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A COMPARISON OF MEDIEVAL EUROPEAN GUILDS AND AKHISM IN ANATOLIA IN TERMS OF THEIR EMERGENCE AND GENERAL FUNCTIONS

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Özet

Bu çalışmada, Ortaçağ Avrupa Lonca sistemiyle, Anadolu'ya özgü bir kurum olan Ahilik arasındaki sosyo-ekonomik ve dinsel benzerlikler verili olarak kabul edilmekle birlikte, her iki kurumsal yapı arasında hem ortaya çıkış hem de işlevsellik açısından farklılıklar olduğu vurgulanmaktadır. Ortaçağ Avrupa'sındaki Loncalar hukuki olarak tanımlanmış, Avrupa'da, o dönemde ortaya çıkmış olan, toplumun bütününe yayılmış, geniş organizasyonel yapının bir parçasıdır. Ahilik ise, Anadolu'daki siyasi kargaşa ve merkezi hükümetin güç kaybına koşut olarak gelişen daha dar bir zaman diliminde işlev edinmiş, gönüllü bir sosyal organizasyondur. Bunun neticesinde, Avrupa'da lonca yapılanmasında bir süreklilik söz konusuysen; Anadolu'da ahilik merkezi hükümetlerin güçlenmesi sonucunda yerini Osmanlı Lonca sistemine bırakmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Ortaçağ Avrupa Loncaları, Ahilik, Avrupa Tarihi, Tarih Yazımı, Kaynakça*

Abstract

This paper argues that despite their similarities in socio-economic and religious senses, Medieval European Guilds and *Akhism* emerged distinctively from different reasons and functioned in different ways. While Medieval European guild system was a part of an organisational structure appearing in the social and economic conditions of

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Western Europe and became in time legally defined and prescribed institution, the *Akhi* system appeared and functioned in very limited time as a voluntary institution specifically in Anatolia as a consequence of political turmoil and increasing decentralisation. So, when the authority of the central government increased, *Akhi* organisation disappeared and gave way to the guilds in the Ottoman Empire.

Key Words: *Medieval European Guilds, Akhism, European History, Historiography, Bibliography*

There were two types of guilds in the Middle Ages as merchant and craft. The guilds can be roughly defined as “government-licensed, local, professional associations of craftsmen” or merchants. The function and definition of the guilds have been a subject of research and discussion for a long time.¹ The scholars generally make generalisations about the guilds by assuming their findings in one specific region as applicable to the guilds all over Europe and this causes confusion for a complete definition of the guilds. However, although there is still much debate and no consensus about the definition of the medieval guilds, it has been widely accepted today that they were essentially “organisational framework” including a variety of functions and “used for different purposes by various groups of actors, both within and outside.”² This multi-functional structure and nature of the guilds in medieval world has paved way for a huge amount of study on the social and economic functions of them in pre-modern world. The emphasis of the researcher differs according to interests and specialisation of the researcher. The economic historians put forward the issues such as “development of labour market, product-marketing.” On the other hand, the social and political historians tend to underline the guilds’ roles in terms of their place in political administration, social control and social differences in these guilds.³

Up to the recent years, two dominant currents of school of thought have dominated the methodology of the researches concerning about the guilds. Despite the latest works underlining the positive role for technological

¹ Maarten Prak, “Craft Guilds in North Western Europe (England, France, Low Countries)”, paper presented in the conference “Return of the Guilds” at Utrecht University, 2006., 1.

² Maarten Prak, Catharina Lis, Jan Lucassen, Hugo Soly, *Craft-Guilds in the Early Modern Low Countries* (London: Ashgate, 2006), 32.

³ Prak, “Craft Guilds in North”, 1.

innovation, commerce and economic growth,⁴ the researches mainly following the traditional view of Adam Smith and Karl Marx, intend to criticize these cooperative institutions as an obstacle to trading activities. They further claim that the guilds prevented the technological innovation and hindered the proper distribution of wealth. On the other hand, another school of thought glorifies the place of those institutions in terms of “a response to the ethical and organisational problems of *laissez-faire* industrialisation.”⁵ In this sense, it romanticizes the communitarian structure and solidarity in the guilds as a representative of the origins of the civil society in European history.⁶

These main currents of thought have determined the interpretation and evaluation of guilds similarly in the scholarship of both the West and the East. The *Akhi* organisation in Anatolia in a similar sense, under the influence of these interpretations, has been regarded as an institution either an obstacle to the innovation, trade and civil society in Anatolia or respected as an equalitarian and communitarian organisation presenting Turkish spirit of solidarity.⁷ In this sense, the historiographical tendencies related to the guilds and *Akhism* in both European and Turkish historical scholarship have many similarities.

It can be rightly asserted that although there were distinctive features of European guilds in medieval world with their diverse local features changing from region to region, some general characteristics were existent. Moreover, those institutions prescribing the common values like brotherhood, friendship, mutual aid and performing economic institutions with a structure of corporate organisation was not peculiar to Europe. The *Akhi* organisation was an analogous institution in terms of these common values.

However, this paper argues that despite their similarities in socio-economic and religious senses, these two organisations emerged distinctively from different reasons and functioned in different ways. While Medieval European guild system was a part of an organisational structure appearing in the

⁴ For the articles holding this view see: S.R. Epstein and Maarten Prak (eds.), *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2008)

⁵ Gary Richardson, “Christianity and Craft-Guilds in Late Medieval England: A Rationale Choice Analysis” *Rationality and Society*17 (2005): 139-189.

⁶ For a discussion of these two opposite approach to the guilds in a general sense see: Anthony Black, *Guilds and Civil Society in European Political Thought from the Twelfth Century to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 1-10.

⁷ To see these kind of evaluations about the *Akhis* look at: Neşet Çağatay, *Bir Türk Kurumu Olan Ahilik* (Ankara: TTK, 1989) and Veysi Erken, *Bir Sivil Örgütlenme Modeli: Ahilik* (Ankara: Seba Yayınları, 1998).

social and economic conditions of Western Europe and became in time legally defined and prescribed institution, the *Akhi* system appeared and function in very limited time as a voluntary institution specifically in Anatolia as a consequence of political turmoil and increasing decentralisation. So, when the authority of the central government increased *Akhi* organisation disappeared and gave way to the guilds in the Ottoman Empire.

The origin of the guild system in European history has been a subject of discussion for a long time and there are mainly two opposite theories. The supporters of one theory have assumed the guilds as a continuation of earlier institutions available especially in the south of France. According to this theory, these earlier guilds had been coming from Roman origin and they derived basically from the Roman institution of *collegia*, performing the social and religious responsibilities in the society such as “the provision of funerals.”⁸ Another view emerging the first theory has regarded the guilds as the later examples of the German-originated guild-like associations in which, the members had come together by mixing their blood and pledging to help each other “under certain definite circumstances”.⁹ The studies on the early medieval guild formations exhibit us the specific characteristics of the guilds as distinct from the guild organisation of the later medieval period starting to flourish in the twelfth century. Most of these earlier guilds were dominantly voluntary organisations, whose purposes were mainly religious, social and political and essentially had no link to trade and industry. For instance, the earliest Anglo-Saxon guilds functioned as religious, social and protective guilds. As it can be observed in the examples of the guild founded at Woodbury by Bishop Osborne or similar ones in Evesham, Gloucester or Worcester, the guilds had been mainly the associations of the priests and “the masses for the living, and funeral rites for deceased brethren or observance of mutual charity” and the feeding of the poor were among the basic tasks of these kinds of guilds.¹⁰ Besides, slightly different guilds with the social idea of mutual aid and protection for property played a role in that period.

⁸ Georges Renard, *Guilds in the Middle Ages* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publications, 1968), 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰ Edwin R.A. Seligman, “Two Chapters on the Medieval Guilds of England” *Publications of American Economic Association* 5 (1887): 9-113.

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Although there are still debates around the origins of their existence and their organisation about whether they were a revival of the craft colleges in the Roman Empire or they were a similar form of Germanic social guild, the medieval guild of the High Middle Ages in the form that we have already known appeared particularly in the regions of Italy, the Rheinland and the Low Countries in the twelfth century. At this point, we should ask the question what separated the medieval guild organisation from the earlier examples of guilds existent in Western Europe. Although they had the above-mentioned characteristics observed in the guild associations of the earlier periods, medieval guilds seem to appear as a result of an economic and social rationalisation of the existing scheme of practice tracing back to the Roman *collegia*. So, the distinctive feature of the medieval guild organisation was not a complete break from the past as some writers claimed but a reorganisation of a known and existing practice in the new forms along with a new conditions emerged in the context of the period.

The new kind of organisation of the guilds was a result of economic expansion in the Central Middle Ages. The rise of population and the growth of the new towns necessitated the trade between the regions with the agricultural surplus and created an environment, which stimulated the exchange of “the marketable skills of labour force”.¹¹ This growth in trade and manufacture was enforced with the improvement of the facilities for transportation and communication and led to the developments in the commercial and manufacturing techniques and organisations. So, the guilds were organised to reply to the rising trading activities and manufacturing and to meet the new requirements for skilled workers created by political and economic context and formed mainly in the flourishing cities and small towns of medieval Europe.¹² It can be assumed that above-mentioned economic changes related to trade and urbanisation created a surrounding for an organization of these professional guild organisations. People were to come together in the same branches of work for cooperation and the employers had to solve the problem of need for additional labour in handicraft manufactures.¹³ In most of the branches of the

¹¹ Daniel Brown, *the Central Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 58.

¹² Malcolm Barber, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe 1050-1320* (London: Routledge, 2004), 68.

¹³ Steven A. Epstein, *Wage Labour and Guilds in Medieval Europe* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 50-51. According to Epstein, Craft-guild organisation emerged in Europe “in order to provide transferable skills through apprenticeship” see: Steven A.

works and trades, guild and corporate regulatory mechanisms became dominant in the conduct of the economic activities. In a world, “where privilege stemmed from membership of the group”, the people dealing with the same or similar occupations came together for mutual defence and aid against the possible abuses from the individual producers or disorders, which might come from outside.¹⁴ The members were generally living very closely like in the same street or same quarter and this also motivated them to organise and also created for them a social surrounding in which they could live together or develop themselves.

While in its earliest forms, they appeared as the merchant guilds, they were in time divided into various specialised professions in consistency with the expansion of the economy in the High Middle Ages. For example, the tanners were organised by the rivers, the dockers in guild system organised themselves by the ports or the goldsmiths created their associations in the towns where the trade of the precious metals was possible.¹⁵ It is a fact that these sorts of guilds were particularly concerned about providing their members with a good volume of market and worked basically with economic motivations. However, as Gary Richardson indicated, they had also religious purposes. For instance, guilds were formed to “provide prayers for salvation of the souls of the deceased members” and they had patron saints. The members of the guilds were attending the religious rituals like funerals and veneration of the cross together.¹⁶

These professional organisations containing variety of purposes like the occupational activities, religious and social tasks acquired to some extent the freedom of the right for combination or the possibility of doing their own regulations and extended their sphere of influence. We can see a good example of expanding effect of guild organisations and their regulations in the statutes of the fishmongers of London. The fishmongers were responsible for buying and selling the fish in the certainly defined places. According to the statute, “none of the fishmongers should act against free trade in fish beyond the prescribed boundaries.” The product-quality has been taken under guarantee by the items of the statue like” fishermen should sell fresh fish after mass and salt fish after

Epstein “Craft-Guilds, Apprenticeship and Technological Change in Preindustrial Europe”
Journal of Economic History 3 (1998): 668-703.

¹⁴ Barber, *Two Cities*, 66.

¹⁵ Renard, *Guilds*, 2.

¹⁶ Richardson, “Christianity”: 139-189.

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prime”.¹⁷ In these regulatory expressions in the statutes, we can easily observe the signs of occupational discipline and consumer protection, which were typical characteristics of the medieval guild-system. Despite their significant role as economic bodies, the guilds showed its power and function in the variety of the practices in the circumstances in which they flourished. Although they were ostensibly shaped to preserve the interests of their members for just economic reasons, as multi-functional institutions, they started to dominate and conduct the life of the towns in some districts of Europe. They further became monopolistic organisations by regulating the activities of the “lesser corporations in the towns” or intervening in the issues such as the production, management of the labour markets, lowering the wages or the control of the quality as well as the non-occupational roles they played by providing aid for their members in the time of need and providing the religious services their members needed. They thus participated in the social life in a large “organisational framework” performing various functions and became a part of the wider world in which they took place.

By extending their activities in a variety of areas, they began to seek within the process for building autonomous and corporate bodies for some sort of self-government legally. The chronology of the impact of the guilds in the political life and the extent of their influence in this sense changes from one region to another. In some regions, the authorities such as lord or town council set up those guilds. On the other hand, the guilds tried to acquire this legal right by their initiatives and attempts. In some regions like Cologne, Worms and some other Italian cities, the guilds were constructed as bottom-up institutions. The guilds in those cities were certainly under the judicial control of the administration but they were not merely a device of public authority. They could negotiate with the central administration for public authority. The artisans and professional manufacturer in those kind of cities particularly in the Low Countries, the Rhineland and northern Italy, swearing for an oath of association and creating institution for the preservation and enforcement of the general economic activities of the whole community of their institutions, tried and achieved to get a public recognition politically and economically and also participated in the administrative mechanism of the burghs.¹⁸

¹⁷ Riley, Thomas Henry (ed.) [www. Trytel.com./tristan/towns/florilegium/economy](http://www.Trytel.com./tristan/towns/florilegium/economy). Accessed 04.01.2009

¹⁸ Prak, “Craft Guilds in North”, 7-18.

The legal and socio-economic privileged status of these guild organisations were intersecting with other groups looking for privileges and charter for self-government. So, in this way, they were used for different purposes in the negotiations with the central government around. As Steven Epstein indicated, a typical example of this kind of a charter is the one granted by William of Normandy, to the guild members in the city of ST.Omer.¹⁹ According to the charter, “all those who have their gild” and inhabiting in the limits of the town, were “made free of toll.” And in the case of damage to some property and maintenance of their guild, these guilds were taken under juridical guarantee as accepted citizens of the towns in which they lived. William granted to the guild organisation their rights and gave the inhabitants of the town to engage in economical activities by “setting them free from all customs.”²⁰ These sort of examples of charters increasing in the same period in the mentioned regions of the Low Countries or the Rhineland show us the gradual rise of the guilds’ privileged position in the urban space and their role as a civil organisations in the urban life as socio-economic institutions coming from bottom-up with negotiations with the public authority.

However, this does not mean that these guild organisations were completely independent units despite their status as voluntary organisation. Once, they were granted legal privileges by the administrators, they were becoming prescriptive institutions taken under juridical control. In contrast to the continental examples where the guilds had judicial self-governmental authority in a broad sense, these kinds of limited administrative privileges of the guilds can be observed in the English case and the formation of the legal status of these guild organisations. It can be assumed that a typical instance for a guild organisation in its medieval form different from Anglo-Saxon ones in England is the charter granted by Henry II to the gild of the Tanners of Rouen in 1170. The king has given this charter to the tanners of Rouen in return for their support against his rebellious sons. In the Charter it is pointed out that Henry II gave and confirm by this charter the guild of the tanners and guild’s customs and duties freely due to their service and support for King and it is forbidden to anyone who wants to perform a craft activity without the permission of the

¹⁹ Epstein, *Wage Labour*,56.

²⁰ Halsall Paul (ed.)www.fordham.edu/hallsall/source/1127stomer.html, accessed 04.012009

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tanners.²¹ This shows us a good example of monopoly maintained by a craft-guild over the economic activities in the town and a particular protection provided by the authority of the king. However, this does not necessarily mean that under these circumstances, the guilds had wide self-governmental rights, which would cause a collision between the administrative authorities and guild organisations. For example, despite the fact that in the towns of England, like York and Newcastle, the guilds had a prominent place and participated in the government by acquiring political functions as well as economic functions, in most of the towns, they had solely economic functions and subordinate to the governing body of the towns.²²

Therefore, these examples of the charters granted to the guild-organisations and their functions illustrate for us their double-sided nature: they were essentially bottom-up and voluntary organisations. They evolved in the specific economic conditions but they acquired legal status and self-government privileges and public recognition by negotiating with public authority. In this sense, those institutions were prescriptive; they functioned in an expanding economy as a tool for responding to the needs of the administrative body and as civil organisations to the social and religious demands of society.

When we look at the guilds in the Islamic world, it can be said that despite geographical differences, there were many similarities in development and values, which the guilds have been built on, to the medieval European guilds. Similar to the counterparts in medieval Europe, the artisans were organised under the professional guild system. They set some standards for their members, articulated disputes between the members of the guild, provided financial assistance for their members and similar to the medieval European guilds, they arranged popular entertainments, linked to the religious days. The guilds on both sides pursued same goals in their economic activities, especially in the rules for good production, control of quality and prices and consumer-producer relations. However, despite their similarities in terms of economic functions and the later organisational similarities as can be seen in the wide range of guilds in the Ottoman Empire including more and more crafts “under

²¹ Halsall Paul (ed.)www.fordham.edu/hallsall/source/1170.rouentanersgilds.html accessed, 04.01.2009

²² Charles Gross, *The Gild Merchant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), 111-113.

the comprehensive framework of organisation of the urban population”,²³ the chronology, development and transformation of the guilds in the Islamic world followed a different route. In this process, although the *Akhi* organisation in Anatolia inherited some aspects of the existing guild system, they were actually shaped and nurtured in specific conditions of Anatolia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Although there were some kinds of guilds in the Islamic in the form of a continuation of their Byzantine predecessors, we can find a certain indication of the emergence of the guilds in the Islamic world in the ninth and tenth centuries. In this period, some sort of corporate organisations of merchants which were established and functioned essentially as an authority for controlling the markets and to meet the needs of the employers for workers in the towns.²⁴ Particularly, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as a consequence of discontents in economic and political life, such as the growth of large-scale accumulation of capital in the hands of upper-classes and a social change in the society, these guild organisations combined with the religious heterodox movements like the *Qarmatis*. In this process, esoteric Islamic heterodox believers used these guilds as a weapon against the central authority of the Sunni orthodoxy. These guilds dominated chiefly the struggle and opposition against the central authority of the Sunni regime. For this reason, the Islamic guilds under the Sunni rule, “deprived of their legal rights” and restricted by many rules in contrast to their counterparts under the Fatimid rule of the heterodox *Ismailis*. Therefore, they gradually lost their power and privileges by the increasing authority of the Sunni rule in Islamic world after especially the overthrow of the *Fatimids*.²⁵

But, basic precepts of brotherhood and fraternity, which were the characteristics of the guilds in the Islamic world continued to live in *futuwwa* tradition, whose origins can be traced back to the early years of Islam. Technically meaning, “helping everybody, preventing injustice and seeing the faults of others”, the *futuwwa* was deriving from the Arabic word “*fata*” which stands for in literal sense, generosity, chivalry and strength.²⁶ The individuals

²³ Michael Cook, *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East: From the Rise of Islam to the Present Day* (London:Routledge, 1970), 28.

²⁴ Zvi Yehuda Hershlag, *Introduction to the Modern Economic History of the Middle East* (Leiden:Brill,1980), 20.

²⁵ Bernard Lewis, “The Islamic Guilds” *Economic History Review* 8 (1937), 20-37.

²⁶ Çağatay, *Bir Türk Kurumu*, 187.

holding these common values, started to come together to form voluntary organisations in the process of the disturbances occurring as social, economic and political changes. However, spreading all over the Islamic world, the *futuwwa* brotherhood “brought together at the beginning of the thirteenth century” and officially recognised by Abbasid Caliph Nasir –Al Din Lillah who was the close friend of Islamic mystic and writer of *futuwwa*, *Suhrawardi*.²⁷ Thus, the *futuwwa* tradition gained utmost importance. *Futuwwatism* had both religious and ethical codes. In this sense, these characteristics can be seen in different examples of *futuwwatnames*, which were written or appreciated by the learned and mystic figures of the period like Muhammed Sulami, who first composed a *futuwwatname* including all the principles of fraternity.²⁸ It is therefore very clear that *futuwwa* brotherhood relying upon the codes of behaviour closely related to the ideas and teachings of Sufism, established itself very strongly in time as an association. These kinds of associations were essentially connected to both military and religious orders. However, particularly after their organisation of *futuwwatism* under state recognition, artisan associations took the tradition. Thus, as distinct from the earliest examples of the guild organisations in the Islamic world, these organisations played religious, political and economic role with a new form of *futuwwa*.

Akhi (means brother and stands for the union of trades and craftsmen) organisation can be evaluated in this general context as a continuation of these socio-economic and religious characteristics of *futuwwa* tradition despite the fact that they were not completely the same. It is well known that in the *Akhi* organisations, the rules and practices of the *futuwwa* were inherited. The *Akhis* in Anatolia used the *futuwwatnames* as a kind of framework of the rules for their members. All of them included the regulations for their members. An *Akhi* as a consequence of *futuwwa* tradition had to follow the spiritual path of a Sufi dervish and this path also stood for the starting for actual production process of a craft. The *futuwwatnames* of the *Akhis* put also some ethical other ethical and moral codes like generosity, honesty and modesty.²⁹ Besides, the young craftsmen had to share their food, and their possessions with other members of their organisation. These examples existing in almost every *futuwwatname*

²⁷ Asceric Todd, “The Noble Traders: The Islamic Tradition of “Spiritual Chivalry”(futuwwa) in Bosnian Trade Guilds (16th-19th centuries) *Muslim World* 97 (2007), 159-173.

²⁸ Çağatay, *Bir Türk Kurumu*, 193.

²⁹ Fatih Köksal, *Ahi Evran ve Ahilik* (Kırşehir: Arter, 2006), 60-67.

present the continuity of the basic characteristics of Akhi organisation and the previous brotherhood available in the whole Islamic world.

However, despite the fact that *Akhis* got *futuwwatnames* and used them as a source for moral behaviour, the *Akhism* was founded in the specific conditions of Anatolia from the late twelfth to early fourteenth century. This fact was indicated in the work of Moroccan traveller Ibn-i Batuta's *Voyages of Ibn-i Batuta*. He gives us the first primary information about the *Akhis*. According to him, "nowhere in the world are there to be found any to compare with them in solicitude for strangers"³⁰ and he indicates that the peculiarity of their practices and aims make *Akhism* distinct from the *futuwwa* brotherhoods. We do not know to what extent his explanation about the *Akhis* was exaggeration or not. But, it is a fact that some existing characteristics of *Akhism* were coming from the dynamics of the Anatolian society in that period. The *Akhis* similar to the guilds in the medieval European guilds took on religious functions as the leader of the spread of Islam in the Christian lands. But, in contrast to the medieval European guilds, the *Akhi* organisation depended on interconfessionalism. The *Akhis* accepted the Christians or Jews as a member of their organisation and contributed to the conversion of these people into Islam. In addition to this function, they functioned as civil governments in the absence of powerful central government in Anatolia and also preserved their socio-economic roles in different branches of occupations.³¹ As it has been known, owing to the Mongol invasions, the nomadic Turkish people passing through Iran came to Anatolia. After arriving in large numbers in Anatolia, the merchants, tradesmen and craftsmen contributed to the commercial and professional life in Anatolia because the majority of these emigrating people were working in these branches of occupations. The organisation of the *Akhis*, in this sense, relied upon the trade and craft occupations. In this process, they organised themselves against the indigenous Byzantine population and the Mongols forcing them flee. This was a necessity for preserving their professions. In this way, the craftsmen and tradesmen found shelter against the rivalry of the Byzantine merchants and any possible danger from the Mongols who were causing political turmoil and disturbance in Anatolia. Thus, the formation of *Akhism* was a direct result of socio-economic, religious and political obligatory factors and the organisation

³⁰ Cited from Todd, "The Noble Traders": 159-173.

³¹ G. G. Arnakis, "Futuwwa Traditions in the Ottoman Empire: Akhis, Bekhtashi Dervishes and Craftsmen" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 12 (1953): 232-247.

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was established to meet the necessary needs of the emigrant people. So, Akhi Evran founded the Akhi organisation by the adaptation of the existing moral and religious codes existing in the *futuwwa* tradition.³²

After their foundation, these organisations functioned in economic life independently in each town as a voluntary organisation. In the early years of its foundation, the members of the *Akhi* organisation were composed only of the tanners. But, in time, the *Akhis* extended their influence and began to serve under 32 main branches of trade and crafts. They established hierarchy for the members of the organisations such as “errand boy”, “apprentice”, “qualified worker” and master. In this process, the *Akhi* leaders expanded their prestige and authority in various occupational branches. They started to grant a kind of certificate to the masters. This was a necessary part of being a master. Similar to the European medieval guilds, the *Akhis* regulated the export and import of the goods they produced. Furthermore, they determined the prices and quality of the products and put down some rules for the operation of their various branches of work because the issues like quality control and standardisation for the goods meant the preservation of long-term interests of both producer and consumer.³³

In addition to their similarities in economic terms to the medieval European guilds, they had also significant political roles. They operated as fully independent political powers in the lack of a powerful central authority. As we discussed above, the medieval European guilds became gradually effective in the administration of the towns as a political actor. But, they in time became prescribed institutions and they were legally defined. But, *Akhism* was completely voluntary organisation and performed their roles without any state intervention. As Arnakis has indicated, the *Akhis* acted as a political control mechanism in the absence of strong central authorities. They filled the vacuum of political authority by establishing the Akhi state of Ankara and administrating the towns like Kırşehir. Besides, they much contributed to the foundation of the Ottoman state and their leaders became influential by giving support to Otman Bey. Although the connection of the Ottoman *Beys* like *Otman* and *Orhan* to the *Akhis* was evident, as a result of increasing power of central authority under the Ottoman rule, they began to lose their importance in the fifteenth century. In this process, they gave way to the Ottoman guilds

³² Fatih Köksal, *Ahi Evran*, 53-57

³³ Çağatay, *Bir Türk Kurumu*, 215.

although some *Akhi* organisations lived up to the eighteenth centuries with their rules and regulations.³⁴

In conclusion, the formation and development of medieval European guilds and *Akhism* depended on different premises. Despite the fact that they emerged as a result of the organisational needs of the wider world in which they took place and responded to these needs of the society in similar senses, there were differences between them particularly in terms of legal definition. The medieval European guilds appeared as voluntary and individual institutions at the beginning. However, they were granted some privileges by the charters and participated in the administrative mechanism of the towns. Thus, they became an important part of society operating in different spheres. By the means of legal definition granted to them, they could make public negotiations with the administrative and central authorities. In this sense, they were prescribed institutions. As a consequence of this sort of legal definition and public recognition, they continued to exist in the early modern period. On the other hand, in Anatolia, following the Mongol Invasion the *Akhi* organisation emerged in the peculiar conditions as a combination of *futuwwa* tradition and craftsmen guilds of the previous centuries. It was not a prescribed institution like medieval European guilds and it was not given any kind of legal privilege. *Akhism* was basically a voluntary organisation and the prime motivation for their formation was religious and social. In the midst of political and socio-economic disturbances of Anatolia of the period, *Akhis* took on many responsibilities to meet various needs of emigrants fleeing the Mongol Invasion. Although their spirit influenced internal organisation of the Ottoman guilds, they lost their importance after they had been taken under control by rising Central government. In this sense, they could not create continuous self-governmental bodies unlike Medieval European guilds. Consequently, whereas Medieval Guilds continued their existence in the early-modern period, *Akhis* gradually left their places to the Ottoman guilds.

³⁴ G. G. Arnakis, "Futuwwa Traditions": 232-247 and Fatih Köksal, *Ahi Evran*, 56-57.

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