

ARIT LECTURE at ANAMED Auditorium and on ZOOM Tuesday, September 13, 2022, 7:30 PM Istanbul

İstiklal Caddesi, 181, Merkez Han, Beyoğlu

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Bread Money: Musical training and transmission among Roman ("Gypsy") Professional Music Families

by Sonia Tamar Seeman

It is well known that Roman ("Gypsy") musicians constitute at least 80% of Turkey's professional musician laborers. Less well-known is that most of these musicians are members of long-term professional musician families whose origins hail from outside of Turkey: mostly Greece and Bulgaria. Their musical training is structured by in-family *esnaf* or guild-training methods, which produce musicians that can serve multiple musical genres (regional/folk/ritual, entertainment, studio, state ensembles, court/urban as well as folk). What are the features of this training that enable musicians to survive changing economic structures and diverse political networks? How do their layered identities as Roma, Turkish, Selanikli *muhacir* / Bulgarian *göçmen* also intersect with their regional affiliations? How are such affiliations performed in strategic responses to economic conditions and client-patron relationships?



These questions are even more pertinent in the face of post-Fordist economic exchanges and the post-COVID digital world. In 2019 prestigious Roman musician families promoted their own musical compositions and family status through marketing YouTube footage of their family weddings, fueling impetus among Roman families for new forms of ostentatious presentation. Since the post-COVID shut-downs, wedding musicians' salaries now compete with increasing wedding costs brought about by such



status markers as hired singer-soloists, elaborate stages, sophisticated video recording equipment and professional dance troupes. In addition, the increased incorporation of recorded requests for dance music means that young musicians are receiving less on-the-job training, compared to their parents, uncles, and grandparents. This overview of my research will conclude with a summary and questions from current research findings, focusing on post-COVID developments in terms of technology, performative visibility, and new marketing structures.

Sonia Tamar Seeman is an Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology, University of Texas, Austin, in the Butler School of Music's ethnomusicology division. She specializes in music of the Middle East and Southeastern Europe and has been working with Romani professional musicians since the mid-1980s.