

TURKISH BUSINESS MODEL: A RESEARCH ON THE AHI COMMUNITY'S ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN DURING ITS FOUNDATION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PARADIGMS

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ABSTRACT

The Ahi community represents an outstanding example of how various organizational structures and roles have successfully collaborated in the past, making it a suitable subject for business history research. The triangular structure, a fundamental multidimensional design where communication, interaction, and mutual integration occur, serves as the foundation for our research. Due to these structural features, various functions have been successfully implemented within a single organizational framework. Akhism, particularly from its inception until it evolved into the Gedik organization, had a distinct organizational structure compared to most contemporary organizations, successfully amalgamating various functions of fütüvvet, production, and bravery based on necessities. The primary reason the Ahi Community has sustained its presence over a long period is its robust approach to organization and business operations. The research aims to answer the questions: "What are the paradigms of organizational digitization?" and "How will they impact established historical communities?". The research methodology involves analyzing the Ahi community's organizational structures and comparing them with current digitization trends. The main findings indicate that the Ahi community could indeed be impacted by current organizational trends, such as digitization. The added value of this research lies in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the Ahi Community's organizational structure and providing recommendations for adapting to new global trends. The conclusions suggest that although the Ahi Community has had a robust way of organizing and conducting its activities, it is crucial to adapt to new digitization paradigms to maintain its relevance in the modern world.

KEYWORDS: *Ahi Community, business history, digitalization paradigms, organizational structures, robust approach.*

1. INTRODUCTION

There has been an increasing interest in business history studies recently. While their boundaries and scope are still subject to intense discussions, business history studies with extraordinary potential and diversity today constitute an academic sub-discipline that provides rich perspectives on the nature and resources of innovations and the richness of nations (Amatori and Jones, 2003). The foundations, organizational structures, and structural and functional transformations of businesses in different periods are the main subjects of business history studies. Organizations do not become the subject of today's scientific research just because of their historical background. It is possible to influence the future by examining historical organizations. Business history studies allow us to understand historical organizations and accurately design and guide future organizations. Taking advantage of historical organizations' lessons learned to adapt to changing conditions over time will benefit

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business scientists and managers. At the same time, the ability of today's representatives of historical organizations to adapt to changing conditions is among the subjects of business scientific studies.

In the history of humanity, different civilizations built their own unique organizations. These organizations reflect the institutional environment in which they operate (Lazonick, 2003). Turks have also established organizations depending on their living conditions. Among the unique strategic organizations that the Turks built, one of the first to come to mind is the Akhism. Due to their nature, Akhism has had a different structure and function from today's organizations. It was established depending on the conditions of the period, and especially its early structure was unique. It could combine various functions and features in a single organizational structure beyond traditional organizations. This multi-functionality also explains its six-century existence.

In the establishment period of the Ahi organization, it has successfully fulfilled three different functions: bravery (social advancement), tanner, and futuwwa in the same organizational structure. Historically, management theory has been associated with the triangle solid, pyramidal organizational structure. (Keigel, 1995). The tripartite design ensures that organizations have a solid structure.

With digitalization, technology has entered business life as well as human life. "Digitalization" is a concept related to the adoption of digital technology or computer technology by an organization, industry, country, etc., or to increase the dose if these technologies are already being used (Eryılmaz, 2020). Digitization is essential for almost all businesses, including modern businesses, historical ones, and their current representatives. In this context, the ways of digitalization of organizations, which are the current representatives of Ahi-order, are essential. In our study, the digitalization relations of the representatives of historical organizations will be investigated. Questions to be answered in this context:

Will the Ahi community be affected by new organizational trends like digitization that are happening around the world? Our study aims to answer questions like, "What are the paradigms of digitization of organizations?" and "How will they affect the established historical communities?"

2. AKHISM

One of the most original and important organizational structures in Turkish business history is Akhism. Akhism or Ahilik, was founded by Ahi Evran in the 13th century. There are two different approaches to the meaning of Akhism. It is accepted that Akhism derives from the word "ehi"; meaning "my brother"; in Arabic, and the word; "akı"; meaning "open-handed, generous" in Turkish (Aydın, 2012). Although there are different interpretations to the origins of the Ahi community, the accepted one is that it is a unique Turkish organization.

In order to fully understand Akhism, the conditions of the period in which it was founded should be taken into account. There was no strong state authority in Anatolia at the time of the establishment of the Akhism. In the 13th century, Anatolia was a region where different cultures lived, and chaos prevailed. The Turks, who lived dispersedly in the new geography, needed organizations with security, production, and norms of belief and behavior to support them until they established a strong state. However, instead of establishing separate organizations to meet their need, the Turks established a single organization, the Akhism, to meet all needs. There is a deep historical background in the organizational structure and functions of Akhism, which spread over a wide geography in a short time and continued its existence successfully for centuries until it officially ended its activities in 1925.

An important reason why Akhism has survived successfully for centuries is due to the organizational design of its managerial function(s) (Aydemir, 2019). Akhism has combined three separate functions into a single organizational structure. The principles of the multifunctional organizational structure that ensure the success of Akhism are hidden in nature. Solid structures in nature are based on the interaction of three points. The triangle is used to evaluate historical and current designs and identify desired futures (Keigel, 1995).

The triangular structure is formed by the interaction of three separate original phenomena. The first phenomenon of the triangular structure is uniqueness. The point that we can also express as a point is individuality. The second phenomenon of triangular structure is linearity. There are two separate points, the combination of the phenomenon and the interaction. In the linear structure, duality occurs as a result of mutual relationship and interaction. Linearity is also the starting point for coordination. However, there is no multicollinearity in the linear dimension. Two-dimensional individuals, functions, or organizations do not exist in individual and organizational relations outside of themselves. Additionally, there are no two mutually functional units in organizations. Organizational structures continue their activities with multiple functions and relationships. The third dimension is necessary for successful communication, interaction, and coordination. Even the most primitive creatures, organizations, can survive by going beyond the linear dimension. These structures, communication, interaction, and interrelationships are not linear in form (Mintzberg, 1992). As in nature, reciprocity is essential for organizations. For reciprocity, a new dimension emerges beyond linearity. The counterpart of the multidimensional structure is the triangular structure. The triangular structure is the basic functional structure in nature in its design. The combination of the triangular structure forms multifaceted structures. Triangle structuring is model integrity itself (Keigel, 1995). The triangular structure, the basic integrated structure of nature, enables phenomena, individuals, and organizations to take place in a multidimensional structure and integrate with them. With the triangular structure, an organization can be a part of other phenomena, individuals, and organizations, affect them and integrate with them. The triangular design represents; constituent laws entering into a web of relationships to form an identifiable configuration or pattern. (Keigel, 1995).

When it comes to organizational structure, it is the organizational charts that should be taken into account. Structures of organizations contain deeper meanings than shapes. Unlike the content, the design of the organization encompasses and represents the whole, including the relationships and interactions. In fact, a basic structural design/schema is needed to represent the organization itself, to show the different things that can happen in organizations and the different forms the organizations themselves can take (Mintzberg, 1992). From the earliest times of history, the main factor in the design of organizations is the effectiveness of more than one function. The same principle applies to today's organizations. Indeed, there will continue to be influential examples of organizational design that fit into each applicable area of the Organizational Design Triangle, as outlined in general organizational designs (Keigel, 1995).

One of the historical organizations that can be the best example of the Organizational Design Triangle in terms of functionality is Akhism. Akhism was designed in this structure from the establishment period until a strong state structure emerged and the Gedik organizational structure, that is, the states attempt to dominate over the tradesmen's organizations.

2.1. Organizational Design of Akhism

We can consider the organizational design of Akhism in two dimensions. The first dimension is its functional structure. The organizational structure of Akhism in its early period and throughout the following centuries is in the form of a combination of three different functions in a single organization. Functions that are completely independent of each other emerged depending on the conditions of the period Aydemir (2019).

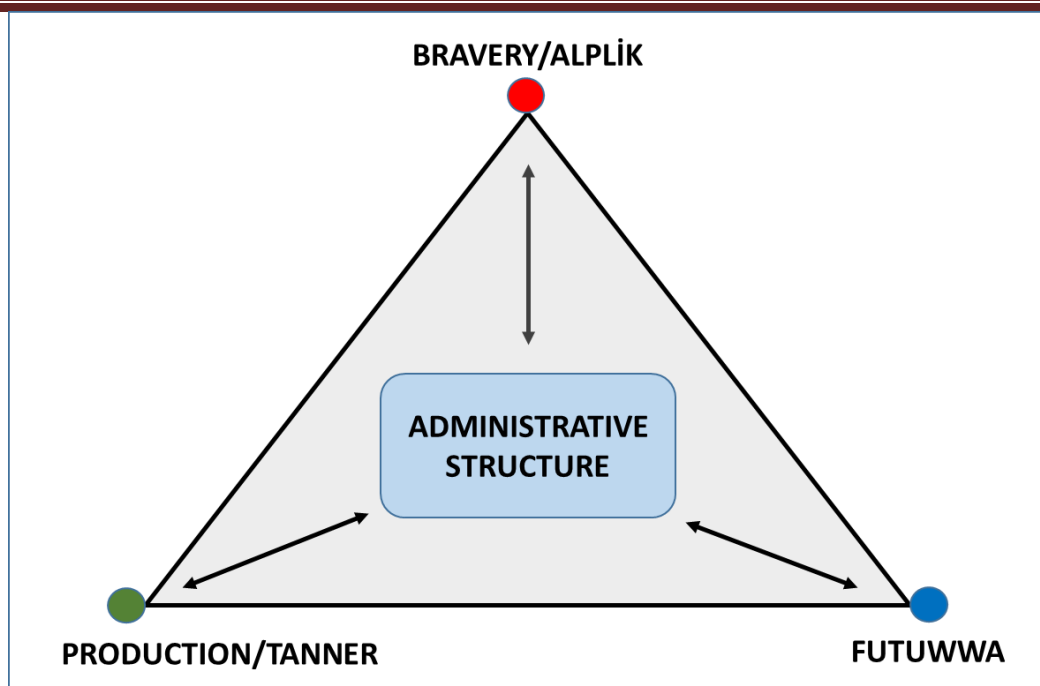


Figure 1. Organizational Structuring of the Akhism.

The organizational design of Akhism is classified based on the three main functions: production, futuwwa and Alplik (alpness). Akhism consists of production that is tanner; it consists of ensuring security and order in the region, namely courage or alpness. Finally, futuwwa constitutes the norms of belief and behavior. Although all three functions have different functions from each other, they acted together for the success of Akhism. The second dimension of the organizational design of Akhism is its administrative structure. The first-hand historical documents that have survived to the present day provide us with important information about Akhism. The genealogy documents, which are a few documents that are written by the Ahis and accepted as their constitution, are essential documents. A management team that fulfills all three functions of the Akhism served in the genealogy. In the genealogy written on different dates and in different regions, the managers and their duties in the basic administrative structure of the Ahis are explained. It is seen that the basic management team in the genealogy consists of Ahi Baba, kethüda, yiğitbaşı, fekke/tekkenis, and masters (Köksal et.al., 2008). Akhis operating in almost every region successfully fulfilled all three functions under the control of this management team in the lodges they established. As the Ottoman principality became a state and eventually turned into an empire, the Alplik (bravery) function of Akhism came to an end. This transformation was not abrupt but occurred spontaneously due to changing conditions.

2.2. The Ahi Community and Bravery (Social Advancement)

The first function of Akhism, which is not found in other organizational structures, is the Alplik (Bravery). This feature of Akhism is hidden in the historical past of the Turks. Turks who went to different parts of the world in different periods defined their virtues and values with Alplik. According to Tankut (1937); Alplik is an adjective that belongs to people living in high altitudes, having high qualifications, carrying holiness, and the regions where they live. In Turks, Alplik is identified with military activities. Alp is a word used in the meaning of "brave, heroic, valiant, tough" in many old and new Turkish dialects (Yaşa, 2015). Historically, the Ahilik has acted as a military organization when necessary, unlike the tradesmen organizations operating before it. The lifestyle in Central Asia was influential in the origin of the Alplik tradition. Some traditions that shape the steppe life have been effective in the emergence of the "Alp" character and the spread of the Alplik spirit (Maraşlı, 2013), and a military structure has turned into a common practice. Encouraging bravery and heroism seen in Turkish traditions have been the source of the Alps (Koçak, 2012).

The reason for this function of Akhism stems from the conditions of the period. As a result of the intensified raids after the 10th century, a significant amount of Turkish settlements and population accumulation emerged in Anatolia. When the Turks came to Anatolia, the region had no strong state structure. Therefore, the Turkish tribes, who came to different parts of Anatolia, advanced towards the west in time. In this period, administrative authority, especially security, was needed since there was no strong state authority in Anatolia.

The first-hand source from which we can obtain information about the bravery of the Akhism is the travel book of Ibn Battuta. An important part of Ibn Battuta's travel book in the 13th century belongs to Anatolia. In the travel book, Ibn Battuta was hosted in an Ahi lodge wherever he went. During his travels, Ibn Battuta came across an Ahi lodge in villages and even at high points. As there is an Ahi lodge in a small village, it can be considered as exciting information to see that the Ahis had a lodge built even on a mountaintop (Şeker, 1996). When Ibn Battuta was hosted in Denizli, during the ceremony craftsmen consisting of Ahi braves were prepared with drums, horns, and pipes, with flags showing their profession, and they competed for glory by wearing weapons from head to toe (Battûta, 2000). In addition to producing, the Ahis ensured the security of the region and formed their military power. The Ahis eliminated the lack of state authority in the period of principalities before the establishment of the Ottoman Empire. Ahis not only a traditional artisan organization that produced but also acted as a military unit when necessary. The concept of Alplik comes to the fore in addition to production, especially in lodges. Most of the time, a cavalryman, a shooter, a musketeer, and a soldier who skillfully uses swords and spears is neither valiant nor a soldier who does not know how to shoot arrows, ride horses, use swords and spears well (Cevdet, 2008).

The Alplik feature of Akhism also led to the establishment of a powerful empire. The Akhis directly contributed to the establishment of the Ottoman Empire. Most of the historical figures who played an active role in the establishment of the Ottoman Empire have the title of Ahi. Although there are not numerous documents about the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, some of the studies that can enlighten the subject have reached the present day. The documents about the establishment of the Ottoman Empire today are full of illuminating points that will save the subject from darkness (Şahin, 2008: 10). One of the surviving studies on the role of the Ahis in the foundation of the Ottoman Empire, and even the most important one, is Anka-i Maşrik. According to Köksal (2014), in order to make more realistic studies of the history of the Ottoman Empire, it is useful to examine the different works of the foundation period, especially the Ankâ-yı Maşrik, beyond a dynastic and war history chronology. According to Anka-i Maşrik, the Ottoman Empire was established with the efforts of the important personalities of the period. The common point of the historical figures is that they were the leaders of the period as well as the founders of the Ahi Order. The Alplik feature of Akhism was terminated after the establishment and strengthening of the Ottoman Empire. As a result of the establishment and strengthening of the functions of the state, such as security and the progress of society, the Ahilik has ended this function.

2.3. Akhism and Production

The second function of Akhism is production. Ahis made tanners by processing raw leather. The leather produced by the Ahis was used as input by many other tradesmen. The only function of the Ahis that has not changed over the centuries is tanning. The Ahis processed the leather from the mom Leather has been an important part of the continuation of life since the first moment of humanity. The history of leather making goes back to the beginning of human history (Coşkun, 2018). Leather initially provided protection for people against natural conditions and clothing. Depending on the progress of civilization, the importance of leather in other areas of human life has increased. In almost all civilizations, leather has been used in the construction of many tools, as well as in the production of works of art.

Leather is a strategic commodity that comes after metal in Turkish history. The lifestyle in Central Asia caused the Turks to go forward in the leather business. There are two main reasons for the progress of leather making in Turks. The first is the active lifestyle. In order to spend certain periods

of the year in different places, various tools and tools are needed as well as strategic planning. Leather is important in the making of these tools. Secondly, agriculture based on animal husbandry in the steppes is an important source of raw materials for leather production. Leather processing and the use of processed leather in many areas of daily life started in order to produce their own goods for people who moved from a mobile life to a settlement (Özdemir, 2004).

Products made of processed leather have been used in many different areas besides clothing of people. Although the kurgan burial finds in the Altai Mountains show that leather products are widely used for making shoes and boots (Coşkun, 2018), leather was also used for making weapons and especially for the effective use of horses. Objects found in archaeological excavations show that the Turks have come to a very advanced point in leather processing. Iron and leather have been sacred commodities in the lives of the Turks.

The Turkish tribes, who migrated from Central Asia to Anatolia, continued their leather processing skills here and took them to a higher level. The use of leather art, which started in Central Asia and continued by moving to Anatolia with the migration to the west, has expanded in a long time depending on the socio-cultural structure and its designs have increased (Özdemir and Kayabaşı, 2007). In Anatolia, leather processing was done by Ahi. Ahi organizations lived from the 13th to the end of the 19th century, representing the production organization related to the management and administration of Seljuk and Ottoman Turkish economy, trade, and industrial life (Eryiğit, 1989). The Ahi continued the leather processing (tanner) business as a sacred profession, as it was before. In the genealogy, which is the first-hand document belonging to Akhism, leather processing is associated with holy persons. Therefore, associating leather processing with holy persons and bringing holiness to the profession is a continuation of the past practices

Production activity in Akhism was carried out with a hierarchy of master, journeyman, and apprentice. Apprentice is the first step of the production activity. An apprentice is a person who learns the necessary knowledge and skills related to a designated profession or art by working practically in that workplace and being trained according to standard programs and who enters the employer's disposal with an apprenticeship contract (İslamoğlu and Alp, 2017). Apprenticeship is the first step into the profession. In Akhism, the apprentice learns the internal functioning and behavioral norms as well as the professional issues. After the apprentice is successful, he is promoted to journeyman. Ahi, a transitional level between apprenticeship and mastery, moves one step closer to the preparation process for mastery. The apprentice who successfully completes the apprenticeship remains a journeyman until he becomes a master. Mastery comes after the journeyman. The master is not only the person who does the production work. In Akhi, the master is also the person who trains apprentices and journeymen, educates them about their behavior and belief norms, and leads them.

2.4. Akhism and Futuwwa

The third function of Akhism is futuwwa. Futuwwa comes from the Arabic word "feta". "Fetâ" means young, slave, servant, and generous in Arabic (Demirci, 1993). The word futuwwa (futuwwa in Farsi, fütüvvet in Turkish) is of Arabic origin, the basic meaning of the word is 'youth, age of adolescence, youthfulness', and it also means 'the brightest time of youth, the adolescent attitude' (Taeschner, 1954). Futuwwa is an organization originating from the Middle East. Fütüvvet, a medieval ideal interpreted as "Middle East Knighthood", was founded in XII. until the end of the century, it was associated with groups of various social strata (Shoshan, 1991). In the chaotic environment experienced in the Middle East in the medieval era, the rulers set up and took advantage of the futuwwa to ensure public order. Turks did not take Futuwwa as it is; they interpreted it with their own culture and belief systems. The Anatolian Akhis of the 14th century represented an important link in the evolution of the futuwwa tradition, and it was thanks to them that this tradition survived well into the Ottoman era, this time within the framework of the more centralized, professional trade guilds (Assceric -Todd, 2007). After the Turks accepted Islam, they met futuwwa. The Turks interpreted and adopted futuwwa differently. Turks benefited from futuwwa in terms of courage and behavior. According to the literature's most widely accepted definition of futuwwa, it means 'having courage

and assertiveness' and, as mentioned before, this definition is the most famous and widely known definition (Aydemir and Mert, 2018). Futuwwa means showing courage and assertiveness, which is a famous and widely known definition (Cevdet, 2008). The courage dimension of the futuwwa is integrated with the Alplik function. The behavior dimension of futuwwa includes the norms of virtuous behavior and belief.

In Futuwwat-nāmah, there are only norms of belief and behavior. The Turks took the futuwwa organization and adapted it to themselves. There is no separate futuwwa organization in Turkish history. The Turks simplified futuwwa, and they took the aspects that fit their own cultural structure and used them. In this context, they took the original futuwwat -namahs, summarized them, customized them, and reproduced them in their own language.

There is no record of production and industry in Futuwwat-namah. For this reason, the Ahis included some of the issues in futuwwat-namah in their own documents. While doing this, they emphasized the importance of production. In Çobanoğlu Futuwwat-namah, written in Turkish in Anatolia, there is a definite expression of having a skill or an art (Şeker, 1996). Subjects outside the production both wrote Futuwwat-namahs in Turkish and were injured by them. The Ahis took the rules that regulate their daily behaviors in futuwwat-namah and added them to their genealogy (Köksal, 2015: 14).

Futuwwat-namah contains the rules of behavior and belief norms of the Ahi community. The Ahis carried out many activities together, apart from the production time. Acting as an organization beyond individuality, the Ahis acted on the principles of futuwwat-namah. The most emphasized principles in Turkish futuwwat-namahs; social solidarity and service, sincerity, generosity, human love, goodwill, willpower away from selfishness and arrogance, freedom and conviction, honesty, modesty, reverence, compassion, honesty, good-heartedness (Solak, 2010: 5).

2.5. Akhism and Today's Organizations

When we look at the organizational functioning of Akhism in the whole geography, it has a functioning reminiscent of today's organizations. In addition to its basic organizational structure and design, Akhism has acted with a business group approach from a holistic perspective. In Ulutan's (1998) study, the Ahi community was exceptionally defined as a group, the "union of production". Aydemir (2020) defined Akhism as a "micro business group". Although they are known by different names in the world, holdings in the most well-known form are business groups that have a dominant position in the country's economy. The organizational structure of business groups consists of a parent company and its subsidiaries and affiliates. A business group is a union of businesses that, although legally independent, are connected and coordinated by formal and informal ties (Khanna and Rivkin, 2001). When we look at the holistic functioning of the Akhism, the zaviye, which is the main business, is in the province of Kırşehir, where it was established. Akhis operated in the entire geography of the empire, including Anatolia, the Balkans, the Middle East, Cyprus, and Crimea. The Ahis in these regions worked within the framework of the principles determined by the central Ahis. In genealogy, central zawiya visit zawiya in the other areas, teach and control the processes, and complete the missing subjects. According to the genealogy, the central management team; In order to visit the hearths in every country to teach them their ceremonies and procedures, they give their grain, sanjak-ı Sherif sacrifice, and offerings from the hearth for three, five, or seven days, see their expenses and meet all their needs completely (Köksal et al., 2008). Each Ahi organization, which was designed according to the Organizational Design Triangle and fulfilled its functions under the control of senior managers, continued to exist as a subsidiary of the main center and zawiya in Kırşehir.

Until the Ahi community ended its activities in 1925, they only did leather processing. Today, only a few examples of the representatives of the Akhis in the historical process remain. Today, leather processing has become a sector, a branch of industry, instead of traditional methods (tanners).

Another feature of the ahis is that they lead the tradesmen operating in their regions. It is stated in the Ahi genealogies that 32 artisan groups are affiliated with the Ahis. The number 32 has a symbolic value and is included in all genealogies. The average number of occupations in the lists at the end of Ahi genealogy is around 100. Therefore, the tradesmen in the lists operated according to the rules set

by the Ahis. Today, some of the aforementioned tradesmen continue their activities. Today's tradesmen have their own professional organizations and an organization to which all tradesmen organizations are affiliated.

Ahis and other tradesmen were the industrial enterprises of the period. In Turkish history, the term industry is mentioned for the first time in Ahi genealogy. For centuries, the merchants have met the basic needs of society and the state. Today, apart from business groups and large enterprises, the most common enterprises are SMEs. SMEs can be considered as the present representatives of historical tradesmen.

2.6. Akhism and Digitalization

Nature is in a state of constant change and development. Constant desire for improvement and progress has existed since the beginning of time (Pihir, 2019). Humanity has gone through different periods in different eras. The most significant change in the history of humanity after the industrial revolution is the penetration of technology into all areas of life. With the introduction of computer and internet technology into human life, business life has also benefited from new technologies, and digitalization has been at the center of businesses. Digitalization affects everything from human interaction with social media and personal services to information interaction that the public uses in personal services (Gray and Rumpe, 2015). The changes impact society and distinct segments of industries, from manufacturing, IT, healthcare and medical services, pharmacy, and retailing up to agriculture (Tratkowska, 2019).

At the beginning of the last century, while human-machine harmony, efficiency and productivity were important in the classical management approach, today, the harmony of information and technology with management and business is aimed at digitalization. The change brought about by technology has led to the emergence of a new concept. The paradigm shift experienced turns into digital with the effect of technology (Özer, 2017). Digitalization, which is a result of technology, directly or indirectly affects people. Digitalization is one of the most important technological developments affecting almost all areas of life (Altun, 2020). With digitalization, there have been changes in the behavior of society and the individuals who make up society. Businesses and organizations, which are an integral part of society and humanity, have been affected by digitalization in many ways. Digitization not only affects attitudes and behaviors in society but also has changed many elements such as the structure, functioning, ways of doing business, and decision mechanisms of businesses (Sucu, 2021: i).

Digitalization has caused many changes and transformations in organizations. Digitization has become a necessity in order to obtain and interpret the information that has reached a large volume today and to transform it into an advantage for the business. The collection, processing, and use of information for the effectiveness and efficiency of organizations are possible with digitalization. Reaching information, which is the most important value for businesses today, distributing it in place and on time with digital technologies, and transforming information into a value is now indispensable for businesses to make a difference, to provide a competitive advantage, cost minimization and profit maximization (Üzmez and Büyükbeşe, 2021).

The effectiveness of the implementation of the systems makes digital governance adopted both in the private and public environment (Calin et al., 2022). The effects of digitization today exceed organizational boundaries and are found at the global level (Burlacu et al., 2022). According to some recent research (Burlacu et al., 2021), the opportunity to develop national economies is also generated by financial digitization.

Beyond considerations of economic and social efficiency and effectiveness, the current stage of digitization maturation requires caution (Burlacu et al., 2021) considering the perspectives of sustainable development (Burlacu, et al., 2022). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, a series of challenges appeared that were overcome perhaps easier and faster with the help of IT technologies (Negescu et al, 2021). There are studies that claim that the influences can be mutual (Popescu et al. 2021). It can become a certainty that the globalization of digitalization has a direct impact on economic and social life (Burlacu, et al., 2021). Rădulescu et al., 2018 consider that business

management in stressful conditions becomes essential. The new trends in business digitalization are presented extensively in the works of Androniceanu et al., 2017. Education is an essential factor in digitalization (Burlacu et al., 2013). In this way, innovative digital solutions have appeared that create educational content (Burlacu et al., 2013).

In the studies carried out, digitalization, communication styles and social activities lead to transformations in the social structure over time, creating a new culture (Altun, 2020), Organizational transformation for digitalization (Bencsik, Hargitai and Kulachinskaya, 2022), Enhancing Sustainable Business by SMEs' Digitalization (Vide, Hunjet and Kozina, 2022), the effects of digital transformation on management (Tratkowska, 2019), digitalization and entrepreneurship (Yılmaz, 2022) were examined. When evaluated from a more general point of view, digitalization affects businesses as well as society. Therefore, digitization affects both the organizational and management functions of businesses as well as their organizational structures.

2.6.1 Akhism and Digitalization in the Leather Industry

Akhism is a social organization that includes production in its establishment period. Ahi organization has successfully carried out three different functions in a single organizational structure. After a strong state structure emerged, the Ahis continued only their production and futuwwa functions. The principles of futuwwa, which constitute the behavior and belief norms of the ahis, are not very related to the concept of digitalization. For this reason, the only function that can be related between the organizational structure of Akhism and digitalization is production.

Ahi organization officially ended its activities in 1925. However, leather processing with the traditional method continued for decades until the leather processing activity was industrialized. Although not affiliated with the Ahis, the tanners continued to process leather with the same principles and methods. Although they did not have an official organization until recently, tanners continued their activities just as if an Ahi organization existed. However, today, there are almost no tanners that process leather with the traditional method. The main reason for this is the limited production capacity of traditional leather processing and the difficulties experienced in recruiting personnel. Classic leather processing can be considered to have disappeared in the face of modern industrial production, which has a large production capacity.

The first of the negative effects of digitalization on traditional production is the difficulties it creates in recruiting personnel. Great technological developments throughout history have led to significant changes in social structures and the roles of the individual in society (Altun, 2020). Technology and especially digitalization, have moved people away from traditional production organizations. Technological advances enable automating many activities that currently require human labor (Altun, 2020). Therefore, organizations operating with non-automated traditional production methods have difficulty in supplying labor.

Tanners, the last living representatives of Akhism today, can benefit from digitalization to protect their assets. Tanners (tanners) can market their products on digital platforms. Leathers produced by traditional methods are processed with entirely natural materials. Products made from these leathers, which can be called special production, are valuable for private customers. In this way, tanners and their products in the digital world will become the center of attention after a while, and an increase in interest in the profession will occur.

Apart from the Ahis, leather processing has become a strong industrial sector today. Leather processing has turned into a strong industrial sector beyond being a tradesman today. The Tanners formed an industrial association nearly a century ago. Leather industrialists formed a union in 1927 before the Ahilik almost officially ceased to exist. Turkish Leather Industrialists' Association (TLIA) is an active organization of tradesmen and industrialists working in leather. From Small Business Enterprise (SME) to muscular industrial size, many businesses operate in the leather industry. Regardless of its size, digitalization is essential for these businesses as it is for other businesses. In the digital and knowledge society, where SMEs are predominant contributors to economic and social development, SMEs' digitalization is a lever for sustainable business (Vide, Hunjet and Kozina, 2022).

For this reason, leather industrialists should benefit from digitalization in all areas, from production to marketing, from planning to decision-making. At this point, we come across the concept of industry 4.0. which is conceptualized as the blurring of the boundaries between the physical, digital and biological worlds (Alanlı and Acar, 2022). With Industry 4.0, not only production but also many functions of the business are digitized. The main goal of Industry 4.0 is the creation of smart products, procedures, and processes (Sayar, 2019). With Industry 4.0, leather operators will go into digital transformation in all other functions as well as their production systems.

Another point to be noted about the leather industry is the chemicals used in leather processing, etc., controlling and minimizing their negative effects on the environment. Therefore, along with the effective use of digital technology raw materials and the effective use of other auxiliary materials used in production, it will be beneficial in minimizing the damages of the wastes that will occur as a result of production.

2.6.2 Akhism and Digitalization of Other Tradesman Groups

Akhis have determined the administrative principles of other tradesmen and have led them throughout history. In the Ahi genealogy, it is written that 32 artisans were affiliated to the Ahi community in the traditional sense (Köksal et al., 2008). Again, at the end of the Ahi genealogy, the artisan groups operating in that region are listed. Artisan groups that have survived to the present day can be a compulsory profession, such as barbers, or they may be in a profession that is on the verge of extinction, such as felt making.

The first of the effects of digitalization on tradesmen groups is the difficulty in recruiting employees, as in the Ahi community. According to Altun (2020); While digitalization has a positive effect on some workforce, it also causes negative consequences for some workforce. Instead of working in artisanal organizations, the workforce can turn to places with the potential for technological progress. The positive effect that digitalization will have on small tradesmen groups is possible if they realize this and use it correctly. Today, almost every artisan group has its own organization, unions, and the leading organization to which these unions are affiliated. Digitization will enable these sub-organizations to activate their managerial functions and ensure that they can protect their assets. All managerial capabilities of tradesmen organizations with increased digital capabilities will increase from planning to control. At the same time, the main tradesmen organization will increase its effectiveness on sub-trades organizations with digitalization. This is only possible with digital transformation in organizational structures. Digitalization is a strategic necessity for these organizations. Structural change is also required for strategic transformation. For digitalization, it is necessary to include digitalization in the strategies of enterprises, change the organizational structures with digitalization, ensure the integration of employees with digitalization and develop the necessary infrastructure (Yılmaz, 2022).

The equivalent of this function of the Ahilik, which acts with the philosophy of business group management of the time, is holdings. Holdings are the most important business groups in countries due to their efficiency in the country's economy and their economic power. Holdings are the pioneers of digital transformation with their economic power and structural and managerial capabilities.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Historical organizations are an important model for today's organizations. One of the unique historical organizations is Ahilik. Especially in the establishment period, Ahilik successfully combined and implemented different functions in a single organizational structure. Especially during the establishment period and the following centuries, Ahilik has successfully performed the functions of bravery (Alplik), tanner, and futuwwa together. The model created by a social need continued only tanner and futuwwa functions after the emergence of a strong state. Ahilik has operated as a micro-business group for centuries. The administrative principles of the Ahi organization have also been adopted and implemented by other tradesmen groups. The Ahis also led other tradesmen.

Although the Ahilik ended its activities in 1925, many of its representatives continued (leather processing) tanner until recently. However, there are a few tanners who process leather with Ahilik methods today. However, tanner SME has grown into a strong industrial sector. Tradesmen groups operating under the Ahi-order have also turned into SMEs. The business model of Ahilik, which operates like a micro business group, is holdings. Today, the organizational structure and functioning of the Ahis have more than one organizational counterpart.

Digitalization technology is becoming more dominant in the structure and functioning of organizations. Digitization affects all organizations, such as people and society. Digitization is becoming dominant over both managerial and business functions of organizations. Digitalization in different dimensions will affect organizations that represent the Ahi community. Traditional tanners, who are the representatives of the Ahis, can benefit from digitalization in the promotion and marketing of their special products, although they have difficulties in supplying labor. SMEs, which is the continuation of the leather processing of the Ahis, and tanners, can benefit from digitalization not only in Industry 4.0 but also in all management and business functions. Similarly, in terms of administrative principles, SMEs, the representatives of tradesmen groups operating under the Akhis can also use digitalization to execute all management and business functions, primarily production. Since holdings are already in a dominant position, they are the organizations that benefit the most from digitalization.

Different representatives of historical organizational structures operate today. Therefore, researching historical organizations and present-day representatives of different cultures and examining their interactions with technology will contribute to the science of management and will also be beneficial for businesses.

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