

Industrial design ethics on the basis of akhism principles

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Abstract

The institution of Akhism which emerged 13th century in Anatolia not only guided commercial life but also regulated socio-cultural life of Turks for centuries. Design ethics resemble Akhism principles in many aspects, especially in terms of people-oriented approach. While Industrial Design is a commercial activity based on human benefit, Akhism purposes primarily human goodness in commercial life. Akhism held relations based on interest between producer and consumer which was an important problem in trades and crafts those times. Likewise, the Industrial Design profession which emerged 20th century with modern industry provides mutual interest between producer and consumer and optimizes firm's profit expectation and user's benefit expectation from the same product. Nowadays, even if it can be turned into manipulating consumer by commercial concerns, design - as it should be, is an activity which is conducted for human benefit and provides emergence of products and processes that ease the life of people.

Human and the economic values which does not conflicts human happiness are priorities of Design Thinking as well as Akhism Thought System. In this study, ethic responsibilities of designer are discussed on the basis of the principles of Akhism Institution.

Keywords: Industrial Design Ethics, Akhism

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1. Introduction

The morality which is an indispensable part of personal and social life emerges in the business life as in all areas. Business ethics based on the satisfaction of people from production to consumption are becoming increasingly common in business world that has an important responsibility towards the society (Kantarıcı 2014). In this study, in order to create basic ethic principles of the industrial design profession, development of Akhi Organization will be examined and its principles which are the best example of social responsibility will be taken as an example.

Akhism is both a lifestyle and thought system which is developed for integrating Turk customs and traditions with Islam when the years Turks begin to accept Islam aggregately. Within the socio-cultural history of Turks, there is an important place for Akhism Organization and Akhi Understanding. Akhi Organization conducted crucial functions on social, economic and cultural life of Turks in Anatolia from 13th century to today. In fulfilling these functions, it predicates the understanding of educating human behaviors on the basis of social aid and solidarity in line of sacred and moral context. The aim of raising well-behaved individuals also played an important role in commercial life. Business ethics principles of the Turk artisans and craftsmen were formed within the framework of this morality. In the development of Turk trade in time, the impact of ethical rules which played an integrating role in the production process of the organization and directly determined social attitudes and behavior of employees in the workplace was great.

The factors that determined the morality of Turkish society which Akhi Organization revealed were not only traditions and customs but also Islamic beliefs and principles. Akhi Organization took on a task of implementation Islamic faith to social and economic life. It organized the relations based on interest between producer and consumer within the framework of these principles, solved the problems of artisans and craftsmen on a large scale and provided continuance and strengthening of economic values which cannot survive without moral values. Moral values and economic values which based on human needs should be in cooperation and be the basis of each other.

The concept of ethics which examines human behaviors based on rules and the inherent obligation to obey the ethics and norms scientifically, which systematizes moral behavior and regulates the legal structure, serving systematic moral values that control communities takes the form of universal norms from intersection of various moral sentiments. In this context, business ethics is a concept which is closely related with people management, justice, fairness and equality issues. It includes the values on the basis of human relations and specific behaviors improved for certain groups.

In environment which is not provided business ethics, it is unlikely to provide a business life which would be necessary condition for sound economic structure in which producers and consumers, the nation and the state, capital and labor are reconciled. Such a business life and social structure was seen in Anatolia when there was Akhi organization to regulate them. It is believed that moral rules of Akhi based on religious and national values, *whose heart is open to God and door is open to all nations*, which regulates social and economic lives of Turks from 13th century to today can serve as a model in determining ethic rules of industrial design profession.

2. Akhism

The majority of the Turks who migrated to Anatolia were craftsmen and tradesmen. Guilds were founded with a view to competing with Byzantium craftsmen, to maintain the quality of the products, to arrange production according to the demand, to set craftsmanship morals and to make Turkish people economically independent. Turk artisans and craftsmen became privileged in society in progress of time and had the right to comment on economic life. They were able to hold up against local merchants and artisans and to compete with them had been possible only through organization

which provided solidarity among them. By this way, they produced and sold solid and standard products. It can be said that Akhi unions occurred as a result of these conditions. Political aspects of Akhi movements matured as a result of migration and wars. In Turk domination of Anatolia and Rumelia, Akhi Organization played a major role. Turks who are settled in Anatolia in consequence of migrations are organized and seized the economic life of the city. The city lodges which spread from cities to the remotest corners of the country were established. Fees were used for organization members needs such as marriage, birth, illness and death by accumulating the craftsmen savings banks. This fund which was a kind of social security called *Orta Sandigi*.

Human is put in the center of system in Akhism and everything is shaped based on his happiness in the world and the hereafter. There is nothing more important than human being which is accepted as "eşref-i mahlukat" that means the most honorable of creatures. Akhism approaches human as a whole and it aims to develop him in all his aspects. That's why Akhism regulates not only ethereal life of people but also economic, social and cultural lives. It can be stated that the ultimate aim of the Organization of Akhi is to ensure people happy lives in both the world and the hereafter. 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 do the art establishment should do the best and perfect of Works" (Uyar and Erdoğan, 2012). Akhism is also a social construction. However, in this independent civil society which was consist of tradesmen and people, social peace and security were ensured by neither without individuals' nor society's disadvantage. Human-human, human-society, human-ware, human-nature relationships were predicated on individual's happiness and society's sake. Philosophical core of Akhism is to be one who is in full moral control of his or her hands, tongue and loins to be reliable and right. This approach enabled Akhi to lead a happy and balanced life for the world and the hereafter. To avoid exploitation of the labor and nature, individual and social peace were ensured through prevent unfair competition and secure the justice. In solidarism based society structure, it is believed that interests of segments which shape society do not conflict. It is not allowed conflicts not only between segments, but also individuals who are from the same segments (Tatlilioğlu, 2012). Trade is made for people in Akhism. Human being is seen as a main purpose of production, not one of the production means. In Akhism, economy is a mean, and it is not allowed to be a purpose. Working only for property, possession or wealth mean nothing by itself. Economic values are valuable providing that they mediate fulfilling more important goal. It is precious to live without being dependent on others or the money which is earned for others is valuable. Akhism was founded based on a system which is against undeserved gain, to swing people, wastage, to consume by not producing and the exploitation of the weak ones. To prevent exploitation of labor, consumer and nature, it tried to provide social and individual peace by preventing unfair competition and securing the justice.

Production is handled as a function of need in Akhism. It is requested from artisans to produce sufficient amount of production which is enough to satisfy the needs. If supply does not meet the demand, own price increases. If supply is overhead, own price decreases. There are suffering groups whether producer or consumer in either case. By compensating supply and demand equilibrium, Akhism prevents unjust suffering and creates an environment in which labor gains objective value.

The quality of the goods is essential at Akhi Organization. Therefore, competition elements such as cost reduction through impair the quality causes to being dismissed from profession. Unlike capitalism, the sole purpose of which is to maximize profit, in Akhism economic approach, purpose of the system is to maximize the social benefits (Şimşek, 2002). In this system, strict arrangements were brought in every stage from raw material procurement to processing and retailing. This arrangements reconciled the conflicts between both producer-consumer and profession experts. Integrity is the first and foremost personnel characteristic which is attempted from artisans. To pull a fast deal, to overcharge the customer, and imitating others' product are seen as a major offense.

3. Change of Socio-Economic Structure from 13th Century to Today

In order to examine ethic of the profession which emerged in 20th century on the basis of the principles of 13th century organization, first of all, socio-economic structure which changes depending upon the necessities of the time will be analyzed within the context of production and consumption phenomenon. Cities in Europe were located as whether centers in which hierocracy was carried out or military fortresses which were built for protection. Trade was so few in cities those times. It is stated that until the 10th century, there had been no activities of industrial or commercial areas and they were dependent on the income from the countryside. 11th century onwards, result of increased economic activity in the military which was in feudal mode of production, in particular the growing number of artisans producing military products has led the craftsmen to operate in urban abstract from the agricultural production.

Turks resolved the deep displeasure of landless and non-free Anatolian peasants by practicing the public ownership understanding in there. This is the first denial of classic feudalism in Anatolia. Anatolian Seljuk's established the new order named *miri* which was public land regulation combining the nomadic tradition of Turks and Islamic *Fütüvvet* law. After all territories were taken public ownership, the right which allowed farmers to use a land for cultivating was given. Seljuk *Ikta* system which is a kind of feudalism in Turks has which constitutes the essence of the Ottoman manorial system took the place of the feudal structures of the whole Anatolia in time.

Ottoman economic order unlike classic feudal order allows large civilian and military executives to intervene massively to economic life and become a partner surplus value which is created in the economy. Trade which was increasing with using money as a fortune and growing importance of crafts production led artisans and merchants divided from the [agricultural production](#) and settle in cities. The artisans who had gained importance in European cities from 13th century organized in craft guilds. Even if they were weakening for reasons such as corruption and inability to adapt to the evolving trade, this structure had maintained its existence until 19th century.

The craft production base of the guilds is a mode of production which is carried out in the home or small workshops under the house. Thus, it can be stated that working area and living area is not separate craft production. In craft production, production is carried out mainly with the hand or help of instrument. The mastery in craft, it is through the acquisition of dexterity or ability to use the relevant tools. In this context, the mode of production which master and his assistants journeyman and apprentice participate production process is dominated. Guilds limited on the number of journeyman and apprentice which one master can run and prevented the capitalization of craft production. The factors that run the capitalist mechanism and make it continue are new consumer products, new production methods, new transportation methods and new markets. All of them were created by the capitalist enterprise (Schumpeter, 1966).

The manufacturing production form which is a transition form from craft production to industrial production was called manufaktur. According to Karl Marx who approaches manufaktur as a mode of production, manufaktur in the narrow sense of the word hardly can be distinguished from handicrafts of guild expect using large number of workers at the same time by the same individual capital. Indeed, manufaktur is a production form which was actually not so different from craft qualitatively at first glance, but separated by a sharp line from the craft in terms of social relations and became capitalist, the opposite form of craft production (Ersoy, 1992).

Along with an increase in trade, the craft production has entered a process of disintegration, and now artisan who cannot sell the goods produced started to sell his products to the merchant who has the ability to sell them in different markets. Since artisan started selling the products which he had produced to merchants, relations between artisans and market was limited. Craftsmen no longer had information about market demands; trader who was in line with the needs of the market got knowledge about market. Therefore, rather selling products directly to the merchant than market, craftsmen lost entrepreneurs function along with the purchasing system. Thus, artisans started to sell

the products which are determined by merchants in line with market demand. Meanwhile, traders were intended to benefit from the exchange value between the product markets. This case does not mean that the artisan necessarily dependent on the trader but it encourages this dependence.

Consumption phenomenon gained [a different point of view](#) with the production which was increasing [incrementally](#) and the need to sell out products which were triggered by Industrial Revolution. Due to the change of the roles in time, strengthening of manufacturers in particular economic aspects and soon starting organizing, consumers became more and more aggrieved and the consumer protection concept was developed. Moreover, this need has never become as important as it is today.

In Anatolia, consumption phenomenon has changed different from Europe thanks to significant contribution of Akhi Organization of Ottoman. Nevertheless, along with the reasons such as [goods entrance](#) in large quantities because of the capitulations, going out of business of native population which was struggling with wars and globalization, consumer victimhood mentioned before has become an issue in Anatolia too. With the development of mass communication, advertising has become a power source that affects both economic and social life deeply. The companies which have “more production for more consumption” approach can prefer misleading advertising which is emotional and seductive to informative ones to lead people to consume their products. Consumers who do not organized enough against all these advances and take a stand [immethodically](#) against manufacturers [become helpless against](#) those who supply goods and services. Therefore, consumer protection has become a necessity.

4. Industrial Design Profession

The task of design had not defined clearly and design had been professed by various individuals from anonymous workers to artists until the occurrence of industrial design profession in 20th century with modern industry. After 20th century, industrial design began to be called with goods which were produced by mass production methods (Hesket, 1987). Since the loss of its competitive impact today to increase the production capacity and because demand do not increase as much as production capacity, companies make their debut with ‘astounding products’ instead of the traditional competition (Güneş, 2011).

A process is needed to create sufficient market demand for the product. This process which is called [marketization](#) phase on the one hand provides products and services unknown by the consumer but which ease the life, on the other hand can turn into the way of manipulating customer with no ethical concerns and within a commercial logic (Altuntuğ, 2008). This unethical approach is against of this profession’s nature which is carried out for human benefit. The manufactured product must meet a customer's needs or must provide a value. Therefore, the first step of the marketing strategy, it is needed to be defined that which demand of customer would be satisfied with the product or what kind of values would be provided (Alabay, 2010). However, today there is an im value appear with the use value in addition to [exchange value](#). Roaming value is a copy of the use value. Im value is the copy of the copy. Realities are replaced by images in capitalist society anymore and images are consumed (Sarıbay, 1995).

The product will be used by individual or massive somehow. If contact point between product and people is a source of dissatisfaction, it means designer is failed. However, when get in conduct with product, people feel safe and more comfortable, become more productive or only happier or more enthusiastic about buying the product, it means designer become successful. Human is important for two reasons with regard to design. The first of them is the man who created the design itself. The second is that design is an activity which is carried out for human benefit. However, as an economic activity, design has to comprise the concept of consumption (Güneş, 2010).

5. Conclusions

In history, moral values like in Akhi Unions were profoundly used as the major element in social capital formation to facilitate the material requirements of the society and keeping the harmony. Even though it is limited Akhi Organization affected the occurrence of working ethics and institutions like social insurance institutions, trade organizations, labor unions in today's Turkey (Öztürk, 2002).

Likewise, it can set an example for design ethics. Design ethics resemble Akhism principles in many aspects, especially in terms of people-oriented approach. That is the basis of ethic comparison of the study. Commercial activity is done for human benefit by both designers and Akhi crafts and artisans. Humans are the aim of production, not the means of production. Fundamental element of production and design is not to get rent, it is to satisfy the needs of people and ease the lives of them when getting economic value. However, designers share the responsibility in creating the products which do not provides that conditions but manipulate individuals to consume them. That creates conflicts of interests between producer and consumer which are on producers' side. However, to provide mutual interest between producer and consumer and optimizes firm's profit expectation and user's benefit expectation from the same product are the aim of this activity.

The designer which is expected to have full knowledge of product life cycle, from suggesting an idea to its producing, from market phase to its reinterpretation phase must set out his own principles. Designer should fulfill the human-oriented approach arises from profession's nature by providing human happiness just like Akhi Organization did once. One of the rules of Akhism is to be good-natured and good morals.

Product design is a set of positive actions and thoughts which affects standards of living of the individual positively and the society and benefits of the environment which it belongs to. Thus, ethically, the products, the ideas which created them and the problems resulting from use are expected not to conflict with the framework set by the above-mentioned principles. Because the product is the mirror of the ideas which creates it and possible consequences arise from use are this ideas' responsibility (Güneş, 2009).

Correct understanding of principles and morals of Akhism is very important in terms of producers and designers, and even country's economy. Knowledge of this past practice which enlightened business world for centuries and accepted as model for business and personal relationships can help both produce useful products and exclusion of trust and honesty in consumer relations. There are similar applications in today's business life, in which moral values still play a constructive role for building social capital to answer both material and social requirements of the people.

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