

“From father to son”: The occupational inheritance of *Lăutari* musicians. A sociological study

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Abstract

This article examines the processes of professional heritage and socialization among Lăutari, traditional Roma musicians in Romania. Drawing on autoethnographic data and thematic content analysis of interviews published in Formula AS magazine, the study explores how musical skills, cultural knowledge, and professional identities are transmitted across generations. The research confirms the predominantly patrilineal nature of occupational inheritance in this community, but reveals a more complex picture of professional socialization. It highlights the crucial role of immersion in a musical environment from an early age, the importance of family and community networks in facilitating learning, and the often overlooked contributions of women in sustaining these traditions. The study also examines the tensions between traditional modes of transmission and modern educational pathways, reflecting broader social changes affecting the Lăutari community. By focusing on this specific group, the article contributes to sociological discussions on occupational inheritance, cultural capital transmission, and the negotiation of traditional identities in modernizing societies, while also shedding light on the adaptations of a marginalized ethnic minority maintaining their professional traditions in contemporary Romania.

Keywords

Occupational inheritance; Cultural capital transmission; Lăutari; Autoethnography; Thematic content analysis;

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Introduction

This article investigates the professional heritage and socialization process of the *Lăutari* community, which consists of traditional musicians in Romania, very often of Roma ethnicity. These musicians have historically played a crucial role in Romanian cultural life, performing at weddings, christenings, funerals, and other community celebrations. Their repertoire is diverse, encompassing traditional Romanian folk music, Roma music, as well as adaptations of popular and even classical pieces. *Lăutari* are renowned for their ability to improvise and adapt their performances to suit the preferences of their audience.

Throughout Romania's history, *Lăutari* have occupied a unique social position. While often marginalized due to their ethnic background, they have also been highly valued for their musical skills. This ambivalent status has influenced both their professional practices and their relationships with the broader Romanian society. The examination of occupational inheritance among *Lăutari* offers a valuable argument for understanding the adaptation and persistence of traditional professions in the presence of rapid social change.

In the past few decades, *Lăutari* communities have undergone substantial changes, including the transition from rural to urban environments, the dynamic of musical preferences, and the change in economic structures. However, the profession persists in being passed down through generations, frequently incorporating traditional learning methods and family-based networks with more contemporary forms of instrumental education and performance.

The first author's personal experience as a *Lăutar* provides a distinctive perspective on this subject, integrating sociological inquiry with insider knowledge. The author's fascination regarding the mechanisms of professional transmission within the *Lăutari* community was piqued by his dual role as both practitioner and researcher. The research investigates the inheritance and cultivation of musical skills, cultural knowledge, and professional identities by utilizing autoethnographic elements, published interviews with established *Lăutari*, and state of the art sociological literature.

This research contributes to broader sociological discussions on the negotiation of traditional identities in modernizing societies, cultural capital transmission, and occupational inheritance by concentrating on the *Lăutari*. It also sheds light on the unique obstacles and adaptations that a marginalized ethnic minority faces as they strive to achieve economic stability and social recognition in modern Romania while upholding their professional traditions.

Literature review

Previous studies on Lăutari

Speranța Rădulescu's (2020) analysis of the Romanian Roma *Lăutari* communities reveals a socio-professional structure strongly influenced by tradition and gender. The *Lăutari* are predominantly male, with a well-defined patrilineal intergenerational transmission. The father occupies the central position in the family and in the professional socialization

process, assuming the role of mentor for his sons. This occupational inheritance not only transmits musical skills, but also reinforces the professional and cultural identity of the performers.

“In the family, the father, not the mother, is the dominant figure. He is the *lăutar*, he is the link that allows them to consider and recommend themselves as musicians, from fathers to sons. The name of the grandfather is seldom uttered or even known, especially if he did not live long. The sons are compelled, or more exactly, until recently used to be compelled, to learn the musician’s profession and help their fathers support their large families, starting to play with them quite early in life.” (Rădulescu 2020, p. 22)

Women, though traditionally marginalized in direct musical practice, play a significant role in sustaining and perpetuating the profession. In recent decades, there has been a gradual evolution in the role of women, who have begun to participate actively as vocalists or instrumentalists, though often under the supervision of male relatives. Moreover, women act as social links between musician families, through strategic marriages that strengthen professional networks and facilitate the expansion of family ensembles.

“Performing instrumental music is an almost exclusively male profession. Until a few decades ago, women were not directly involved in making music. Today, women from families of musicians can be vocalists and, in some regions, they play the guitar, the accordion or the cymbalom (hammered dulcimer). Their role is still seen as marginal. Whatever the case may be, the women are experts in the music performed by the musicians in their family or in close families, a music they comment upon among themselves, trying at the same time to influence their husbands when making professional decisions”. (Rădulescu 2020, p. 22)

The professional identity of the *Lăutari* is closely linked to their work, observes Rădulescu (idem), which gives them a sense of pride and differentiates them from other Roma groups. This distinction manifests itself in a certain distancing, sometimes even contempt, towards Roma from other clans, reflecting an internal social hierarchy within the wider Roma community.

In the context of recent socio-economic changes, the profession is adapting and traditional structures of professional organization are being challenged. The tendency of some young people to move away from the traditional family occupation, particularly in times of economic hardship, is forcing the profession to extend its networks beyond strict family boundaries.

“Women are also important as a binder between musicians’ families. Girls often marry musicians’ sons. These marriages consolidate the relationships between the men in this walk of life and allow them to expand their family ensemble, if needed, to include relatives by marriage earned through women. This has proven to be useful, especially in the 1990s, when many boys, discouraged by their fathers’ trouble finding a job in a badly impoverished society, refused to take over their fathers’ jobs, and as a result, family bands shrank dramatically. In the last 15 to 20 years, the *lăutari* have learned to put together their ensembles by making phone calls right and left to find available instrumentalists either in the family or outside it.” (Rădulescu 2020, pp. 22-23)

Margaret Beissinger's (2005) study of wedding music provides a detailed analysis of changes in wedding music and dance in post-communist Romania, with a focus on the role of Roma musicians. Methodologically, the study is based on extensive ethnographic research, including participatory observation at weddings and interviews with *Lăutari*. The author provides a detailed description of a traditional wedding in 2002, illustrating the coexistence of traditional ritual elements with new forms of dance and music. The author argues that after the fall of communism in 1989, the musical and choreographic repertoire at Romanian weddings underwent significant transformations, reflecting the country's wider political and social transition. During the communist period, the regime imposed the exclusive performance of musical genres considered "purely Romanian" at public events. After 1989, the newly-gained freedom of expression allowed for the emergence and popularization of previously banned or marginalized musical genres, especially those associated with Roma culture.

Beissinger (2005) focuses on two dance forms that gained prominence during this period: the *manea* and the *Lăutari hora*. The *manea*, a musical genre with oriental influences, became extremely popular at weddings, despite controversy over its lyrics and style, considered vulgar by some. The *Lăutari hora*, a traditional Romani dance, began to replace the Romanian hora at many weddings. The author interprets these changes as reflecting a growing fascination with Roma culture in post-communist Romanian society. She suggests that the adoption of these dance forms allows Romanians to temporarily experience an "exotic" identity and to express a more open sexuality than was previously socially accepted.

Beissinger (idem) places these developments in the broader context of social and cultural transformations in post-communist Romania. She argues that new dance forms reflect both an openness to global influences and a reconfiguration of ethnic and gender identities. Thus, Beissinger (2005) sees these changes in wedding music and dance as emblematic of Romania's wider transition from communism to an open and market-oriented society. She suggests that these cultural developments reflect the ongoing negotiation of identities and values in post-communist Romania.

More recent research by Beissinger (2018) investigates the intersections of gender, ethnicity and education in *Lăutari* families. Through long-term ethnographic fieldwork spanning almost two decades, Beissinger explores how children of *Lăutari* make personal and professional choices in both traditional and contemporary Romanian contexts. The study focuses on the trajectories of 11 children of *Lăutari*, comprising five sons and six daughters, using narrative accounts and interviews to analyze their experiences. The findings reveal that the profession of *Lăutari* is predominantly passed down the male line, with sons following in their fathers' footsteps. However, the learning process is based less on direct instruction and more on immersion in the family musical environment from an early age. Boys usually start to learn to play instruments around the age of 8-10 years, guided by their fathers or other male relatives and sometimes taking lessons from other local players. By their late teens, most boys are playing professionally. Women, on the other hand, rarely become professional musicians in the *Lăutari* culture.

“I maintain that *lăutar* sons are socialized to adopt the occupation of their fathers, becoming professional musicians who will support future families. They are driven by a sense of economic responsibility to pursue traditional livings, sensing an urgency that is compounded by the crisis of unemployment among contemporary Roma (World Bank 2014; Ilie et al. 2012; O’Higgins and Ivanov 2006). Most *lăutar* sons promote traditional *lăutar* culture; they embrace the ethno-gendered, occupational identity that “lăutari” represent: Romani men who make music and money.” (Beissinger 2018, p. 7)

Beissinger (2018) points out that sons of *Lăutari* acquire musical skills primarily through socialization at home, learning by ear rather than through formal education. This process involves not only mastery of instruments, but also internalization of the behavioral norms associated with being a musician. Although some players supplement their home training with formal music education, either from other players or through music schools, this is not the traditional norm.

“This begins early, often long before sons have expressed any opinion on the matter, as I observed years ago when a proud father declared that his one-and-a-half-year-old son would be, as he put it, “a *lăutar* just like me!” (and now he is). Boys start at a young age - by eight or ten, if not sooner - to learn an instrument from their fathers (or other male relatives). Most *lăutari* do not read music; they traditionally learn and perform by ear.” (Beissinger 2018, p. 14)

The same study discusses the fact that the profession of *Lăutar* offers several advantages, including a culturally-determined means of earning a living, fulfilling family expectations and maintaining Roma identity and traditions. However, it also presents challenges, such as unstable self-employment income, lack of social health and pension insurance, and the pressure to conform to family expectations, potentially limiting alternative educational or professional paths.

The role of formal music education in the culture of the *Lăutari* is evolving, observes Beissinger (2018). Traditionally regarded as useless, some young *Lăutari* now attend music schools to gain additional credentials. Formal education can facilitate networking and employment opportunities, and music education is increasingly seen as a mark of status by some older *Lăutari*. However, whether formal education significantly enhances the skills and performance of the players remains controversial in the professional *Lăutar* communities.

Beissinger’s research highlights the persistent gendered and ethnic dimensions of the profession of the *Lăutari*. In general, sons are expected to continue the musical tradition, while daughters increasingly pursue alternative studies and careers, calling into question traditional gender roles within *Lăutari* families.

“Among daughters, however, the situation is more complicated. They too are socialized within the family to assume domestic “female” roles. And while some are clearly drawn to these traditional niches, most in my fieldwork are not. Instead, most *lăutar* daughters seek to break from the domestic roles of the past as they pursue upward mobility through education (Gkofa 2016; 2017). I argue that they are overturning the traditional “rules” for women of *lăutar* culture as they eschew early marriage and childbearing, aspire to make their own decisions, earn money independently, and be fulfilled and empowered

intellectually (not to mention, in the case of those living in rural areas, relocate to the city).” (Beissinger 2018, p. 7)

Another study by Margaret Beissinger (2020) provides a comprehensive analysis of the identity and social practices of Lăutari in Romania, with a focus on marriage and weddings. The author argues that the Lăutari occupy a hybrid space, or a 'third space', between traditional Roma culture and mainstream Romanian society, creating what she calls the 'Lăutar space'. The author observes that the life of these musicians is marked by a constant negotiation between their Roma and Romanian identities. They see themselves as an elite within the Roma community, distancing themselves from what they consider the 'backward' practices of other Roma groups, and at the same time affirming their closeness to the dominant Romanian culture. This intermediary position allows them to build up a specific cultural capital, which they capitalize on in their professional interactions within the Romanian society, especially at weddings.

Beissinger (2020) emphasizes that the identity of the Lăutari is fluid and constantly evolving. Younger generations, in particular, are redefining "Lăutar space" through education and increased exposure to mainstream culture. This leads to changes in marital and professional practices, such as inter-ethnic marriages or the abandonment of patrilocal residency.

Irina Georgescu's dissertation (2013) explores the identity and social transformation of Roma converted to Pentecostalism in Romania. The author conducted qualitative-exploratory research in various Pentecostal Roma communities in the Bucharest-Ilfov area, during the first half of 2013. Through participatory observation at Pentecostal services and ten semi-structured interviews, the research was focused on the social organization of the conversion process, the moral career of repentant Lăutari and the new practices and meanings associated with music in these communities.

The analysis of the respondents' discourses reveals a profound transformation of identity, in which the conversion to Pentecostalism is perceived as a radical break with the previous life. This process entails a number of challenges, the most significant of which is the renunciation of the profession of the Lăutar, traditionally the main source of income and a central element of ethnic identity. Nevertheless, music continues to play an essential role in the lives of respondents and communities, being reinterpreted in a religious framework. The melodic lines are retained, but the content and associated practices are transformed to align with the new religious identity. The justifications offered for conversion are often built around narratives of divine revelations and positive changes in personal life, reflecting the process of negotiating and legitimizing the new identity in relation to the past and the wider community. This negotiation of identity is manifested in an ongoing tension between retaining elements of Roma identity, particularly in the realm of music, and distancing oneself from certain 'worldly' practices associated with this identity. An important aspect highlighted by the research is how younger generations of Pentecostal Roma negotiate their identity at the intersection of ethnicity, religion and modernity. Education emerges as a very important factor in this process, providing new opportunities that influence identity change.

In his work, Adrian Șchiop (2017) presents, through ethnographic research and a thematic analysis of manele lyrics, both the specificity of this musical universe, anchored in the life of the Ferentari neighborhood in Bucharest, and its distinction from the traditional Lăutari music from which it has evolved.

“The gimmickry (ro. “șmecherie”) and conspicuous consumption are the two major thematic categories that radically separate the *manea* from the historical genre that is at its origin. Although conspicuous consumption is assumed ironically by the public, it actually expresses a characteristic of Romanian society as a whole; while the middle classes try to distance themselves from it, the lower classes embrace it unreservedly. Moreover, in the discourse universe of *manele*, both the hostility of the world and social success are designated by the ambiguous figure of enemies. Enemies’ envy is invested with a positive meaning, since it is a mark of success, ‘they envy me because I am stronger than them’, and thus it becomes a source of empowerment. At the same time, enemies are part of a mythology of the construction of masculinity, a masculinity that needs confrontation and competition in order to define itself.” (Șchiop, 2024, online)

Conceptual framework

Socialization

Socialization is a fundamental sociological concept that describes the process by which people take on and internalize the morals, conventions, actions and social skills associated with their social status. People are shaped through this process, both in terms of understanding how they fit into society and in terms of developing their own identity within the social framework.

Durkheim was among the first sociologists to emphasize the need for socialization to maintain social cohesion. For social order to exist, he argued, socialization is necessary to develop a "collective consciousness" that reflects the fundamental principles and conventions of society. Durkheim's theory underlines the importance of education as a socializing force in transferring the moral values and shared beliefs that are essential for social cohesion. In “The Division of Labour in Society” (Durkheim, 1893), for example, the classical sociologist introduces the notion of how various societal functions support social cohesion, thus indirectly addressing socialization issues. Durkheim (1912) examines in “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life” how religion promotes common beliefs and values that unite society and functions as a crucial institution in the socialization process.

In his structural-functional approach, the American sociologist Talcott Parsons developed the idea of socialization. In his view, socialization is a way of transmitting culture and ensuring that people fulfill their responsibilities in society. Parsons argues that socialization helps people internalize society's values, which in turn shapes their motivations and actions towards socially acceptable routes. Socialization is therefore essential for the stability and smooth functioning of society. Parsons (1951) explains his theory of action and how social systems influence human behavior in “The Social System,” which includes analyses of how socialization supports social stability and role fulfillment within the social system. He further elaborates on the mechanisms of socialization and the

idea of action systems and their relationship to social systems in his 1951 book "Toward a General Theory of Action."

Turning to symbolic interactionism, the core of Mead's socialization theory is how social contact shapes the self. To explain the idea of the self, which emerges from symbolic contacts with other people, Mead emphasized the value of communication - especially language - in shaping the self. He suggested that people learn about who they are and how they fit into society by taking on the views of others. He called this process 'assuming the role of the other', essential for creating a self that is aware of societal expectations. In his 1934 book, "Mind, Self and Society," Mead (1934) describes his theory of the social self and how interaction shapes the self.

Bourdieu is another very important contemporary sociologist who conceptualized socialization. His concept of socialization goes far beyond simply conforming to societal roles and conventions. To explain how people acquire the dispositions and skills that enable them to function in their social environment, Bourdieu created a complex theoretical framework. Habitus, field, cultural capital and symbolic capital are his important key concepts of socialization.

Cultural capital

Bourdieu's ideas clarify how people come to occupy specific places in society and how social structures are both reproduced and transformed. Bourdieu's "Outline of a Theory of Practice" (1977) contains his discussion of habitus as a fundamental component of the theory of practice, which explains the relationship between individual actions and the larger social structures that influence and constrain them. Habitus is the system of long-lasting and transposable dispositions that people acquire from their life experiences. Mediating between personal agency and social structure, it shapes opinions, judgments and actions. This idea is central to understanding how people can change and adapt within certain limits, but also how upbringing and social environment predispose them to behave in certain ways. Furthermore, a field is an arena of production, interaction or competition in which different actors pursue their interests and exert their influence. Fields are regulated, ordered areas that are essential to agents' functioning habitus. Within fields, institutions and agents compete for the distribution of different types of capital.

Socially recognized tastes, skills, knowledge and habits constitute cultural capital. Embodied, objectified, and institutionalized capital are the three types of cultural capital that Bourdieu distinguished, and each of which influences social mobility and social stratification. First, enduring mental and bodily states constitute embodied capital. This includes patterns of speech, movement, gestures, etc. This form is essential for musical and artistic professions in general, sports, but also for other occupations that require special forms of body movement. Over time, embodied cultural capital becomes embedded in a person's identity and habits, rather than simply learned. Second, tangible objects such as books, instruments, cars or pieces of art are part of objectified capital. Musical instruments are, for example, essential for the transmission of musical professions. Cultural competence is a by-product of socialization processes and enables a person to

understand and use these objects to transmit cultural capital. Thirdly, institutionalized capital is the institutional recognition of cultural competence through official credentials such as diplomas, certificates, etc. The official recognition of cultural capital possessed by an individual is provided by the institutionalized type of capital, which frequently affects his or her social position and employment prospects.

Socialization in the family and in educational organizations is how cultural capital is generally acquired. In other words, socialization is essential for the transmission of social advantages and disadvantages between generations. Parents with a high level of cultural capital can instill socially acceptable manners and tastes in their children, as well as educational support and exposure to cultural events. Thus, social inequality is mainly caused by differentially transmitted cultural capital. It affects how a person can negotiate within social institutions and systems. For example, people who are more culturally literate are often better suited to succeed in educational systems that respect their knowledge and skills. Better positions in the workplace, higher wages, and more respectable social standing can result from this success.

Because certain types of cultural information and skills are more valued or prestigious in society than others, cultural capital also confers symbolic power. Through socialization, people frequently internalize this valuation, which helps them to maintain these beliefs and reinforce social hierarchies based on the possession of cultural capital. Cultural capital is therefore intimately associated with symbolic capital. Symbolic capital, as discussed by Bourdieu in “Forms of Capital” (1986), is the perception and recognition by others of a person or group as having honor or prestige. This idea emphasizes the importance of intangible resources that confer power and maintain social order. The way cultural capital is viewed and endorsed in social domains affects symbolic capital, which in turn affects people's ability to influence or even control others through the exercise of power.

Occupational inheritance

In sociology, occupational inheritance is the tendency of people to choose careers or assume positions similar to those of their parents, especially of the same-sex parent. This idea contributes to the preservation and propagation of social structures and inequality by explaining patterns of career continuity within families across generations. In the music industry, occupational inheritance can manifest itself as a direct transfer of musical skills from parents to children, or as inherited access to networks, mentoring and status within the industry. Learning music is only one aspect of this inheritance; another aspect is the development of a subtle awareness of social mores and norms, the cultural framework that is common in the music community.

Bourdieu (1986) explained occupational inheritance in relation to broader theories of social reproduction and the transfer of cultural capital. Bourdieu's more general theory is that parents transmit social class and cultural capital to their children, thereby maintaining current social systems, including through occupational inheritance and other forms of transmission of resources and privileges (or lack of them). Understanding occupational inheritance in the music professions is greatly facilitated by Bourdieu's ideas

of cultural and social capital. Raised in environments rich in cultural capital related to music and singing, the children of musicians frequently experience music education, live performances, and the informal lessons of a musical lifestyle. The intrinsic benefits of this home environment enable them to form the habits (dispositions) necessary for success in their musical careers.

Through his studies of social structure and role models, sociologist Robert K. Merton has also contributed to our knowledge of occupational inheritance. According to Merton's role modeling theory (1986), children are inclined to adopt occupational roles that the influential people in their lives - especially their parents - model for them, which frequently leads to occupational inheritance. The children of doctors and lawyers, for example, are more likely to have the financial means and the specific cultural competences and social networks they inherit to succeed in these professions. In the same vein, families engaged in trade can pass on useful knowledge and professional connections that help people enter related fields.

Becker's 2008 study of art worlds provides insight into how professional groups - including those in music - operate according to their own social systems and sets of regulations. These communities provide the social structure necessary to transmit the specialized knowledge and skills associated with the music industry. Becker explains at length how complex cooperative networks produce art rather than individual creativity. In this case, pre-existing norms, networks and cultural capital facilitate professional inheritance and can provide substantial benefits to those who have access to them from an early age.

According to Becker's paradigm, social networks and conventions created within these artistic communities frequently support careers in the arts. In this case, the significance of mentoring and family ties helps to clarify professional legacies. Like other professions, the arts can be inherited through family connections, which transmit knowledge, skills and - most importantly - networks. In close-knit artistic communities, such as those in the performing arts (music, theater) and crafts, this is particularly typical. Often going beyond biological ties, mentoring is essential for sharing professional knowledge and integrating young artists into established networks. Individuals raised in the art world are socialized into the norms, values, and behaviors that are expected and accepted in these communities, in addition to their own skill set. Their artistic methods and career paths can be heavily influenced by this deep-rooted knowledge. Networks within art worlds also provide access to vital resources, including audience bases, funding and exhibition venues. The complicated terrain of the art world is often easier for those who are born into these networks or inherit these relationships. Borrowing heavily from Bourdieu, who profoundly influences Becker's thinking, cultural capital is also transmitted through professional inheritance in art worlds. This covers not only particular creative skills, but also an understanding of the workings of the art industry, which can be essential for success and recognition.

The relevance of occupational inheritance lies in the way it illustrates how networks of cultural and social capital - knowledge, skills and occupational networks - are transmitted

within families, thereby maintaining class structures. It also advances knowledge of how the labor market is segmented and how economic inequality is maintained.

The occupational legacy of the music professions emphasizes the subtle interplay between personal ability and socio-cultural facilitation. The socialization process within musical families provides the young musician with a scaffolding that greatly influences his or her professional potential and career path, even though personal talent and passion are important. This scaffolding is built from both tangible resources - instruments and training - and intangible ones - the standards, beliefs and expectations of the musical community.

Methodology

We adopted a qualitative approach in this research. The strategy was framed within the interpretivist paradigm, with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the occupational heritage in the community of Lăutari, with a focus on the musicians from the Buzău area.

The methodology we implemented for this article included two main components. The first author integrated an autoethnographic approach, utilizing biographical notes as a Lăutar and son raised in a family of Lăutari. This method allowed him to value personal experience as a source of data, providing an insider's perspective on the phenomenon under study. He has also included participatory observations of the experiences and careers of other Lăutari whom he has known personally or with whom he has collaborated professionally, thus adding an ethnographic dimension to the research.

Second, we conducted a thematic content analysis of seven interviews with or about famous Lăutari originally published in the Formula AS magazine, then republished in a revised form, along with rich photographic illustrations, in the volume "Dadestar chaveste. Poveste lăutărească" (Ignat, 2023). The list of the interviews that we analyzed is available in Table 1. This method allowed us to contextualize the primary data within a broader public discourse about the Lăutari.

Table 1. List of analyzed interviews from Formula AS magazine

Nr.crt	Article title – original (Romanian)	Article title - translation
1	“Vrăjitorul viorii - Caliu: Nu uit de unde am plecat. Am fost un copilaș care dormea pe jos, cu vioara-n braț”, de Iulian Ignat	“The wizard of the violin - Caliu: I don't forget where I started from. I was a little child who slept on the floor, with the violin in my arms”, by Iulian Ignat
2	“Povești din Micul Paris: Fănică Luca, întâistătorul muzicii lăutărești (evocare de Mihai Bogdan Simion)”, de Bogdana Tihon Buliga	“Stories from Little Paris: Fănică Luca, the Primate of Lute Music (evocation by Mihai Bogdan Simion)”, by Bogdana Tihon Buliga
3	“Mieluță Bibescu: “Omul nu are vârstă atunci când iubește ce-i frumos”, de Iulian Ignat	“Mieluță Bibescu: “Man has no age when he loves what is beautiful”, by Iulian Ignat
4	“Bogdan-Mihai Simion: ‘Sunt cobzar, lăutar, om al cărții, cu un doctorat în litere’”, de Bogdana Tihon Buliga	“Bogdan-Mihai Simion: ‘I’m a cobbler, a luthier, a man of the book, with a PhD in literature’”, by Bogdana Tihon Buliga

5	“Florin Iordan (formația “Trei Parale”): “Misiunea noastră este să păstrăm în lumină muzicile tradiționale românești”, de Iulian Ignat	“Florin Iordan (band “Trei Parale”): “Our mission is to keep Romanian traditional music in the light”, by Iulian Ignat
6	“Marian Alexandru (violinist): “Ăsta este miezul vieții noastre: muzica”, de Iulian Ignat	“Marian Alexandru (violinist): ‘This is the core of our life: music’”, by Iulian Ignat
7	“Ionică Minune -- “Știu că vorbesc ca un copil, dar viața mea e plină de fantezie și de voieșie”, de Iulian Ignat	“Ionică Minune -- “I know I talk like a child, but my life is full of fantasy and cheerfulness”, by Iulian Ignat

We combined these methods to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study, allowing us to cross-validate the results and enrich the interpretation. This methodology helped us explore the processes of professional socialization, the mechanisms of transmission of cultural capital specific to the musicians, as well as identity dynamics in the context of contemporary social change. By integrating the first author’s own perspective as a member of the community of Lăutari with analysis of magazine interviews, we were able to provide a nuanced and authentic picture of the social universe of the Lăutari.

We note the potential limitations of this methodology, such as the inherent subjectivity of the autoethnographic approach and the limited representativeness of interview-based research. To address these issues, we maintained a constant reflexivity and aimed for transparency in reporting the results.

The transmission of the profession in the Frunză family

In the family of the first author (see Figure 1), namely the Frunză family, the profession of Lăutar was mainly passed down the patrilineal line, from father to son, over several generations, although there were some exceptions. Great-grandfather Frunză Andrei played the violin and the cobza, being the one who started the musical tradition in the family. His wife, Floarea, was not a Lăutar.

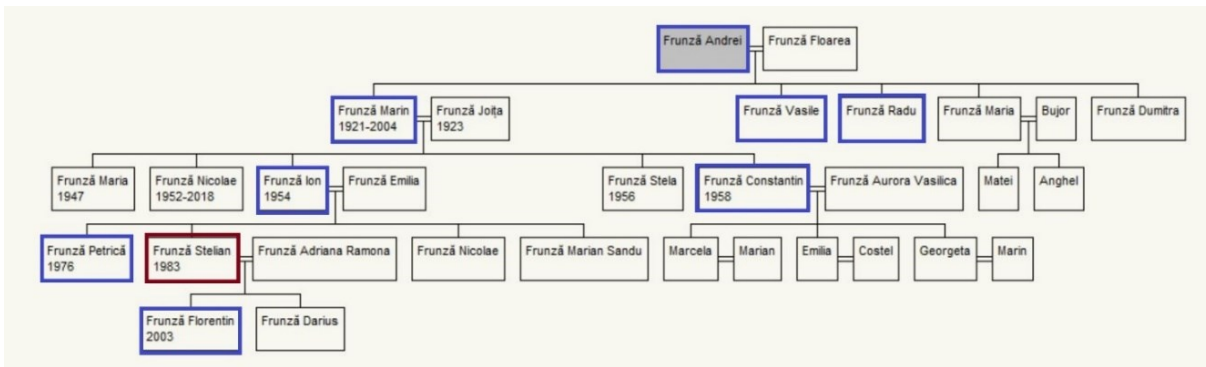
In the second generation, grandfather Frunză Marin learned to play the tambourine and cobza with his brothers, Vasile and Radu. Marin continued the musical tradition and even survived imprisonment in Siberia thanks to his musical talent, forming a band in the camp. Grandmother Joița, on the other hand, did not sing, being a homemaker and cook. Marin's brothers, Vasile and Radu, played the violin, but Radu gave it up after his brother's death on the front. In this generation, Maria and Dumitra were not involved in Lăutari music, while Bujor followed a craftsman's trade.

In the third generation, father Frunză Ion learned to play the accordion and the țambal, a trade that he combined with other occupations to support his family. His brothers, Nicolae and Constantin, also followed in the musical tradition, playing different instruments. His uncles, Matei and Anghel, although not musicians, had jobs in the plumbing trade. In this generation, the women of the family, such as mother Emilia and aunts Stela and Aurora, did not continue the musical tradition.

In the fourth generation, the Frunză brothers Petrică and Stelian have continued the tradition, learning to play various instruments and having a university education. Their brother Nicolae has learned to play the organ and accordion, while Marian Sandu has dedicated himself to photography and videography. Their cousins, Marcela, Emilia, and Georgeta, did not follow the musical path, taking care of the household or other trades, as did their brothers-in-law Marian and Costel.

In the fifth generation, Frunză Florentin learned to play the accordion and keyboard, continuing the family tradition and forming his own party band. His brother, Darius, is a student and wants to learn the to play clarinet, but has currently interrupted his lessons to concentrate on school.

Figure 1. Family tree of the Frunză family. Source: own research.



Family tree created with the Simple Family Tree program

Thus, in the Frunză family, the profession of *Lăutar* was mainly passed down from father to son, but it was not an absolute rule, as there were also family members who followed other occupations (see Table 2).

Table 2. The transmission of the *Lăutar* profession in the Frunză family

Generation	Person	Instruments	Other information (musicians in family, occupation, education, etc.); biographical notes
1	Frunză Andrei (Great-grandfather)	Violin, cobza (lute)	
	Frunză Floarea (Great-grandmother)		
2	Frunză Marin (Grandfather)	Cymbalom, cobza (lute)	School education: 4 grades, WWII veteran, CAP worker. He learned to play by ear cobza and cymbalom in the family, with his brothers Frunză Vasile and Frunză Radu. While he was a prisoner of war in Russia (Siberia), he made a tambal with the help of the camp's woodman. It was thanks to this musical instrument that Frunză Marin managed to survive his imprisonment by setting up a music band in the Siberian camp, where he played for the Russian officers.

	Frunză Joița (Grandmother)		School education: 4 grades, homemaker. The grandmother was a homemaker and took care of her 5 children. For a period of time, she was the cook of a family of boyars from Movila-Banului. She was very appreciated for the dishes that she prepared for those who worked in the boyars' household, and also for the important guests of the boyar family.
	Frunză Vasile	Violin	He had no formal education, he studied violin with his younger brother, Frunză Radu. According to family stories, he was one of the most famous violinists in the Buzăului area, being appreciated by the Lăutari due to the mastery with which he played the melodies of the time. Frunză Vasile died on the front during the Second World War, after a bombing of the Crâng forest in Buzău.
	Frunză Radu	Violin	He had no formal education, he learned to play the violin by ear from his older brothers. He was so skilled in the mysteries of the violin that he could play a tune correctly after just one audition. He suffered a shock after the news of his brother's (Frunză Vasile) death on the front, and could no longer play the violin.
	Frunză Maria Bujor		He is not a <i>Lăutar</i> ; he is a craftsman, from a family of <i>Ursari</i> .
	Frunză Dumitra		
3	Frunză Maria		
	Frunză Nicolae		
	Frunză Ion (Father)	Accordion, cymbalom, voice	School education: 8 grades. Other jobs: unskilled warehouse worker (goods handler).
	Frunză Emilia (Mother)		School education: 8 grades. Job: cleaning lady.
	Frunză Stela (Aunt)		School education: 8 classes. Pensioner.
	Frunză Constantin (uncle)	Accordion, cymbalom, voice	School education: 8 grades. He learned to play the accordion at the insistence of his father (Frunză Marin), by purchasing an accordion. He learned to play with his older brother, only by ear. After a while, due to the working conditions at the wire factory in Buzău, he started to have hearing problems and could no longer play the accordion. Other occupations: wire factory worker (machinist), deaf because of his job.

	Frunză Aurora Vasilica (Aunt)		School education: 8 classes. Homemaker.
	Matei		Installer School education: 8 classes.
	Anghel		Installer School education: vocational school.
4	Frunză Petrică (Brother)	Guitar, vocals Sound	Married to Daniela, divorced. Civil partnership with Liliana. School education: university degree (BA in social work). Other jobs: expert at the National Agency for Roma, social worker. Frunză Petrică learned to play the guitar taking lessons from a teacher. He played with his brothers and father and is now a musician in some bands in Buzău but also in the surrounding areas.
	Frunză Stelian (First author)	Organ, accordion, guitar, drums	Married to Adriana Ramona, presently divorced. School education: university degree (BA in sociology, BA in social work, MA in sociology, doctoral candidate in sociology). Other jobs: social assistance referent.
	Frunză Adriana Ramona (Former spouse)		School education: 12 classes. Bartender.
	Frunză Nicolae (Brother)	Keyboard, accordion, voice	School education: vocational school. No occupation. He is the first Lăutar brother, he learned the secrets of the accordion from his teacher in the village of Margineanu, Buzău. He was also the first Lăutar in the family who learned to play the keyboard.
	Frunză Marian Sandu (Brother)	Photo/video	School education: high school + baccalaureate. Soldier employed in the Ministry of National Defense.
	Marcela (Cousin)		School education: 8 classes. Homemaker.
	Marian (Brother-in-law)		He's not a Lăutar. He works in construction in Spain.
	Emilia (cousin)		School education: 8 classes. Homemaker.
	Costel (Brother-in-law)		He's not a Lăutar.

			He works as a tractor driver for an agricultural association in Buzău.
	Georgeta (Cousin)		School education: 8 classes. Homemaker.
	Marin (Brother-in-law)		He's not a <i>Lăutar</i> . School education: 6 classes. Unskilled worker at a bread factory in Buzău.
5	Frunză Florentin (Son of first author)	Accordion, Keyboard	School education: high school (12 grades). <i>Lăutar</i> . He learned to play the accordion from a blind teacher. His first contact with musical instruments (accordion, organ) was at the age of 3, with these instruments being present in the family home. At the age of 6, he was taken to a music school in Buzău to learn to play the piano. At the insistence of his piano teacher, Florentin was redirected to <i>Lăutari</i> music because he liked listening to this kind of music more and especially because his family played it. At the age of 12, Florentin's father hired an accordion teacher to introduce him to the art of accordion playing. During his teenage years, he also began to study the keyboard in order to pursue other musical genres. Currently, Florentin has his own party music band, and they play at weddings, baptisms, and other private events.
	Frunză Darius (son of first author)	Clarinet	Student in 7th grade, he wants to study the clarinet. His father hired a teacher to initiate him in the basic playing of the clarinet. Because he is too busy with school and because of his very young age, his father (the first author) stopped clarinet lessons for a while.

The photos included in the Annex provide a complex picture of the life of professional musicians, highlighting the importance of the social, cultural and economic capital specific to this professional community. The social networks of the musicians are both professional and personal. Meetings at the village buffet to organize events or collegial gatherings between accordionists illustrate how social capital facilitates job opportunities and the exchange of professional experiences. The musical groups described represent collaborative structures that maximize the economic and artistic potential of their members.

Music proves to be a central element of the Lăutari way of life, profoundly influencing lifestyle and everyday practices (see Figure 2). The presence of musical instruments in family photographs and at social events suggests a close link between professional and personal life, characteristic of traditional occupations. Musical instruments, especially the accordion, appear as forms of embodied and objectified cultural capital. The purchase of instruments for children represents an investment in their cultural capital, facilitating the perpetuation of the family tradition. The intergenerational transmission of the craft is evidenced by children's early exposure to musical instruments and their participation in family musical activities. This process of early professional socialization contributes to cultural and occupational reproduction in the community of the Lăutari.

**Figure 2. Life as a Lăutar in the Frunză family - photographic illustrations (Aprox. 1974 & Aprox. 1987).
Source: author's family archive**



(1)

Frunză Ion's first leave from the army. The photo was taken at a buffet in the village of Movila-Banului, Buzău.

People in the picture:

Frunză Ion – left (father)

Frunză Marin – center (grandfather)

Petre Ion - center

Stan Gazaru - right

In addition to the buffet, they organized an event, which was the wedding of Petre Ion.



(2)

Frunză Ion (accordionist), father of Frunză Stelian. The picture was taken at his in-laws' house, at a family party, where he lived with his wife.

The accordion in the picture was more than 50 years old and was made in Germany (Hohner). These parties were organized in their free time, whenever they met after work.

The official recognition of the profession of a Lăutar, exemplified by the professional certificate (available in the Annex), indicates a form of institutionalization of specific cultural capital, conferring legitimacy and social status within the wider society. The photographs in Figure 3 illustrate how Lăutari music and practice structure a distinct way of life with specific forms of capital and social practices. This traditional cultural and economic system continually adapts and negotiates with wider social changes while maintaining its internal coherence and distinct identity. Additional photographs are available in the Annex.

Figure 3. Life as a Lăutar in the Frunză family - photographic illustrations (Aprox. 1997). Source: author's family archive



(1)

Frunză Stelian (the first author, when he was 13 years old).

The picture was taken in the family house in Buzău, where the first author spent his childhood with musical instruments.

This keyboard is a Yamaha PS-55, the instrument on which he practiced a lot.



(2)

The Frunză brothers from Buzău.

Frunză Nicolae - orga

Frunză Petrică - guitar

Frunză Stelian - guitar

These were their first instruments bought by the parents to play at events.

Learning the Lăutar profession: biographical notes by the author

In the experience of the first author as a Lăutar and researcher, the concept of occupational inheritance is evident for his professional journey. Coming from a family with a long tradition in playing music, he was exposed to a musical environment from an early age. This early exposure is a form of built-in cultural capital, passed on informally through the mere constant presence of music and instruments in everyday life. His father, as the primary role model, and his older brothers, as intermediaries of this tradition, played crucial roles in transmitting not only technical skills but also a professional ethos specific to the players.

Objectified cultural capital manifested itself in their home through the constant presence of musical instruments. Their mother's efforts to acquire instruments, through loans, illustrate the family's investment in the accumulation of objectified cultural capital essential to their professional development. These instruments were not mere objects, but carried within them the symbolic charge of the Lăutar tradition, representing both a family legacy and a gateway to their professional future.

The occupational inheritance also manifested itself in the privileged access to the networks of the professional musicians. Participating in the Lăutari community with his father and brothers introduced the first author into a unique social space where he was able to accumulate social capital specific to this professional community. These connections not only facilitated performance opportunities for him, but also helped shape his professional identity as part of a larger tradition.

The gender differentiation in the transmission of the craft of playing Lăutari music is also evident in the first author experience. While he, as a boy, was encouraged and supported to pursue the musical path, his mother's role, although crucial in facilitating musical education, remained in the supportive sphere, fulfilling both the homemaker role and, later, taking paid employment as a cleaning lady. This dynamic reflects the traditional gender structures in the Lăutari community, where the craft is predominantly passed down the masculine line.

The learning process, though seemingly spontaneous and self-directed, was actually deeply steeped in the cultural capital of family and community. "Stealing the craft", as the family called it, is in fact a sophisticated form of transmission of tacit knowledge, specific to the Lăutari culture. This method of learning, based on observation, imitation and experimentation, is in itself a form of cultural capital, passed down intergenerationally and valued in the community.

The experience of the first author also illustrates how occupational heritage can act as a powerful motivational factor. The desire to rise to the level of his brothers and gain recognition in the community of Lăutari was fueled by the awareness of belonging to a valuable family tradition. This intrinsic motivation, stemming from the occupational heritage, has been crucial in overcoming the obstacles encountered in the learning process and in his persistence in pursuing a career as a Lăutar.

In what follows, we provide several biographical notes of the first author to illustrate how occupational heritage and cultural capital are linked in the socialization process of a *Lăutar*.

Father's role

“He was a role model for me musically. I liked to be like him since kindergarten, to be a *Lăutar*, to earn money for the family welfare. The profession of a *Lăutar* is largely passed down through the paternal line, but it is not obligatory for the father to teach his son to play a musical instrument individually. For the most part, the *Lăutar* profession is learned from other musicians, and is self-taught. In this self-taught way I learned to play the accordion, keyboard, drums, guitar, I ‘stole’ techniques of interpretation and accompaniment from certain people in the entourage of the *Lăutari*. My uncle (Frunză Constantin), when he came to visit my father, he took the accordion and started to play a few songs, and I listened and memorized what he played. After he left, I started to study to play those songs that my uncle played” (Biographical notes of the author S.F., 2024).

Mother's role

“For 20 years, my mother didn't have a job because my father earned decent money for the family welfare. My mother mostly took care of our upbringing and education, but also on the professional side, she wanted to carry on the *Lăutari* music from generation to generation. She was the woman who provided our musical instruments. I think it was thanks to my mother that I learned to play and to be a professional musician. I remember how she used to take a loan from the Mutual Help House (Casa de Ajutor Reciproc - CAR) to buy musical instruments (keyboard, guitar, accordion). Being the youngest, I didn't really have access to these instruments except in the absence of my parents, and I regarded them as toys, which made some sounds. Playing with them, I became fond of those noisy toys, and that's how I began to learn to play the instruments mentioned above.” (Author's biographical notes S.F., 2024).

The role of other family members

“My older brothers (Frunză Petrică, Frunză Nicolae) were already *Lăutari*, they started to rehearse a few songs and they asked me to sit next to them. I was at the beginning, but I liked to sit there and hoped that maybe they would ask me to sing with them, which they did eventually. My brothers played an important role in supporting me in front of my parents about my interest in music. They mentioned that at my age, I could sing quite well and it would be appropriate to sing at events with them. My mother did not agree that I should lose my nights because of my age at the time (11 years old), but at the insistence of my older brothers I was finally allowed to sing at weddings, christenings and other private events.” (Author's biographical notes S.F., 2024).

The role of other community members

“During the years 1990-2010, in the center of Buzău, there was a *Lăutar* fellowship. Every Tuesday and Thursday the *Lăutari* met there to socialize, but also to haggle for events (weddings, baptisms, etc). My father, together with my brothers, went to the fellowship to maintain social relations with the other *Lăutari*, but also to haggle for possible weddings or baptisms. The eldest brother (Nicolae) had already made friends of his age

and already had a gang where he could exchange experiences with other Lăutari. Due to the fact that we had musical instruments adapted to the market at that time, he would bring his friends home to study and rehearse some of the songs that were on the top at that time. I enjoyed the fact that these young people would come to our house where they practiced and played, because it was a good opportunity for me to learn their trade. After the Lăutari left, I started to repeat what I had heard from them. I didn't finish singing, until I had played several songs, just as my brother did. I must mention that these young Lăutari have contributed to my personal development since my childhood, because they came up with new melodies and a different style of singing." (Author's biographical notes S.F., 2024).

Author initiative (self-taught involvement)

"Being the youngest member of the Frunză family, I was very well looked after by the whole family, and all the attention was directed to me. I was born with the instrument (accordion) in the house, so to say, which I didn't know what it was until I opened it to see what it could do, since I was four years old. I always wanted to discover what each key, sound on this instrument does, and in this way, I felt that something attracted me to it. Being the youngest child, I didn't have access to the instrument, because there was the risk of breaking it or dropping it on the floor. My accordion playing happened only when I was alone at home, so as not to be seen by my parents. The ambition and courage I had to be a Lăutar was heightened even more when I saw older siblings who had teachers so they could learn to play on some of the instruments in the house. During teaching classes, I was present next to them so that I could learn some musical tones as well as the basic techniques of the instrument. I had so much ambition, that for me it had already started a competition between me and my brothers, I wanted to show that I was learning to play even though I didn't have a music teacher to teach me some instruments (accordion, keyboard, drums, guitar). I already started to play side by side with them in a very short time, because I had memorized the songs, I could perform them in a few minutes, which made me progress very fast and catch up with my older brothers. When I started earning my first pennies from the events, I was very happy and had a high self-esteem, because kids my age didn't have that potential and were waiting to get a few pennies from mom and dad, while I already had my own pennies." (Biographical notes of the author S.F., 2024).

Yesterday's and today's Lăutari: interviews from Formula AS magazine

After analyzing the interviews with or about the Lăutari published in Formula AS magazine (see Table 1 in the methodology section), several main themes can be identified that provide insight into the world of Lăutari music and the experience of the Lăutari. The transmission of musical tradition within the family and community is a central theme. Many Lăutari come from families with a long musical tradition, having learned the craft from their parents and grandparents since childhood. This intergenerational transmission of musical knowledge and techniques is essential for the preservation and continuity of the Lăutari tradition. Music education and the transmission of knowledge to new generations is a concern for many Lăutari. They discuss the importance of learning music formally, but also of preserving traditional teaching and learning methods.

Adapting to social and economic change is another important theme. The musicians talk about the transformations their profession has undergone, from playing at weddings

and village parties to performing on major international stages. They have had to adapt to the new demands of the music market, the advent of technology and changes in the public's preferences.

The passion for music and instrumental virtuosity are central elements in the discourse of the musicians. They often speak of a deep love for their instrument and for the art of music, dedicating their lives to perfecting their technique and creative exploration. Virtuosity is seen as an ideal towards which they constantly strive.

The relationship between tradition and innovation in Lăutari music is also a recurring theme. The players discuss the delicate balance between preserving the authenticity of traditional music and the need to innovate and adapt to contemporary tastes. Some advocate purity of style, while others are open to fusion and experimentation.

Cultural and ethnic identity plays an important role in the narratives of the musicians. A number of the interviewed Lăutari are of Roma ethnicity and talk about how music is an essential part of their cultural identity and heritage. At the same time, they emphasize their contribution to Romanian culture as a whole.

Recognition and the social status of the musicians in society is another theme present in the discussions. The interviews reflect both pride in their art and frustration with the lack of official recognition or prejudice they sometimes face.

We will now look in more detail at the information provided in the interviews on the transmission of the profession of the Lăutari. Social networks, especially family and community networks, play a crucial role in perpetuating this tradition. The Lăutari who were interviewed almost invariably come from families with a rich musical history, which facilitates their access to valuable cultural capital that is difficult to acquire outside these circles. This capital includes not only the technical skills of playing various instruments, but also knowledge of repertoire, performance styles and professional practices.

Professional socialization begins at an early age, often in informal family settings. Children are constantly exposed to music, observe and imitate adults, and are encouraged (sometimes even pressured) to participate in musical activities. This early immersion in the world of Lăutari music helps them to form a strong professional identity and gradually build up the necessary cultural capital. Occupational inheritance also manifests itself through specialization in certain instruments within the family, creating a diversity of skills that allows the formation of complete family bands. This strategy strengthens family cohesion and maximizes economic opportunities. The extended social networks of the Lăutari community provide additional opportunities for learning and development. Informal gatherings of the Lăutari, as described by some interviewees, function as spaces for sharing knowledge and strengthening professional identity.

At the same time, the interviews reveal tensions between this traditional occupational heritage and the pressures of modernization. Some players mention conflicts between following the family tradition and aspirations towards formal education or adapting to the new demands of the music market. Almost all of the interviewed musicians mention that they come from families with a musical tradition. Bogdan Mihai Simion talks about his grandmother who played in a Lăutari band and his father, a violinist and

conductor. Marian Alexandru describes himself as being part of the "fourth generation of Lăutari." Ionică Minune mentions that "everyone in his family played [Lăutari music], grandparents and great-grandparents."

"And when I was 5, my uncle gave me a children's violin. He was living in Bucharest, working as a kind of chimney sweep. And he brought this three-quarter Steiner violin. When I saw it, my God, I didn't eat for almost a week. I'd have a little dumpling, a little snack, but all I could think about was learning to play it. I slept with it in my arms, but where did I sleep, Mr. Iulian? We slept on the floor, on mats, on straw mattresses, that's how we grew up. I'm not showing off, I know where I came from, I was a little kid who slept on the floor with the violin in my arms. I used to wake up in the middle of the night, gently, I'd take my violin and go somewhere in the back, so as not to wake my parents, because they'd come from singing, from weddings, my mom with her voice, my dad with his violin. And I'd play what I'd heard from the grown-ups, I'd play without them showing me anything, where you put your finger, where it's F, C sharp, A flat, B flat. I corrected myself. Everything was in my brain, measures, tenths, counting, everything I heard from the elders. I'd take the violin, I'd take a colt with me, because I had horses and I loved the colts, Caesar or Nadia, and I'd go up the hill, I had my own place, in the vineyards, where there were pigeons, tobacco, agriculture. And there I studied all day, alone. I didn't really play with my friends, my mind was on singing. I went to school for six years, after that it was easier, I started performing at weddings, and I took my homework home, the teachers let me, they saw that I was tired. At 11, I was ready. I had a lot of contestants from my generation and the jury was formed and the elders said: "Caliu is a phenomenon!" (...) I tell Robert to mobilize his generation. "Look, Robert, I'll give you my sword, you follow from father to son, as I have done in my family, in the Clejani tradition." (Caliu, in an interview with Iulian Ignat).

Informal learning within the family is well illustrated in the interviews. Several players describe how they learned the craft by listening and observing family members. Marian Alexandru recounts how he listened and joined in with the Lăutari who gathered in their home. He explicitly mentions his grandfather's role in teaching him the craft: "My grandfather, Aurel, taught me to play, he gave me confidence". Ionică Minune mentions that he listened to his father's rehearsals and then practiced at night.

"My fondest memories are of my father. Just today they came to my mind when I found some pictures around the house. I remembered the first time we sang together. He said, "Mr. Darling, you still have a lot to learn." I was really upset, but I said, "Shake hands, Dad, I'll keep that in mind." He was right." (Mieluță Bibescu, interview with Iulian Ignat)

The interviewed players mention that they started playing at a very young age. Ionică Minune started at the age of four, while others mention ages between 7-9.

"At the age of four, he picked up an accordion he found at home and played his first song: a tango, Castel Amore. No one had taught him, he had heard the piece from the Lăutari in his home town of Costești, near Buzău. At that time Costești had 2,300 or 3,300 Lăutari, whose families lived in five small streets. Who was the best of them? 'Papa! Nobody could make the violin sigh like him. He also had an orchestra, with accordions, cymbal, they conducted the wedding, with all the dances, from morning till the next day. Grandfather had three sisters and eight brothers, they all played different instruments, they tied the

wedding. I mean, I go with my family and we take all the money. In my family everybody sang, grandparents and great-grandparents, they would go to other villages and sing for three days and three nights, without amplification, in difficult conditions. My grandfather had a little cymbalom around his neck and he sang with his voice. And my father sang with his voice, only I never did. Nothing comes out. My father rehearsed with his men in the house, a song that came out then, that people asked for. Come on, let's sing that verse. I'd listen, and at night I'd pick up the accordion and play my older brother's 12-bass accordion. My grandfather was Petrică, my father Mitică, my brother Aurică and me, Ionică'. The reputation of "Miracle" came by itself, thanks to the enormous talent with which the kid amazed his audience. (...) He soon gave up his dream of going to music high school and went into the business after his father died. When he had time, he traveled around the country in search of the famous musicians of that time to listen to them, and by the time he was 17, when he arrived in Bucharest, his name was already known and admired. He teamed up with Toni Iordache, with the great musicians of the '70s and '80s, he played first in Japan, then on stages all over the world." (Ionică Minune, interview with Iulian Ignat).

In the case of Bogdan Mihai Simion, we notice how, interestingly, his paternal grandmother played an important role in the transmission and consolidation of the musical tradition in the family. Thus, the transmission 'from father to son' can also be mediated by female family figures. In Simion's case, his mother was not interested in music, his father having played the most important proximal role in his career as a *Lăutar* - but it was his paternal grandmother who connected his father to music.

"Interest in music is part of me because of my family. My grandparents on my mother's side didn't sing, they were farmers and breeders in Oltenia. My paternal grandmother, however, Viorica Simion, was an extremely beautiful singer, and in Vâlcea she was a highly esteemed seamstress. My father inherited her talent; he led an orchestra of forty instrumentalists, called 'Doina Lotrului.' He was a very important violinist in Vâlcea before 1989. So, I grew up with music in the house, with double bass, with the cymbal, things that can't be bypassed (...) The Cobza appeared in my life out of my passion for literature, it was not among the family instruments. My father forced me to play the violin, five years of hard lessons, which did not awaken anything in me except the pain of the bow slapped across my fingers. My mother scolded him to stop sending me to violin school so I'd stay in school and not become a violinist like him. She didn't see any future in music, my dear mother. My father, mercifully, gave in." (Bogdan Mihai Simion, interview with Bogdana Tihon Buliga).

There is a tendency for different family members to specialize on different instruments. Marian Alexandru mentions "a small cymbal, a double bass, a violin, two accordions", and Ionică Minune talks about his father's orchestra with "accordions, cymbal". This diversity is useful, allowing the family to keep money earned from events by working together.

"I'm from the fourth generation of *Lăutari* and I've caught the times when *Lăutari* got together and played for themselves, for pleasure. When I was 7-8-9 years old, as old as I was, I would listen and I would also jump in with my violin when they would help me or when I felt like I belonged there. And after all these years, these moments are coming back to me, which I've been ready for since childhood. Sometimes, the *Lăutari* would

meet at our house, make tea, coffee, talk about what they had to talk about, and at some point, they would pick up their instruments and play, simply for pleasure. It was a different school for us. They had a small cymbal, a double bass, a violin, two accordions, and they were all singing with their voices, a kind of gypsy flamenco from our local culture. Now the soloist sings and the rest just play the instruments, but back then, at the wedding, each of the instrumentalists sang with their voices. I can't forget that atmosphere, because that's how I grew up, among them. (Marian Alexandru, interview with Iulian Ignat).

Some of the players mention that they did not have the initial freedom to choose their instrument. Bogdan Mihai Simion was forced to play the violin by his father as a child - although he opted for the cobza as a teenager, and Marian Alexandru says his grandfather decided he would play the violin.

“The answer came like a thunderbolt: the cobza!!!! I was fifteen years old and forever attached to the cute little cobza. It was complicated to find one, it was even more complicated to find a cobzar who could explain to me the secrets of the instrument. Until I found Constantin Gaciu from Olt, I was self-taught. Then this man took me under his care and I had to forget everything I thought I knew about the cobza, because it was wrong. Three years of intense study and... as if, as if, its mysteries were beginning to reveal themselves to me... (...) I've been making a living from playing the cobza since I was eighteen. You don't get rich from playing the cobza, but I have a house, and for thirteen years, my fridge hasn't been empty.” (Bogdan Mihai Simion, interview with Bogdana Tihon Buliga).

There is also an evolution of the profession over time. Marian Alexandru notes differences between the past and the present: “Times are changing, what I say was then, in the days of the real *Lăutari*, now, everything is very processed”. Mieluță Bibescu believes that manele is like a “virus” that has greatly affected the professional and community life of the *Lăutari*:

“Before 1990, we, the *Lăutari*, were an island of friendship and beauty, of all that is noble. After that, the manele came and two roads were created, some went right with the manele, some went left with the *Lăutari* music. Cell phones and technology appeared, so we started to see each other less often.” (Mieluță Bibescu in an interview with Iulian Ignat).

There are also mentions of the conflict between following family tradition and formal education. Bogdan Mihai Simion mentions that his mother did not want him to become a *Lăutar*, preferring to concentrate on school. We also note that transmission from father to son does not necessarily imply direct instruction of the son by the father. It is, as Beissinger (2018) observes, an immersion in a male-dominated musical environment, based largely on self-taught learning and ‘stealing the craft’ from other players, be they relatives, neighbors, friends, etc.

“My father didn't have the necessary patience, my grandfather, Aurel, taught me to play, he gave me confidence, if I can give what I have to give in this profession, I owe it to him. He was versatile, he played the violin, the small tambor and the accordion. Being four

brothers and a lot of cousins, we didn't really have the right to choose which instruments to play. We had to find a way to play together, one brother on the clarinet, one cousin on the small cymbal. I didn't really like the violin at first, it's an instrument that squeaks a lot before you hit a clean note, unlike the accordion, where the sound is fixed. My grandfather said, 'You're going to play the violin,' I don't know what he was thinking. It took me a while, but eventually, I discovered the beauty of this instrument. At the age of 14, I moved with my family to Bucharest, I went to music high school, at 18 I was hired by competition in the 'Ciocârlia' ensemble, the path was clear. I toured all over the world, and then, for 25 years, I continued to enjoy touring, in the orchestra of Maestro Gheorghe Zamfir. I wanted and loved to travel the world." (Marian Alexandru, interview with Iulian Ignat).

Conclusions

This study on the professional heritage and socialization of Lăutari musicians in Romania largely supports and extends the findings of previous research by Speranța Rădulescu and Margaret Beissinger. The patrilineal transmission of the Lăutar profession, as observed in previous research, is confirmed in the present study. However, our findings suggest a more nuanced understanding of this process, highlighting that the phrase from father to son does not necessarily imply direct instruction from fathers, but rather describes a complex immersion in a musical environment.

The study corroborates Beissinger's observations on the early age at which children in Lăutar families begin to engage with music, often starting around 7-10 years old. This early exposure contributes significantly to the accumulation of embodied cultural capital specific to the profession. The research also supports Beissinger's findings on the informal nature of learning, with many Lăutari describing a process of stealing the trade through observation and imitation rather than formal instruction.

An interesting aspect that emerged from this study, warranting further investigation, is the role of women, particularly mothers and grandmothers, in the professional heritage of Lăutari. While the profession remains male-dominated, women play a crucial role in shaping and strengthening the musical environment in which young Lăutari are socialized. Mothers may facilitate access to instruments and support their children's musical education, even when not musicians themselves. In some cases, grandmothers serve as important links in the chain of musical heritage, preserving and transmitting traditional repertoires and cultural knowledge.

The study highlights the importance of social networks within the Lăutar community for professional socialization. These networks, often family-based but extending to the wider community, provide opportunities for young musicians to observe, learn, and eventually perform alongside more experienced Lăutari. This process contributes to the accumulation of both cultural and social capital essential for success in the profession. While many Lăutari continue to learn primarily through informal, community-based methods, there is an increasing trend towards formal music education, reflecting broader social changes and aspirations for upward mobility.

In conclusion, this study enriches our understanding of professional heritage among Lăutari by revealing the complex interplay of family dynamics, community networks, and

changing social contexts in the transmission of this traditional profession. It underscores the need for further research into the often-overlooked role of women in sustaining and shaping Lăutar musical traditions, as well as the ongoing negotiation between traditional and modern forms of professional socialization in this community.

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Annex 1. Life as a Lăutar in the Frunză family - photographic illustrations. Source: author's personal archive

Photograph	Description
 <p>Aprox. 1976</p>	<p>“Doruleț” band from Constanța. People in the picture: Costel Frunză, Ion's brother-in-law Marian - accordion George - drums Marcel - guitar The photo was also a business card for that period, offered at the events where they performed.</p>
 <p>Aprox. 1980</p>	<p>In this picture, Frunză Constantin, brother of Frunză Ion, is at a wedding in a cultural center in Buzău. He is the soloist and accordionist, with George behind him as drummer. Frunză Constantin learned to play the accordion with his brother, Frunză Ion, from their father (Frunză Marin).</p>
 <p>Aprox. 1982</p>	<p>Wedding at the tent (Cernatesti, Buzău), at the father-in-law. People in the picture: Frunză Ion - accordion. Panait Liliana - soloist. Painat Vasile - drummer. The photo was taken during a break from the event at the soloist's request. The soloist was generally the main character of the band, as she created an atmosphere of dancing and fun with her voice, together with the other members of the band.</p>

	<p>The photo was taken in the house of Frunză Ion, who is pictured here with his wife, Frunză Emilia, and their son, Frunză Marian, who was 3 years old. The event at which the picture was taken represents the cutting of Frunză Marian's moț, where several guests were invited.</p>
<p>Aprox. 1983</p> 	<p>The photo shows a collegial intonation between accordionists at a wedding in front of St. Nicholas Church in Buzău. From left to right: Andrei Gheorghe (30 years old) - accordionist Frunză Ion (31 years old) - accordionist. Fănel from Gheraseni (34 years old) - accordionist. This kind of meetings were quite common after the completion of the day's wedding customs (groom's shaving, bride's cooking, religious wedding). Typically, each accordionist would bring one bride to the church, and after the religious wedding was over, he would lead them to the party. For the people in the picture, this period of rest during the religious service of the wedding meant extra time to get over different discussions.</p>
<p>Aprox. 1985</p> 	<p>Aprox. 1986</p>  <p>Professional license used during the communist period, to practice as a free-lance professional (lăutar) in Romania. The license belongs to Frunză Ion (first author's father), accordionist. In 1986, Frunză Ion sang with the orchestra Casa de Cultură from Buzău, conducted by Gigi Vrabie (violinist), in front of a commission of 11 members, where Emilia Comisel (ethnomusicologist and university professor) was the president of the commission. With this certificate, the musician had the right to conduct a band composed of 6-7 players, who were paid according to the grade received by the certificate holder.</p>



Aprox. 1989

Wedding band.

This picture shows the band led by Dumitru Gageanu (vocals), with:
Dangalas Nelu - keyboard
Frunză Ion - accordion
Nelu Dogea - guitar
Marian Parleci - drums

During this period, weddings were allowed in restaurants until midnight.



Aprox. 1990

Family photo (Frunză brothers).

In order of height:

1. Frunză Petrică, born in 1976.
2. Frunză Nicolae, born in 1978.
3. Frunză Marian-Sandu, born in 1980
4. Frunză Stelian, born in 1983.

This picture was taken in the apartment where the family lived in Buzău, by a neighbor, who had recently bought a camera.

The accordion in the picture represents for me (the first author) the noisy toy that made wonderful sounds and chords. This instrument was my inspiration to develop my musical senses from such a young age.



Aprox. 1990

In the picture there are two of the Frunză brothers, Frunză Ion and Frunză Constantin, following the death of their mother. The moment was captured by a neighbor. The mourning practice of growing beards can be noticed in the picture.



Aprox. 1990

Frunză Nicolae (12 years old). In this picture there is the first author's older brother, the first Lăutar among the four children of Frunză Ion. He had an accordion teacher from the Buzău area, where he learned the secrets of Lăutar music. Being the first Lăutar among the brothers, he was a model and guide for the first author.



Aprox. 1994

Class IV D, Elementary School no. 5, Buzău, together with Martes Elena. This picture was taken in the backyard where the first author was a student. He was the third, top row, from right to left.






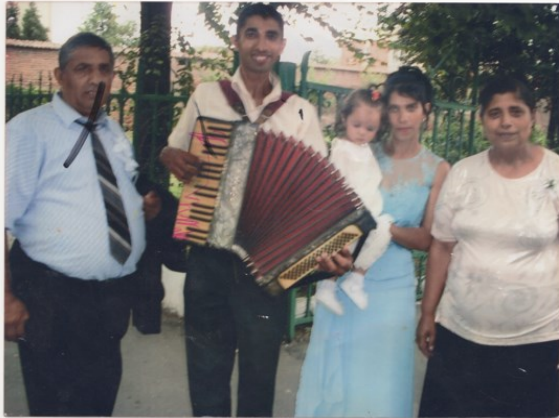
Aprox. 1997

Frunză Stelian (the first author, when he was 13 years old). The picture was taken in the family house in Buzău, where the first author spent his childhood with musical instruments. This keyboard is a Yamaha PS-55, the instrument on which he practiced a lot.



This picture was taken on the birthday of a young lady from Vizireni, Buzău County. The birthday girl was the girlfriend of the young man who plays the drums (Iulian), and the boy on the keyboards is Frunză Nicolae (the older brother of the first author). The two Lăutari know each other from the musicians' community in Buzău. In this picture you can see how focused the two of them were on performing.

<p>Aprox. 1994</p> 	<p>This picture was taken at the same event mentioned in relation to the picture above. In this case, you can see the girl standing behind the drummer, as she was his girlfriend. For the birthday girl, it was also a special moment to have the musicians play for her on her birthday.</p>
<p>Aprox. 1994</p> 	<p>This photo was taken in the church yard in com. Padina, Buzău. It shows the young accordionist Frunză Nicolae, who performed during the wedding procession to the church, where the religious wedding was to be held.</p>
<p>Aprox. 1992</p>  <p>Aprox. 1993</p>	<p>The photo was taken in the neighbors' apartment on the 4th floor, in Brosteni, Buzău. The picture represents moments of interaction among neighbors, together with their children, at "tăierea moțului" (cutting the first hair of the baby, a custom at the child's one year anniversary). In this picture, there are the first author's parents, Emilia (the one with the pink dress), father Ion (the one with the white shirt), and brother Nicolae (the one who plays the keyboard).</p>



Aprox. 2008

The photo was taken in the courtyard of the Banu Church, in Buzău, where the first author's older brother, Petrică, had his religious wedding. The photographer wanted to highlight the Frunză family in a moment of joy with their children and grandchildren. In this picture, there are the parents, son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter.



Aprox. 2010

The photo was taken in the courtyard of a citizen of Movila-Banului. Buzău, at a baptism. In the background, you can see the instruments that the lăutari play at various events. The man playing the organ is the first author's godfather in marriage, Vali Moise, who was not from a Lăutar family but had the passion to learn this profession. The first author's father, Frunză Ion, played the accordion.



Aprox. 1990

Frunză Family.
A family picture, where the famous accordion could not be missing. The photo was taken in the living room of the apartment in Buzău by a neighbor at the request of the parents.



Aprox. 1997

There is the older brother of the first author, Frunză Nicolae.
This accordion belonged to the father, but it was also the brother's study instrument. The picture was taken at their house in Buzău.



Aprox. 1997

There are the first author's grandmother (Garoafa), mother (Emilia), two older brothers (Petrică and Nicușor), and friend (Cristi).
The instruments in the photo are a keyboard (Yamaha) and a 6-string electric guitar (Behringer).