

**The effects of akhism principles on today's business life:
A case in the western mediterranean region**

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Abstract

In historical process, Akhism guided to the commercial life of Turks. It is in close contact with other institutions of the society. With its rules and principles Akhism seeks to establish good relations between people and also organizations. With these perspectives, Akhism has an quite stable place in history. The purpose of today's commercial applications of the principles and implications of the study is to reveal Akhi. In this context, we did a literature review firstly; followed we implied the survey upon small and medium-sized business owners, than collected data and analyzed.

Keywords: Akhism principles, producer, seller, shopkeeper

1.INTRODUCTION

In the historical progress of nations, economic wealth plays an important role as well as prosperity in social and cultural make-up. When the entire Turkish history is considered, we come across with the institution of Akhism that is both related to the regulation of socio-cultural life as well as to the operation of business life within the framework of certain principles and rules. Even though Akhism has aspects in parallel with today's management philosophies, history has not been immutable and economical activities have changed since the thirteenth-century establishment of Akhism.¹¹

¹¹ ÜLGER B. and ÜLGER G., "Akhism as a Non-Governmental Association Model in the History of the Turkish Nation and an Assessment of Today's Business Ethics A Relationship or a Contradiction", Journal of Human Values, 11,19-61 (2005).

Akhism is such a system with its own principles that developing art, trade and economy of the people of during Ottoman and Seljuk. Ahi in Turkish to mean generous, big-hearted, brave derived from the word "akı". It is thought the word of Akı transformed to Ahi which is meaning to "my brother" when the Turks rule over Anatolian.¹²

Akhism is a Turk tradesman founding exposed by historical and socioeconomic conditions and based on religion and moral rules. The main purpose of Ahi organization institutionalized over time was to organize the relationship between producer and consumer in best way and to make honesty dominant over business life. Western historians base the origin of Akhism on Futuvva organization that has developed between Arabs in the east. However, they accept Akhism is far different from Futuvva organization and it is an institution unique to the Anatolian Turks.¹³

Briefly, Akhism is a professional association which is quite common in Turk countries and especially takes reference Islam religion. With its principles and institutional structure Akhism managed trading life of Turks for a long time. The principles of total quality of today's business and community life became vision and applied rigorously by members of the Akhism ages ago. The mission of Akhism was determined as "services to all" thus, they aimed to protect all people and in this direction they worked and set required organizations.

Correct understanding of Akhism, applying of its vision, mission and organization structure upon business life -especially- is very important for Turkey and world. However, the number of investigation of the effects of Akhism over today's business life is quite low. The purpose of this study is to show the effects of Akhism applied commonly during Seljuk and Ottoman period, over today's business life. In this context, in the western Mediterranean region of Turkey (Antalya, Burdur, Isparta), surveyed over small-scale tradesmen and the people engaged in commerce and researched their sensation aimed at Akhism principles.

2.THE VISION OF AHI ORGANIZATON

To understand the vision of Akhism it is necessary to analyze thoroughly Futuvvatname which is known as Ahi constitution. Futuvvatnames are the books describing principles of Futuvva organizations and rules entrants must conform of this organization. They are

12 GÖLPINARLI A., "İslâm ve Türk İllerinde Fütüvvet Teşkilatı", İ.Ü. İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası, C. 11, İstanbul, 1950, s.6

13 www.sebilay.org.tr, (25.04.2012).

regulations that regulate matters that need attention to be organized of tradesman organizations in cities. The book "Kitab'ul-Fütüvve" written by Ebu Abdi'r-Rahman Muhammed İbn el-Hüseyn es-Sülemi is the first known Futuvvatname. 14

The principles in Futuvvatnames are concern of every moment and every aspect of daily life of Ahi. That encompasses the whole of social life. The principles and doctrines which are accepted unchangeable and indispensable constituting the fundamental values of Ahi vision are listed in Futuvvatnames as follows: 15

Not to leave prayer (ritual of worship centered in prayer). Because prayer keeps away from all forms of evil.

Having modesty. Modesty, increases people's reputation in the community.

1. Not to be a slave of the soul. The slavery of the soul is the beginning of desire and behavior in poor work.
2. Not to be a slave of life of the world. Exalting the dignity of man destroys the mortal ones.
3. Having halal (legitimate) earnings. The thing which is halal is to eat something gained by person's hand and work. It is one of the most important and indispensable principle of Akhism. This principle has led working life to a dynamic state.
4. Giving and bestowing upon needy people. It is one of the fundamental principles must be based on the generosity and assistance of social and economic life. Provides together with others to reach higher goals.
5. Enjoining goodness and keeping from evil. This principle provides eliminations of errors and injustices that may occur through the internal audit of organization of Akhi.

At the beginning of the basic components of Akhi vision, "Excellence in Service" is found. This is the most important building block of Akhi philosophy. No matter who or what the art establishment should do the best and perfect of works. This is in a sense, the reason being Akhism. In doing so, planning for the future is very important. Because Akhis are the people who have partner social values and goals, owner of art and implying these objectives together.16

14 GÖLPINARLI A., "İslam ve Türk İllerinde Fütüvvet Teşkilatı ve Kaynakları", İ.Ü. İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası, C.II, İstanbul 1950.

15 Tuhfat-al- Vasayâ, s. 216–217.

16 İbn Batuta, s.8

A non employed Akhi is unthinkable. Every individual learn a profession according to the ability to dexterity and skill, becomes the owner of business and contribute to social life. Unprofessional ones does not help others. Happiness and the power of the society, only if can be possible to make a contribution of every individuals as an owner of art to social life. 17

3.THE MISSION OF AHI ORGANIZATION

The basic mission of Akhism is to achieve perfect communities by training excellent individuals, serve humanity and the people in way streamline the world.¹⁸ In Akhism individual excellence comes first from everything. For this reason, primarily Ahi should get a move on him. After this takes place, could bring order and service to the world. Then, it is possible to define Akhi as follows: “good-natured, who continue to pray, giving alms, who bestows and obedience to his father, hosts neighbor, who share properties in his hands, who beautify his jobs, saying that is right, trying his deeds to make most beautiful, storing secrets, who in compliance with love, behaves correctly, without a lie and hypocrisy, who gain halal earnings, working like a bee, avoiding unlawful things, giving to anyone even if he is not given, forgiving those who persecute, favors for malfeasant, that comply with Sharia law, protecting the right of siblings, which is sympathetic to his neighbors, asking who away from, visiting patients and inquire after their health.”¹⁹ The eyes of Akhi do not see unlawful things; the mouth of Akhi does not speak sin words, the hands of Akhi do not persecute.²⁰

Perfection of society depends on perfection of individuals. When the individuals become perfect, then societies become perfect. The mission of Akhism refers to the excellence from personal to general and from individual to the community. In this context, perfect individuals create great communities. The missions of Akhism related with community in Futuvvatnames, specified briefly the form of services to all.

The fundamentals of Akhi founding were so strong and its rules were so acceptable that these rules were taken example for municipal services and for the control of these services; formalized in such a form of law. Akhis bind the rule every stage of production from supplying raw materials to sell. This eliminated many possible frictions between tradesmen.

17 <http://www.ahilik.gen.tr/kavram/vizyon2.html>, (25.04.2012).

18 Tuhfat-Al Vasayâ, s.209

19 Tuhfat s.209

20 Tuhfat s.209 ayrıca bkz. <http://www.ahilik.gen.tr/kavram/misyon.html>, (18.04.2012).

Anyone who did not conform to standards, produced low quality goods and services was penalized in such ways. 21

4.RULES OF AKHISM ETHICS²²

- Akhis must strive for not a few businesses or art, but a single business or art that is appropriate their capabilities.
- That must be a business or and art of Akhi protecting his honor appreciating his labor.
- Ahi should be accurate, shall not deviate from path of labor to earn more than he deserves.
- Ahi must have knowledge, should love scholars, should not humiliate against of them and should use his information in proper time and place.
- Must be good-natured and good morals.
- Must be accurate and reliable in his business and life.
- Should know that the talking and must remain the promise.
- Should not distinguish in service.
- Should not wait response for his goodness.
- Must be friendly and soft spoken.
- Should not twit his errors.
- Should pay attention to friendship; never forget a friend and brotherhood.
- Should do favor to anyone even he were evil.
- Should be modest.
- Should work friendly, willingly and sincerity.
- Should not betray someone else's goods.
- Should be generous.
- Should judge for his anger.
- Must keep secrets.
- Must protect and regard his employees.

5.ADVICE OF AKHI²³

- Do not look, eat and drink unlawful things!
- Be accurate, patient and resistant!

21 www.diyadinnet.com (18.04.2012).

22 Burgazi, Burgazi Fütüvvetnamesi.

23 Burgazi, Burgazi Fütüvvetnamesi.

- Do not tell a lie!
- Do not begin talking before than elders!
- Do not trick anyone!
- Be frugal!
- Do not desire goods in the world greedily!
- Do not measure incorrectly and do not weight defectively!
- Forgive even if you were strong and high case!
- Behave softly even if you were angry!
- Be a generous even if you were needy!

6. REFLECTIONS OF AKHISM PRINCIPLES ON TODAY'S BUSINESS LIFE

In the study to determine the effects of Akhism on today's artisans and craftsmen, 5 Likert scale questionnaire designed on the basis of fundamental principles of Akhism and 29 questions were asked to participants. Questionnaire applied over randomly selected eighteen years and over 450 owner of the business organization. The data collected from fieldwork conducted in Turkey's western Mediterranean analyzed using package programs SPSS 16.0 and StataTM. Because of reliability problems, 35 questionnaires were removed and continued with 415 questionnaires to study.

7. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

According to the survey respondents' demographic information is shaped as follows:

- Regional and sex distribution is as follows:

Age / Sex	GAZİPAŞA		ALANYA		BURDUR		MANAVGAT		ANTALYA CITY CENTER		FİNİKE		ISPARTA	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
18-30	5	6	16	7	9	3	9	6	6	7	6	4	17	10
31-45	4	4	14	5	10	1	8	5	9	10	6	5	22	8
46-60	6	3	24	3	8	1	10	2	8	6	7	1	19	5
61-*	6	1	26	0	8	0	7	1	12	2	8	0	18	1

TOTAL	35	95	40	48	60	37	100
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- Only in respect to the age distribution is as follows:
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Age / Sex	Male	Female
18–30	68	43
31–45	73	38
46–60	82	21
61-*	85	5
TOTAL	415	

According to this distribution it is observed that for each age group the age distribution of male distribute properly, but of female decreasing with increasing age.

- The distribution of gender and education level as follows:

Education / Sex	Male	Female	Male	Female
Illiterate	34	5	% 8,1	% 1,2
Primary Educaion	123	45	% 29,6	% 10,8
High school	87	32	% 20,9	% 7,7
University	52	23	% 12,5	% 5,5
Master	12	2	% 2,8	% 0,4

According the data in the table male with primary education has the highest rate with 29.6%

It is seen that primary education level is much more than other levels. It is also seen that the rate of university and master is quite low.

8.THE EFFECTS OF PRINCIPLES OF AKHISM ON TODAY’S BUSINESS LIFE

The SPSS output giving the average of responses to questions as follows:

propositions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
In business life good temperament and good morals is important for me.	415	3,971	0,88691	0,04354
Promise is just like honor for me even it was not written. I respect my promises, not writings.	415	2,737	1,14459	0,05619
I do favors for everyone and aspect for their kindness.	415	3,947	0,81773	0,04014
I pay attention for justice, measure and weight.	415	3,947	0,89393	0,04388
I do my job sincerely, honesty and friendly.	415	3,952	0,84989	0,04172
I make proximity and hang on my neighbor’s shortages.	415	3,957	0,86144	0,04229
I call myself instead of someone else in looking for errors.	415	3,986	0,89539	0,04395
I am proud to be and have time with the poor fellow.	415	4,043	0,84445	0,04145
I do not respect to the rich ones due to richness of them.	415	3,889	0,91274	0,0448
I speak the truth and do not give up the truth	415	3,986	0,93498	0,0459
I protect my employees and their rights.	415	3,971	0,90577	0,04446
I perform god’s orders and prohibitions in the open and the secret.	415	3,971	0,88962	0,04367
I avoid the bad words and insults.	415	3,937	0,92779	0,04554
I do favor to anyone even he were evil.	415	3,961	0,85322	0,04188
I show patience against the evil and trouble.	415	3,995	0,92207	0,04526
I sincere in my belief and worship.	415	3,974	0,88562	0,04347
I don’t accredit the goods of mortal world.	415	4,031	0,88546	0,04347
I do not observe anything for my goodness and charity except of god’s sake.	415	3,843	0,90466	0,04441

I try to my consumers' heart rather than to sell more expensive.	415	2,901	1,0934	0,05367
I'll be friendly with people knowledgeable and ask for their thought.	415	4,053	0,76271	0,03744
I only trust on god every time and every where.	415	4,089	0,82781	0,04064
Custom and usage are very important for me.	415	4,106	0,79146	0,03885
I content with less, give thanks god with much.	415	4,058	0,86897	0,04266
I make sacrifices for the sake of something.	415	4,161	0,77113	0,03785
I maintain the right and object to evil.	415	4,108	0,82257	0,04038
I firmly tied up to my religion.	415	3,925	0,88559	0,04347
I believe that anyone tied up to religion should be faithful in commerce.	415	3,978	0,92836	0,04557
I try my neighbor to win as least as I win.	415	3,111	1,07103	0,05257

(5: "strongly agree", 4: "agree", 3: "neither agrees nor disagrees" 2: "disagree" 1: "strongly disagree")

Given the means the result of "strongly agree" was not observed. The mean of 18 questions is in the shape of "neither agree nor disagree" and the mean of 8 questions is in the shape of "agree". Especially, three of the questions were answered very low rate. These questions are examined below. If we look at these questions by adding gender factor, questions and averages of answers is as follows:

- ✓ Promise is just like honor for me even it was not written. I respect my promises, not writings.

Gender	Frequency	Mean
Male	313	2,7348
Female	102	2,7451

Both female and male answered this question as "disagree" with the average of 2.7.

- ✓ I try to my consumers' heart rather than to sell more expensive.

Gender	Frequency	Mean
Male	313	2,9553
Female	102	2,7353

It can be seen that both sexes answered to this question as “disagree”.

✓ I try my neighbor to win as least as I win.

Gender	Frequency	Mean
Male	313	3,0575
Female	102	3,2745

Participants answered this question as “neither agree, nor disagree”.

Considering this three major principle, regardless of gender, it is seen that today’s business life is staying far away from these principles.

If we analyze the variables according to the region, means are as follows:

REGION	Average	Result
Gazipaşa	3.76	Neither agree, nor disagree
Alanya	4.10	Agree
Manavgat	3.92	Neither agree, nor disagree
Antalya City Center	3.59	Neither agree, nor disagree

Finike	4.05	Agree
Isparta	3.91	Neither agree, nor disagree
Serik	3.54	Neither agree, nor disagree

Within the survey field of application only Alanya and Finike answered as “agree”, other regions answered as “neither agree nor disagree”. Alanya has the highest level with the average of 4.10; Antalya city center and Serik has the least level. Thus, Alanya is mostly keeping the rules and morals of Akhi. From this point, the effects of Akhism can be mentioned today, but it is obvious that Akhism impact is much weakened.

If we analyze the variables according to the education, means are as follows:

Education	average
Illiterate	3.95
Primary Educaion	3.77
High school	3.76
Üniversity	3.65
Master	3.59

As can be seen, whether averages are close to each other, there is an inverse ratio that is averages decreasing towards education level increase.

If we analyze the variables according to the income level, means are as follows:

Income level (TL)	average
500–1000	3.91
1000–2000	3.90
2000–3000	3.93

3000–5000	3.83
5000–7500	3.92
7500–10000	3.83
10000-*	3.87

When compared income level almost all levels has close averages. Thus, income level is not a characteristic parameter.

If we analyze the variables according to the professional experience, means are as follows:

Professional experience (year)	average
1–5	3.55
6–10	3.65
11–20	3.88
20-*	3.89

As professional experience increases, the rate of acceptance of the principles of Akhism increases.

If we analyze the variables according to the age, means are as follows:

age	average
18–30	3.67
31–45	3.71
46–60	3.89
60-*	4.17

As it seen, the age variable is quite decisive on the principles and ethics of Akhism. Acceptance rate of principles of Akhi increased with increasing age. In other words, the younger generation less adopted the concept of Akhi.

9.GENERAL EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Although the moral and principles of Akhism largely lost its impact, maintained its existence in today's artisans and craftsmen. The rate of acceptance increases with age and professional experience increase (directly proportional); decreases with education level increase (inverse proportional). In addition, adopting the principles of Akhism rates also vary regionally. It is remarkable that Akhism is more adopted in such regions far from metropolis as Alanya, Finike, Manavgat and Isparta.

Correct understanding of principles and morals of Akhism is very important in terms of tradesmen and artisans, and even country's economy. Who do not know the history could hardly speculate future effectively. However, the Akhi institution and its brought poorly understood by young generations especially. Knowledge of past practices which enlightened business world for centuries and accepted as model for business and personal relationships will help both produce excellent products and exclusion of trust and honesty in consumer relations. With this awareness, it is borne in mind that there are very important duties, to all sections of society and primarily to educators.

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