

Chapter 49

Abdals in Cultural Geography of Anatolia

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INTRODUCTION

Culture expresses the different beliefs, thoughts, values and other humane life forms that societies have gained through long-lasting experiences. In other words, it can be defined as the societies' cognitive, affective and kinesthetic experiences (Özgen & Köşker, 2015). Cultural diversity is an important source of richness for societies. Turkey, as a state that represents the culture of ancient Anatolia peninsula, hosts socio-cultural groups with different language, religion/belief, social and cultural differences with diverse ethnic (Özgen, 2015). Another cultural resource feeding this richness of Anatolia is Abdals. Abdals, located in different regions of Turkey, stand out with their different life styles and especially musical performances.

The word "Abdal", used in Anatolia to define folk poets (or bards) and a social group, also refers to a sufistic level or status. Therefore, with regard to Anatolia's cultural background, the word Abdal has a dual structure. Ayata (2006) notes the dual meaning of the word Abdal as follows:

1. Ethnically, the word Abdal used to refer to White Huns (descendance).
2. Abdals were traveling dervishes who invited nomadic people within the region from Central Asia to Anatolia and Balkans to Islam.

The fact that these two meanings became intertwined in oral and written sources and this ethnic and Sufistic dual definition became widespread caused the roots and roles of Abdals to become complex in Anatolia's cultural richness. The lack of ethnic studies on Abdals, the fact that the word Abdal is used to describe different groups and indefinite descriptions make it difficult for studies on Abdals to be clarified.

Abdals

Studies show that Abdals were seen in Anatolia for the first time in the 9th century and they came to Anatolia together with Turkmen tribes as a huge immigration wave due to major droughts and increasing Mongolian pressure in Central Asia in later periods (Saruhan, 2012). After this period, the group referred to as Abdals in Anatolia are known to be associated with religious activities.

In Sufism, the word Abdal refers to a spiritual level. In the Sufism, the term is used for those who are free from desire for material elements of the world, devoted to God, do not serve anyone but God, find happiness in spiritual life and perception of existence and adopt an understanding of life based on human and soul (Keskin, 2015). The word Abdal, which has the same meaning with words "ermiş, pîr, baba", seems to become a common title among Turkmen groups devoted to the Sufism in Anatolia beginning from 13th-14th century. Especially in rural areas, faith leaders of nomadic Turkmens,

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followers of Babais, have mostly been referred to as “Abdal” (Önler, 2013).

The word Abdal, which is the plural form of words “bedel and bedil” meaning “substitute or equivalent” in Arabic, has become to be used as a singular word in Persian and Turkish. The plural form is “abdalan” in Persian and “abdallar” in Turkish. Also, the word “budela” is also used, which has the same meaning in Sufi terminology (Uludağ, 1988). The word Abdal has been used in literary texts written in Iran for “dervish” beginning from 12th-14th century. The word was used to refer to wandering dervishes similar to Kalenders in Iran in the 14th century, to refer to "lunatics and mad persons" in the 15th century and to refer to "wandering dervishes" and "beggar dervishes" in 17th and 18th centuries (Köprülü, 1988). In addition, sufist sources mention that Abdals are individuals who possess all moral attributes, especially generosity, and have entangled beards, pale faces, no jobs, no children and no property (Mukaddem, 2013). The word Abdal, which has a spiritual meaning in Sufism, has gained a negative meaning beginning from the 15th century. The words “aptal and budala”, both of which mean “stupid” or “idiot”, are a result of this change.

Aşıkpaşazâde mentions four important groups that played a significant role in the spread of Islam in Anatolia: Gâziyân-ı Rûm, Ahîyân-ı Rûm, Bâciyân-ı Rûm and Abdâlân-ı Rûm (Öcalan, 2002). Anatolian Abdals, referred to as Abdalan-ı Rum, is a group that provided important services in the establishment of the Ottoman Empire and the spread of Islam in Anatolia. Abdalan-ı Rum are heterodox (Rafizi) dervishes mentioned by Aşıkpaşazade. Although referred to by other names as well in, wandering dervishes known mainly as Abdals seem to have gained a great recognition within the society in 14th and 15th centuries (Köprülü, 1988). Abdal Musa and Kaygusuz Abdal can be given as examples of these dervishes. In this period, Abdals were a group existing in the Bektashi Order and the Seyyid Gazi Monastery was the most important center of Abdals in Anatolia. Kâtip Çelebi notes that the Bektashi Abdals dwelled in the Seyyid Gazi Monastery and the Hüseyin Gazi Monastery and the Yakup Monastery in Ankara were exclusive to Abdals. The fact that Evliya Çelebi pointed to the Seyyid Gazi Monastery and the Hüseyin Gazi Monastery as Bektashi monasteries indicates that the Bektashi Order included Abdals in the 17th century as well (Köprülü, 1988).

In this regard, the concept of Abdal seems to have a sufist origin. The term refers to those who are “devoted to the Order”, in other words, a title given to members of the Order (Erkan, 2008). In the interview with Tokel (2004), Ocak states that this group referred to as Kalenderiye dervishes in Ottoman records are said to wander “Çeng-ü câne” (playing music), played drum and a musical instrument called chenk and even horn. However, it is not really possible to associate Abdalan-ı Rum or Anatolian Abdals, a sufist group, with Abdals living in Anatolia or outside Turkey today. At this point, the most important similarities between these two groups are the religious identity based on the Alevi-Bektashi understanding and musical identity that comes with the sufist identity.

PURPOSE

There is a need for scientific studies on cultural characteristics of Abdals, who are important shareholders of the multicultural structure of Anatolia, so that Abdals can continue to exist, preserve their culture and transfer it to future generations. There are communities of Abdals in Anatolia, who are losing their identity to conform with the social structure and dominant culture in Anatolia, while there are also groups that own

the Abdal culture and name. Especially stereotypes regarding the concept of Abdal cause this cultural identity to be marginalized. In this context, the purpose of this article is to determine contributions of Abdals, an important component of the cultural richness of Anatolia, to Anatolian culture.

Geography of Abdals

As an ethnic community, Abdals are usually engaged in music and continue their existence in many parts of Anatolia. Abdals are called *aşık* or *mitrip* in Diyarbakır, *gevende* or *govende* in Urfa and Adıyaman, *abdal* or *kirve* in Gaziantep and Kahramanmaraş and *Carcar*, *Teber*, *Tencili*, *Fakcılar* or *Begdili* in different places (Okumuş, 2005).

The lack of written or verbal sources related to Abdals increases the complexity of identification efforts even further. It is accepted that Abdals ethnically come from Hephthalites, also known as White Huns (Ayata, 2006). According to Köprülü (1988), the claim that Abdals or Aptals come from Hephthalites or White Huns, who played an important role in Central Asia in 5th and 6th centuries, cannot be easily rejected. In historical sources, the resemblance of the word Abdal with White Huns (Akhuns in Turkish) has led to this idea. Syriac writers refer to White Huns as Hephthalites and Abdel; Greek writers as Abdelai and Islamic-Arabic writers as Heyatil (Konukçu, 2002; as cited in Çakmak, 2015). The word Abdal appears as the name of a state in Afghanistan in 17th century: the Abdali State (Ayata, 2006). Today, there are widespread Abdal communities outside of Turkey. Abdals also live in countries such as Afghanistan, China, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. Studies show that Abdals in these regions have similar characteristics with Abdals in Turkey. In his exploratory trip to Central Asia in 1906, Pelliot mentions Abdals living in the Painap village of Chinese Turkestan. According to Turks in the Kashgar area, Abdals are a group of Muslims speaking the same language with them. According to them, Abdal is not the name of a separate community, but a word used for wandering dervishes (Okumuş, 2005).

Le Coq mentions that Abdals in East Turkestan and Abdals in Adana have some common words, both refer to themselves as Abdals and speak an exclusive language among themselves (Köprülü, 2004).

Abdals who live in different cities, towns and villages along the Kashgar-Yarkend-Hotan line, located on the West Coast of the Taklamakan Desert, support themselves mostly by selling brooms, sifters, silverware, carpets and linen bags and through peddling and begging (Çakmak, 2015).

There is also a village named Abdal in Azerbaijan, famous for raising folk bards. It is thought that a tribe called Abdal or Abdali have been living somewhere around Kandahar, Afghanistan since time immemorial (Köprülü, 1988). Erkan (2008) notes that Garibzades, who are descendants of Pashtuns who originate from White Huns/Hephthalites, living in Afghanistan have similarities with Abdals living in Anatolia in terms of lifestyle and culture and finds it to be a weak possibility that today's Abdals originate from the sufist group known as Abdalan-ı Rûm.

Documents in the Ottoman archive indicate that Abdals lived in various parts of Anatolia and Rumelia. These documents note that Abdals are Turkmens and live in Maraş, Tarsus Sanjak (State of Adana), Hayrabolu Kaza (Vize Sanjak), Istanbul region, Tatar Pazarı Kaza (Paşa Sanjak), Rumelia, Kütahya Sanjak, State of Erzurum, Adana, Bozok, Biga, Aydın Sanjak, Çukurova, Zülkadriye Kaza (Maraş Sanjak), State of

Karaman, State of Sivas and Rakka (Türkay, 1979; as cited in Sarıkaya and Seyfeli, 2004). Aksüt (no date) notes that Abdals live in cities of Adana, Adıyaman, Afyon, Aksaray, Amasya, Ankara, Antalya, Aydın, Bolu, Burdur, Çorum, Denizli, Erzurum, Eskişehir, Gaziantep, Isparta, İçel, Karaman, Kayseri, Kırıkkale, Kırşehir, Konya, Malatya, Manisa, Muş, Nevşehir, Sivas, Tokat, Uşak, Yozgat today. The lack of numerical data about Abdals and the fact that they are a closed community prevent any information about their total population.

Identity of Abdal

Abdals are among the groups marginalized in Anatolia. Their different lifestyle and occupations, in particular, have caused them to be marginalized. Anatolian Abdals have been referred to as "Romanis" due to their occupations such as basketry, tinsmith, forging, circumcising and musicianship (Ayata, 2006; Köprülü, 1988). Abdals are not in the same social group with the Romani. This fact is supported by both historical documents and Abdals themselves (Okumuş, 2005). Abdals do not describe themselves as Romanis and note that being an Abdal is a higher order/level (Kolukırık & Yıldırım, 2009). In order to differentiate themselves from the Romani, Abdals describe themselves as Abdal Alevi (Yetkin, 2012) or Turkmen Abdals (Ayata, 2006; Saygılı, 2015).

Abdals are a group excluded from the society. Parlak (2009) explains this condition with Abdals' similarities with the Romani in terms of physiological appearance, nomadic lifestyle and certain attitudes and behavior forms and the negative attitude in the society toward wedding musicianship (as cited in Saruhan, 2012). For this reason, Abdals are said to be looked down on because of their identity and even discriminated in terms of employment (Kılıç, 2012). The case of Abdal women is not so different. According to Yetkin (2012), Abdal women do not accept being referred to as Abdals. The best example of exclusion and discrimination toward Abdals in the society is expressed by Neşet Ertaş in the interview conducted by Mutlu and Tosun (2008):

We used to get up and go to the marketplace every morning and get back before sunset after getting supplies. I have seen it in Istanbul, everyone was equal. For this reason, I did not wear a hat in Kırşehir as well. There was a mosque on the side of the road. Old folks were sitting on the edge of the mosque. Walking past the mosque on the way back to home, kids started to throw stones at me because I was walking in the Bağbaşı neighborhood without a hat. At that time, it was unthinkable that Abdals walked around without a hat, it was considered to be disrespectful. We could not go out in public without a hat, it was unacceptable, they would not tolerate it. Wearing a hat was not enough too, we would lower our hats up to our eyebrows, you imagine the rest... We would always wear a hat in weddings. Anyone who was not an Abdal, no matter how old, was our master. We had to show them respect. We would address even a five-year-old as "My master's son, my master's daughter..."

The fact that Abdals were forced to wear a hat in Kırşehir for a certain period of time is the example of marginalization and humiliation of Abdals due to their identity.

There is a tendency to place importance to religious identity among Abdals due to negative connotations of the Abdal identity. Alevism is a powerful identity-builder among Abdal groups and in cases where the word Abdal has negative connotations,

Abdals use their religious identity instead of their ethnic identity (Kolukırık & Yıldırım, 2009). Hence, the marginalization of Abdals caused them to re-build their identity and place importance to their religious identity instead of their ethnic identity. Unfortunately, Abdals who are members of the Alevism have been marginalized due to their religious identity as well and various fractions in the Alevi identity and cultural detachments have occurred due to rural-urban migration.

Abdal Culture

Culture can be summarized as values, traditions, beliefs and practices forming the lifestyle of a specific group (Eagleton, 2011). Güvenç (2013), on the other hand, defines culture as a complex entirety consisting of all things, material and spiritual, that humans learn and teach as a member of the society. Anatolia is region enriched by various communities with different cultural characteristics. Abdals are one of the elements that feed this cultural accumulation.

Language

Abdals refer to themselves as Teber and their language as the Teber language. The word Teber means 1. drum; 2. Abdal in the Teber language (Sarıkaya and Seyfeli, 2004). Le Coq, who conducted a comprehensive study regarding Abdals' language, notes that the language is rather a mix of Turkish, Persian and Arabic (Ayata, 2006). W. Foy reports that Teber-speaking Abdals are a branch of Yuruks, yet speak a different language. Although their language resembles Southern Turkish in terms of sentence formation and verb conjugation, it resembles Kurdish in terms of vocabulary and some words are borrowed from the Romani language and lost words of Anatolia (Okumuş, 2005). Apart from these studies, the language spoken by Abdals is described as "the secret language" (Caferoğlu, 1954). Abdals refer to the language that they speak among themselves as "the secret language". The secret language is an artificial communication tool formed apart from mother tongue (written language, spoken language and dialects). Speakers of the secret language are usually small communities who perform the same profession or art (Sarıkaya & Seyfeli, 2004). According to Ayata (2006), Abdals have been using short words only understood by Abdals when they go to weddings and circumcision ceremonies and perform their professions in order to communicate with their friends and avoid making those around them uncomfortable. Therefore, the Abdal language is considered to be one of the secret languages of Anatolia. According to Yıldırım (2012), secret languages in Turkey are examined under two categories: Turkish-based and non-Turkish-based. Turkish-based secret languages are the Abdal (Teber/Carcar) language, the Çepni language, the Tahtacı language, the Tokat Geygel language, the language spoken by nomadic people in Eastern Anatolia and the language spoken by Cyprus immigrants. Non-Turkish-based secret languages include the language spoken by Alaçam (Bolu) sifter-makers, the language spoken by Abdals in Düzce, the Dinar Geygel language, the Poşa/Boşa language and the Mıtrıp language.

Some examples from the secret language spoken by Abdals include (Ayata, 2006; Sarıkaya & Seyfeli, 2004; Okumuş, 2005; Yıldırım, 2012):

abı: father
av-neher: water
bavere-gene: come
becese: go

bayınna-: pay
ca/ce: home
cav: 1. eye; 2. *cav*: in relation to eye: scowl
çepel: dingy
dest: hand
dızı: thief
geben: stranger
geder: donkey
harkut: egg
haşa/tuf: cigarette
herşit/hersut-mene: bread
qayıntı: 1. food, provisions; 2. food for a journey
ker/kar: knife
mast: yogurt
menge: cow
pırçı/pılçı-: feel hungry
şir: milk
tırsı: fear
yabı: horse
yeken-cerem: money
zuxun: 1. Folk song; 2. wedding

One of the important elements of the language spoken by Abdals is different words used in different regions. For example, bread is called “hersit, hersut” in Central Anatolia, whereas it is called “mene” in Diyarbakır (Ayata, 2006; Sarıkaya & Seyfeli, 2004; Okumuş, 2005). However, different words used in the same region as well. For example, both the words “yeken and cerem” are used for money in Central Anatolia or both the words “haşa and tuf” are used for a cigarette (Ayata, 2006; Sarıkaya & Seyfeli, 2004).

This difference may be a result of the influence of other languages in the region.

In the study conducted by Sarıkaya and Seyfeli (2004), the words in the Abdal language are reported to originate from Arabic, Armenian, Persian, Kurdish and Turkish. However, paragoges used for lexicalization and inflectional suffixes originate from Turkish and the sentence structure is completely coherent with the Turkish syntax rules. The authors note that the Abdal/Teber language has common words with secret languages used in Azerbaijan and Abdals came from Central Asia to Azerbaijan and from Azerbaijan to Anatolia.

Religion and belief

Abdals are members of the Alevi faith. The fact that Abdals in Anatolia mostly live in Alevi regions show that most of them are Alevi (Köprülü, 1988).

In the process beginning with the Islamization of Turks, Alevism emerged as an understanding of Islam belonging to nomadic and semi-nomadic populations and was carried from Khorasan and Iran to Anatolia (Turan & Yıldız, 2008). Sufist movements have an important place in Alevism seen among nomadic Turkic tribes, which allows old Turkish beliefs and traditions to live (Gürsoy, 2006). Like other Anatolian Qizilbashs, Anatolian Abdals are originate from Babai Turkmens as well. Thus, it may be suggested that Abdals are related to Kalenderî groups, since Kalenderies are Alevi

as well and affiliated with Alevi associations (Ayata, 2006). In this period, Abdals played an important role in Islamization of Anatolia. Following the activities of Rum Abdals, especially Abdal Musa and Kaygusuz Abdal, Bektashism became established in city centers and Alevism became established in rural areas (Turan & Yıldız, 2008). Abdals, who have a nomadic lifestyle (Köprülü, 2004; Parlak, 2012; Yılmaz, 2008), have stayed within Alevism, which was spread in rural areas of Anatolia.

Today, Abdals have adopted a sedentary lifestyle and their religious activities seem to have weakened compared to the past due to certain social changes. Participation in "cem" ceremonies (religious ceremonies where various social relationships can also be discussed) led by "dede" (the person who conducts religious ceremonies and also have the respect and authority to influence many aspects of social life) is almost non-existent among Abdals (Gürsoy, 2006). Recently, the conflict between their professions and months of cem has made it difficult for Abdals to participate in cem ceremonies. Abdals, who lost their links with Dedes, state that cem ceremonies are rarely held today due to practical difficulties (Ayata, 2011). Fractions in sociocultural lives and Alevism understandings of Abdals, who have an Alevi-Bektashi tradition, are not limited to the above mentioned. For example, the fact that there are individuals who make pilgrimage and perform the salaah in accordance with the Sunni understanding among Abdals living in Kırşehir indicate that the Alevi-Bektashi tradition tend to weaken especially among the new generation (Gürsoy, 2006). According to Okumuş (2005), Abdals living in the city center of Kahramanmaraş completely conform with the Sunni-Hanafi lifestyle of the Maraş community. They perform the salaah, make the pilgrimage and fast just like them. In Diyarbakır, Abdals living in areas where Shafii constitute the majority practice religious rituals just like the Shafii population in Diyarbakır. Thus, Abdals conform with religious practices required by the region where they live due to fear of being marginalized and are under the risk of losing their cultural inheritance (Kolukırcık & Yıldırım, 2009; Örün, 2015).

Family and social life

Abdals have a closed community and a structure based on close social relations within the group due to exclusion and marginalization processes. The living space of the Abdal community does not allow for separation from their social identity, because it seems that members of the community settle close to each other, turn neighbor relations into kinship relations, thus form an intertwined structure (Yetkin, 2012). This is especially evident in formation of family, the smallest building block of the society, and marriage rituals. Exogamy (marriage with those who are not Alevi-Bektashi) is not seen in Abdals, who continue to be a closed community. This is of great importance in terms of preserving internal dynamics of the community (Ayata, 2006). Since they are a closed community, they know each other and families respect partner choices of young women and men (Saygılı, 2015). Marriages usually take place at an early age (Okumuş, 2005).

Abdals, who believe in Alevism-Bektashism, refer to those who marry to those who are not Alevi-Bektashi as "düşkün" (fallen) and marginalize them (Yıldız, 2012). In Alevism, to be fallen is to be removed from membership due to failure to behave in accordance with values and judgments of the group. Removal from the group may be permanent or temporary. Re-acceptance to the group is performed through a cem ceremony (Gürsoy, 2006). Being Alevi-Bektashi, Abdals have a musahiplik

(companionship) belief. Musahiplik is usually between married couples (Ayata, 2011). Musahiplik is a sort of religious brotherhood aiming social solidarity and social control. In musahiplik, two families who are social and religious companions, promise each other for a life-long brotherhood and solidarity. This agreement is made in a gathering in the presence of “Dede” (Gürsoy, 2006). Marriage between sons and daughters of musahips (companions) is strictly forbidden. In certain regions, sons and daughters of musahips are accepted to be forbidden to be married to each other for seven generations (Bulut, 2013).

In Abdal families, women are respected, but the eldest man in the family has the final say (Yetkin, 2012). In this respect, the economic responsibility of the family is assumed by the man in Abdals, who have a patriarchal family structure. The responsibility of the man is very dominant in terms of providing for the family and women do not generate income except for odd jobs (Gürsoy, 2006). The most important source of income for men is to play music in weddings. In fact, they sometimes have to change the date of their own weddings. For example, Abdals living in Kırşehir, who used to start their wedding ceremonies on Thursday, today usually start on weekdays due to their profession. Abdal weddings that start on Monday-Friday go on for three days (Saygılı, 2015).

Monogamy is essential in Abdal families and polygamy is not taken kindly and usually forbidden. Divorce and separation are also prohibited and those who do are considered to be fallen. The reason behind being considered to be fallen is the failure to keep the promise made during the wedding and acting without the approval of the “meydan” (the area where cem ceremonies are held) (Ayata, 2006).

Music

The most important profession of Abdals is music. For Abdals, music is not “the art of combining sounds” or “a tool of entertainment”. In their own words, “a newborn falls either on drum or zurna (shrill pipe or clarion)” and again in their own words, “a newborn is born, grows, learns and dies with music” (Erkan, 2008). Abdals living in Aydın and its vicinity play the most outstanding examples of the Aegean music with their drums and zurnas, Central Anatolian Abdals play bozlaks -considered to be Anatolia’s Jazz-, halays, ballads, traditional folk dance songs and Abdals living in Çukurova and Barak keep elaborated expressions of folk bards alive and play touching Barak-style songs and yığitlemes (Parlak, 2012). The most important indicator of the Alevi-Abdal coexistence in both culture and music is the compositions created by Abdals for poems written by Alevi folk poets (Yöre, 2012).

It would be appropriate to call Abdals “the ritual-oriented entertainment providers” of Anatolia (Erkan, 2011). According to Köprülü (2004), the word Gewende, which is used to for Kurds to refer to Abdals according to Le Coq, comes from the Persian word “guyende” which means “performer, singer, minstrel”. Thus, music and story-telling have been important occupations for Abdals all along. It is known that some Abdals in Anatolia would dress as dervishes and beg for money in groups even in the first half of the 20th century, many of them engaged in music and story-telling and were especially famous for telling the stories of Koroghlu (Köprülü, 1988). Music has an important place in Abdals’ lives. Abdals consider music to be a occupation that has become mandatory for each individual to be able to continue their social life within its natural process, just like learning how to talk (Erkan, 2008). For Abdal communities, being

engaged in music is not only a source of income, but also a main framework which allows for a life of integrity. Music, which is a cultural practice, leads to a meaningful whole with groups location, lifestyle and relations with outside world (Dağ, 2000, as cited in Keskin, 2014).

Abdals start their musical education from a very early age. Abdals start to take their children to weddings when they are 8-9 years old. A 14 or 15-year old Abdal masters drum and zurna and play drum and zurna in weddings (Kılıç, 2012). They find the opportunity to prove their musical skills especially in weddings held in their area. Music is almost a tradition for Abdals.

Bozlak, which is a type of unmetred folk song, is of great importance for Abdals. The essence of Bozlaks is not joy or happiness, but a cry of pain. Of course, the performer must sing accordingly and have an appropriate attitude and tone. The closest form of music to Bozlak is elegy or lament (Tokel, 2002). It can be said that Abdals have an important mission in terms of transferring the folk music to future generations and keep especially the ‘Bozlak’ form alive (Yiğiter, 2010). Abdal artists who sing Bozlaks include Muharrem Ertaş, Neşet Ertaş, Hacı Taşan, Çekiç Ali and Yusuf Deveci. With his unique style and attitude, Neşet Ertaş was honored with the UNESCO "National Living Human Treasure" award in 2010 and was awarded an honorary doctorate by Istanbul Technical University a year later (Bekki, 2012).

Economic activities

The best known and traditional profession of Abdals is musicianship (Gürsoy 2006). However, they engage in other activities as well. These professions, most of which are extinct today, include blacksmith, tinsmith, farrier, boilersmith, siftermaker, male dancer, story-teller, basketmaker and circumciser (Akgün, 2006; Bekki, 2012; Saygılı, 2015). The main source of income of Abdals is drumming. Today, Abdals play drums in weddings, soldier send-offs, folk dances, various ceremonies and sahur times during the month of Ramadan. In most ceremonies, drum is accompanied by zurna (Okumuş, 2005). However, the most important source of income is weddings. The fact that, playing music outside of weddings does not generate a considerable income and it causes economic difficulties for Abdals. Abdals who play music and known as ‘‘Usta’’ in Kırşehir are able to find work in summer, which is the season preferred for weddings, and during periods when there are a high number of circumcisions, however cannot find any work in other months (Ayata, 2006). Not being able to find ceremonies to perform their profession leads to economic difficulties. Still, performing their art is more important for Abdals than money. However, drum and zurna struggle to find themselves a place in the modern life and Abdals lose their musician identity with each passing day (Kılıç, 2012).

Economic difficulties and narrowing of fields where they can perform their profession lead them to education in order to raise their life standards. Abdals usually have a culture of performing the family profession. However, their low economic power lead them to place importance on education. Abdals state that they want their children to have higher life standards through education, thus they are hesitant to guide their children toward music (Saygılı, 2015).

CONCLUSION

The Anatolian Peninsula is an area with a different cultural richness. Abdals, who contribute to Anatolia's cultural richness, constitute one of the most important elements of Anatolia's musical culture. Music performance, which has become a lifestyle and a tradition going on for generations for Abdals, contributes to Anatolian culture as a cultural treasure. However, the profession of "wedding musicianship", where musical production of Abdals shine out, cannot be continued in the same way today and economic difficulties threaten the continuity of this musical tradition. At this point, "Kırşehir Masters' Music and Theater Community" formed by the Ministry of Culture with 15 Abdal music masters is an important initiative to maintain this musical heritage. However, it is rather meaningful that this group, which performs the music of Abdals, was not named "Community of Abdals". This type of initiatives and practices mean anonymizing the musical heritage that reflects the cultural richness of Abdals.

Abdals, a part of the cultural texture of Anatolia and citizens of the Republic of Turkey, define their ethnic identity as Turkmen Abdals and their religious identity as Alevis. Abdals have a closed community and oral traditions are effective in maintenance of cultural heritage and identity belonging. However, the culture carried on to the present day with oral traditions has gone through certain changes and transformations. When the interaction process between members of the Abdal community and other cultures is added to these changes and transformations, the cultural alienation of Abdals is inevitable (Yetkin, 2012). One of the most important factors that speed up the cultural change and transformation in Abdals is being marginalized by the dominant culture. This marginalization is manifested as contempt and insultation against Abdals. Abdals, as stated by Mollaer (2008), are not "visible others" of communities who have increasing identity claims, but "invisible others" which are not taken into account. Thus, as invisible others of the Turkish society, Abdals struggle to exist as a disadvantaged group in terms of identity, culture and economy.

With the urbanization process of Abdals, the structure of closed community has started to change as well (Kolukırık & Yıldırım, 2009). Weakening in religious beliefs and traditions are seen with urbanization as well. Abdals tend to dispose of their culture and identity in order to be "just like everyone else" due to contempt against their identity, marginalization and economic difficulties. Abdals are slowly losing their traditional rituals of life and tend to conform to the dominant culture and in the danger of losing their cultural identity. It will add value to the cultural richness of Anatolia that Abdals maintain their cultural values, traditions, religious forms, structures and rituals and preserve their identity in spite of all stereotypes. For this reason, it is necessary to build a social structure which will make Abdals visible in Turkey's colorful social life and allow Abdals to maintain their social, political, cultural and economic existence. It seems to be possible only by accepting the other as a part of the society with his or her identity, culture and existence and showing the ability and will to live together.

In conclusion, Abdals are one of the colors and representatives of the rich cultural life forms of the Anatolian Peninsula. In order to protect this cultural value, it is necessary to make an effort to raise awareness of both local and national governments and organizations and international non-profit organizations. This way, similar to the case of other cultural forms that survived on a national (mainly in municipalities and the

Ministry of Culture), regional and global scale, it will be possible to realize regulations aimed at allowing Abdals to maintain their artistic production, especially in terms of music and entertainment, and other cultural traditions.

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