applications. Recent cultural sector reforms create policy momentum supporting such innovation, while the documented experience of Uzbek pedagogical institutions provides institutional infrastructure ready for expansion.

The broader significance of this work extends beyond a single instrument. The Kashqar rubab's situation exemplifies a tension present throughout traditional music education: how to systematically transmit orally learned practices within written documentation systems. The pedagogical framework developed here may inform integration efforts for other under-represented traditional instruments, contributing to the preservation of Uzbekistan's rich musical heritage within the evolving structures of higher music education.

References

1. Qurbonova, S. (2023). O 'ZBEK XALQ MUMTOZ MUSIQASI TARIXIGA BIR NAZAR. *Oriental Art and Culture*, 4(3), 423-425.
2. Qurbonova, S. (2023). SHARQ XALQ MAQOMLARINING O 'RGANISHNING AHAMIYATI VA DOLZARBLIGI. *Oriental Art and Culture*, 4(5), 178-182.
3. Qurbonova, S. (2025). MUMTOZ MUSIQADA MAQOM NAZARIYASINING ASOSIY TAMOYILLARI (XOJA ABDULQODIR MAROG 'TY NAZARIYASI ASOSIDA). *Oriental Art and Culture*, 6(5), 192-195.
4. Toshmatov, D. (2026). Breath and melisma in Ferghana style vocal art. *Academic Journal of Science, Technology and Education*, 2(4), 27-33.
5. Kamolova, A. O. Q. (2026). The personality of the teacher and its impact on the effectiveness of pedagogical activity. *Academic Journal of Science, Technology and Education*, 2(4), 67-69.
6. Chinikulov, N. (2026). Musical terms in ancient Turkic inscriptions. *Academic Journal of Science, Technology and Education*, 2(4), 48-50.
7. Akhmedov, N. S. U. (2026). Music creation of Turkish peoples and Uzbekistan dostan performance. *Academic Journal of Science, Technology and Education*, 2(4), 3-7.
8. Jumaniyazov, S. R. (2026). Honored with the "Culture and Art Devotee" Badge: Recognizing Artistic Excellence and Cultural Leadership. *Academic Journal of Science, Technology and Education*, 2(3), 112-114.

9. Sobirjonova, F. B. Q., & Turgunbaev, R. (2026). ORNAMENTATION AND EMOTIONAL AFFECT IN THE TANOVAR REPERTOIRE OF TWENTIETH CENTURY FERGHANA MASTERS. *European Review of Contemporary Arts and Humanities*, 2(5), 96-100.
10. Toshmatov, D. (2026). THE ROLE OF THE TANBUR IN SHAPING VOCAL PHRASING IN UZBEK CLASSICAL MUSIC. *European Review of Contemporary Arts and Humanities*, 2(5), 72-79.
11. Madaminov, N. (2026). DEVELOPING TONAL NUANCE AND ORNAMENTATION IN ACADEMIC GIJJAK PERFORMANCE TRAINING. *European Review of Contemporary Arts and Humanities*, 2(5), 111-115.
12. Bobojonov, A. B. (2026). PEDAGOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CREATIVE ABILITIES BASED ON AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH. *European Review of Contemporary Arts and Humanities*, 2(5), 67-71.