

The Search of Tacit Knowledge in Akhism Culture

Hulusi Doğan *

Abstract: This paper reports on a conceptual analysis of tacit knowledge and examines Akhism Principles that increased the development and spread of tacit knowledge among craftsmen and tradespeople. The objective of this paper is to emphasize the key role of tacit knowledge in creating a sustainable competitive advantage and pay attention to interesting similarities between modern tacit knowledge development ways and the Principles of Akhism. The study evaluates whether the Principles of Akhism can be a source or a guide for ongoing organizations to spread and develop their tacit knowledge potential.

Key Words: Tacit knowledge, Akhism.

Introduction

As a world wide agreement, we are living in a “knowledge-based society, where knowledge is the source of the highest quality power. In a world where markets, products, technologies, regulations even societies change rapidly, continuous innovation and the knowledge that enables such innovation have become important sources of sustainable competitive advantage. Hence all firms and societies consider knowledge and the capability to create and utilise knowledge to be the most important source of sustainable competitive advantage” (Nonaka et al., 2000: 5-6). In short, in this society, also named as “knowledge economy”, knowledge becomes an intellectual capital and more important than land, labor and other physical elements in production.

On the other hand, while everything is changing rapidly and knowledge is becoming the most valuable capital and the main source of competitive advantage, patents and many types of expertises do not become sufficient to protect firms from imitation. Due to much of knowledge is only the basis for a transient competitive advantage, competitors reverse other firms’ products, copy their best practices and develop parallel (or superior) technologies. This reality creates a discussion that

* Yrd. Doç. Dr. Hulusi Doğan, Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi Nazilli M.Y.O.'nda öğretim üyesidir.

whether any difference exists among knowledge types or which knowledge type is more valuable for organizations to bring sustained competitive advantage. Consequently recent studies show that a knowledge type, tacit one, is superior than explicit knowledge, can be coded or symbolized, to create not simply competitive advantage, but sustained competitive advantage in today's economic environment (Lubit, 2001: 164-168; Mascitelli, 2000: 179-183; Hall and Andriani, 2003: 145-147; Boiral, 2002: 291-297).

Today many mediums, radios, televisions, newspapers, information technologies etc., but especially internet, make it easier for every organization, even a person to attain, store and transmit explicit knowledge, which is conscious and can be easily coded, symbolized, or expressed, than tacit knowledge. But to become the basis for a sustainable competitive advantage, a knowledge type must be readily spread within an organization that has it, not readily spread to other ones. For a knowledge to provide sustainable competitive advantage, the skills and resources that underlie an organization's core competencies must be relatively widely transferable within the organization, but very difficult for others to copy or develop. Only knowledge type that fits these criteria is tacit knowledge. Because tacit knowledge stands in contrast to explicit knowledge and it is difficult to express, formalize, or share. This difficulty of expressing, codifying and transmitting tacit knowledge makes it much harder for competitors to copy than explicit knowledge, thus, it forms a strategic value for an organization that has it in creating sustainable competitive advantage (Lubit, 2001: 166).

As the difficulty of copying tacit knowledge enables tacit knowledge to be the basis of an inimitable competitive advantage, organizations are seeking ways to develop, share and spread tacit knowledge as a common value embedded in their cultures, structures or sets of processes. But what the most attractive is to see almost all ways or methods modern management techniques and management scholars offering today's organization for tacit knowledge already existed in Akhism, lasted between the 13th and 19th centuries, which is a Turkish corporation including the principles and characteristics which are common the Turkish craftsmen of Anatolia. Highly interesting similarities between the two approaches and ways make it necessary for us to have a detailed examination on Akhism to acquire new methods, principles or processes that can help today's organizations for best utilising tacit knowledge in creating competitive advantage. So, the purpose of this article is to explore Akhism by comparing the methods of both Akhism and modern management systems for tacit knowledge and discuss how we can explore new techniques from this culture, Akhism, for today's organizations as well as demonstrate a huge culture waiting for all the world to be analysed to support *modern management approaches*.

Akhism

Akhism is the name of an association that had collected all Anatolian tradespeople and craftsmen in an organization lived about more than six centuries. Akhism had a critical role in cooperation and unity of Anatolia as well as its social, cultural and educational composition and even in Ottoman Empire being as a longest-lived country in the world. It became a glue or an adhesive mixture in establishing and rising of Ottoman Empire, as an association collecting all tradesmen and craftsmen living in the period of the Seljuks and many small States scattered in Anatolia (Çalışkan and İkiz, 2001: 1-5; Ekinci, 1990: 15-16; Horata, 2004: 530-537).

The founder of Akhism is Akhi Evran (1172-1262) whose real name is Shaikh Nasir al-Din Abu'l-Hakaik Mahmud b. Ahmad born in Hoy town of South Azerbaijan. Leaving from Azerbaijan with his teacher Evhadüddin Kirmani and visiting different cities of Anatolia, Akhi Evran had settled in Kırşehir, a city of central Anatolia. Akhi Evran, engaged in leatherwork in Kırşehir, had walked around all cities of Anatolia to spread Akhism and finally had managed to pull all Anatolian craftsmen, tradesmen and employees in Akhism, thus provided them with equitable rights, an increasing prosperity and a life of happiness. Akhi Evran had been the leader of 32 main branches of trade or art tied to Akhism when he died in 1262 (Çağatay, 1989: 200-201; Küçükdağ, 1999: 214-228 Bayram, 1995: 49).

Akhism, of Akhi Evran, was a superior craft, trade and management association based on democratic principles. The core of this association, guided Anatolian people about 630 years in art, trade, craft and economic issues during the periods of Seljuks and Ottoman Empire, was a harmonious combination of morals, craft and trade including just human values such as justice, respect, love, commitment, confidence, friendship, cooperation, respect, quality, tolerance, patience etc. With this speciality, Akhism was a human science that was largely about socio-economic issues and aimed at human prosperity and happiness (Demir, 1999: 95-112; Keskin, 1999: 203-213; Erken, 1999: 125-138). Even more than 700 principles were counted in Akhism to secure socio-economic happiness of Akhis¹ (members of Akhism). Not only did these principles join all Anatolian people together and support Ottoman Empire to survive about 600 years, but also created some outcomes that were enough to focus attentions. For example, an American expert committee came to İstanbul to examine Ottoman Wakf System based on Akhism principles in 1921.² The committee liked the system very much and decided to adopt it to their country. While Americans were accepting that they were successful by establishing 26.000

¹ Akhi is a person who is the member of Akhism.

² Wakf is a religious or charitable foundation created by an endowed trust fund in Akhism.

wakfs until 2000 years, they were very surprised when they learned that 238.000 wakfs recorded in Ottoman Empire archives in 1926 (Tesob, 2006). Similarly, Fatma Bacı, wife of Akhi Evran, was the founder of Anatolian Women Association which is the first women organization in the world to encourage women to take a more active role in socio-economic life. The industrial sites, constructed by Akhis, included special places for women to carry out their handicrafts such as knitting, embroidery, felt, carpets, kilims, tents, etc. (Doğan, 2004: 330-331; Bayram, 1987: 38-39).

In short today, we believe that Akhism and its principles have many secrets for our social and economic units struggling to survive in a hypercompetition environment. Evidently, it is necessary to examine Akhism for new findings as well as tacit knowledge.

Tacit Knowledge

According to theoretical framework, knowledge falls into two different types: explicit and tacit one. Explicit knowledge can be expressed in formal and systematic language and shared in the form of data, scientific formulae, specifications, manuals and such like. It can be processed, transmitted and stored relatively easily. In contrast, tacit knowledge is highly personal and hard to formalise. Subjective insights, intuitions and hunches fall into this category of knowledge (Nonaka et al., 2000: 7). Also Polanyi (1966: 4-5) who was the first one to introduce the concept of tacit knowledge, argues that the portion of individual knowledge that is readily accessible to us is only a small fraction of the totality of our knowledge. He asserts that, in a sense, the knowledge that we can express in speech, writing and other explicit forms is only the tip of the intellectual iceberg. Beneath the surface of conscious thought lies a vast sea of tacit knowledge, derived from a lifetime of experience, practice, perception, and learning. And he summarizes it in a phrase of “We can know more than we can tell” (Mascitelli, 2000: 182; Koskinen and Vanharanta, 2002: 58).

Similarly, Lubit (2001: 166) claims that tacit knowledge is difficult to express, formalize, or share. It stands in contrast to explicit knowledge, which is conscious and can be put into words. An individual experiences tacit knowledge as intuition, rather than as a body of facts or instruction sets he is conscious of having and can explain to others. Tacit knowledge is “knowing how” while explicit knowledge is “knowing that” (Ropo and Parvainen, 2001: 4).

On the other hand, Fleck (1996: 119) describes tacit knowledge as: “a subtle level of understanding often difficult to put into words, a trained recognition and perception, a good feeling for the technology. This form of knowledge is wholly embodied in the individual, rooted in practice and experience, expressed through skillfull exe-

cution, and transmitted by apprenticeship and training through watching and doing forms of learning (Johannessen et al., 2001: 5). Consequently, tacit knowledge is in the business context: practical, action oriented, experienced-based, contextual linked and and personal, but not subjective or relative. It is objective, i.e, empirically testable and checkable, in sense that it is objective in its consequences. This means that the work done by the use of tacit knowledge can be tested for quality, durability, reliability and for reductions in the cost of production (Johannessen et al., 1999: 127).

Akhism and Tacit Knowledge

It is possible to see interesting principles of Akhism to encourage tacit knowledge development and sharing among Akhis. But we believe that it will be more useful and productive to examine the relation between tacit knowledge and Principles of Akhism by using the following characteristics of tacit knowledge step by step:

Difficulty of Codifying/Expressing: To have a difficulty in expressing is the most outstanding property of tacit knowledge. Because of this main property, tacit knowledge is defined as “knowing more than one can tell” (Polanyi, 1966: 4-6). In other words, tacit knowledge ignores grammatical rules or mathematical formulae and has a special content that virtually confirms or supports the phrase of “It is unexpressible but have an experience”.

Trying to express tacit knowledge looks like attempting to tell taste differences between two oranges or tea blends. Although we can easily taste and perceive the differences, we always meet a difficulty to express it (Ropo and Parvainen, 2001: 4-5). The best way to overcome this difficulty is passing the beverage or food to other person to taste it. This way makes tacit knowledge possible to share by individuals but not to express. Consequently, expressing difficulty which gives “tacit” adjective to this knowledge type can be overcome by common experience although it has not been put into any words or symbols.

Tacit-to-tacit exchange is greatly enhanced by close personal contact: indwelling with others, sharing common emotions and experiences, and coaxing forth an occasional deep insight (Mascitelli, 2000: 189). The stock of tacit knowledge accumulates through time as an individual learns a particular skill, or as members of a group or team learn to interact with each other (Berman et al., 2002: 13-21). For this reason, physical co-location and face-to-face interaction is particularly recommended by almost all scientific authorities to be an important catalyst for tacit knowledge sharing (Edmondson et al., 2003: 200). Moreover, informal relations after working hours are evaluated as one of the most critical tools for tacit knowledge sharing among the employees and hence the informal activities such as the weekend tours or

picnics in which employees can join are recommended for organizations as well as formal seminars, meetings or lectures arranged in a working year.

It is very interesting to see all recommendations told above and even more in Akhism. In this organization which arose about seven hundred years ago, apprentices learned all details of a craft from their masters by observing and doing in a continuous face-to-face interaction. Apprenticeship, lasting at least eight-years period, also was the first main condition of this organization to be a master and have an employment place and means that nobody can easily learn the tacit entity of a craft without a face-to-face interaction (Çağatay, 1989: 137-138). Furthermore Akhis joined in evening meetings to take lessons organized in Akhi lodges. These lessons were about behaviours and attitudes which Akhis followed in economic and social life (Çağatay, 1989: 137-142; Erden, 2004: 396; Akkuş, 2004: 37-41; Doğan, 2004: 329-333; Yıldız, 2002: 1). In other words, evening lessons were a key means to enhance socialization, tacit-to-tacit exchange, of Akhi members. In addition to hands-on experiences, Akhis learned and shared the world views and mental models of Akhism only through these social meetings outside of the workplace, especially evening lessons.

Perhaps the other most interesting principle of Akhism toward accelerating the socialization process of members was to choose two experienced apprentices named as “course brothers” for a new apprentice candidate. Course brotherhood lasted during all life and course brothers were responsible for each other’s behaviours neglecting or breaking any principles of Akhism. In this way, there had been an effective auto-control mechanism in Akhism to secure a high commitment and a close relation based on mutual trust, love and respect among the young (Bekki, 2004: 165-167; Tesob, 2006). It is obvious that this course brotherhood system had played a key role to create and share Akhi culture, therefore to enhance tacit-to-tacit exchange through direct experiences. As a result, course brotherhood system of Akhism can be an effective way for today’s organizations to enhance tacit-to-tacit exchange.

Apprenticeship/ Relation of Master and Apprentice: Attitudes, behaviours and actions are the real secret codes reflecting outside of tacit knowledge and work as expressing tools of tacit knowledge. As only these tools make it possible to express and share tacit knowledge, it is inevitable that there must be a master and apprentice relation in sharement of tacit knowledge (Johannessen et al., 2001, 5; Lubit, 2001: 168). In short, tacit knowledge can be acquired by having a long-time experience in the guidance of a master. Therefore tacit knowledge is a holy knowledge pool composed of dissolved and recombination of labor, eye-straining effort and patience in time-tunnel. Being an inspiration for a learner and not creating a shortage or a diminishing for a master come from this holiness speciality of tacit knowledge.

It is not so easy to reach tacit knowledge. It needs great efforts and resolution. Many obstacles and difficulties that one can face on this hard and long way may annoy and discourage him. Unfavourable conditions or unexpected problems may confuse and even make him leave his aim. Consequently, trustworthy master is like a moon risen in the middle of the night. Thanks to him it is possible to see way and escape from holes and accidents. As the master has walked through the way of tacit knowledge before, he knows all probable difficulties and troubles. When the learner loses his courage or hopes, the master appears to help him. Maybe, his behaviors influence the learner rather than his words; sometimes his glances, taking a hand with a sincere smile or standing erect and facing all difficulties calmly creates a new hope and spreads a positive energy for all followers. So the good master means right step, right direct and right result. And also good master means a guide to reach tacit knowledge in the shortest and the most secure way (İbicioğlu ve Doğan, 2006: 23-24).

What was truly unique about Akhism was that they knew the critical role of master and apprentice relation in tacit knowledge sharement very well. So one had to pass three stages, sequentially *errand boy*, *apprentice* and *qualified workman* to reach the highest position, *master* in Akhism (Çağatay, 1989: 137-139; Akkuş, 2004: 38).

In the first period of Akhism, *errand boy* who is at least ten years old is expected to carry on with a craft or an art of Akhism under the control and permission of his guardian and master. Only basic knowledge about a craft or an art is given to the errand boy in this two-years period. A person who completes this period successfully deserves to have an *apprentice* rank with a ceremony in which his master, guardian and qualified workmen are ready. In this ceremony, the master introduces the apprentice candidate and talks about his commitment and skills. Whereas this ceremony means the official acception and declaration of errand boy as a member of Akhism, it also ends with a salary determined to be paid for new apprentice (Çağatay, 1989: 137-139, 201; Burak ve Özçelik, 2004: 204-205).

On the other hand, apprenticeship period takes three years. At the end of this period, the apprentice takes part in a ceremony to get the rank of *qualified workman*. Whereas he wears a clothing which is special to the masters and experienced apprentices, his master and three others who are from different branches organized in Akhism testify in favour of his trade morals, skills and knowledge. Afterwards the president, the master of the masters, wraps pestemal, a special belt symbolizing success and rank in a craft, around the apprentice's waist and gives advices to him about trade morals and values (Torun, 1998: 182-183; Bekki, 2004: 166-168).

To get a *master* rank, a qualified workman has to be completed a three-years serving period, carried out all responsibilities successfully as well as became sensitive about educating young apprentices. Furthermore not any recorded complaint,

good relations with other apprentices, vocational commitment and love, behaving well towards customers, giving the masters a certain idea about managing a separate employment place are the other conditions that a qualified workman should have. Ceremonies are organized in spring season with the participation of religious and governal leaders of the country besides all the masters and the candidate is given master rank with prayers, advices and warnings (Çağatay, 1989: 137-139, 201; Burak ve Özçelik, 2004: 204-205; Bekki, 2004: 166-168).

Clearly, getting a master rank in Akhism requires having at least eight years experience in an activity with a compulsory working with masters (Demir, 2001: 76-82). Only through years of experience can the apprentice gain the ability to create a vocational “entity” that embodies the wealth of tacit knowledge he has acquired. Maybe the particulars of a carpentry or a leather-working can be explicitly defined, but it is impossible for a novice to master the tools without years of hands-on experience (Mascitelli, 2000). So, Akhis believe that not only does an apprentice improve his hand-skills, but also observes how the masters adress problems in an apprenticeship period. Thus, observing the masters and sharing the same atmosphere with them for many years help the apprentice both consciously and unconsciously to absorb guidelines what data to focus on, how factors are casually related, and how to adress problems. These guidelines sign the keys and ways that foster development of tacit knowledge. Moreover, Akhi masters teach the apprentices trade morals and values. As the masters know that they are also responsible for all behaviours and productions of their apprentices during their all trade life, they have to observe and teach their apprentices carefully (Sarıkaya, 2002: 72; Torun, 1998: 118; Sarıkaya, 2003: 93-110; Çağatay, 1990: 79-81). It means that the transfer of tacit knowledge in Akhism is not limited to only vocational issues. On the contrary, the masters have to be an ideal model for apprentices with their behaviours, actions and attitudes in also social issues and relations. For example honesty, respect, commitment, love, generosity, confidence, solidarity, quality are some issues which have priority to be taught in apprenticeship period of Akhism. For this reason, apprenticeship starts at small ages and takes a long time in Akhism (Çalışkan ve Yeşil, 2004: 263-265; Çalışkan ve İkiz, 2001: 81-83). Finally apprenticeship method of Akhism and its basic values such as honesty, respect, commitment, love, generosity, confidence, solidarity, quality can be a source for managers of modern organizations to develop a knowledge-sharing culture and enhance tacit-to-tacit exchange among employees.

Difficulty of Transferring/Copying: Explicit knowledge can be transferred form one location or person to other at relatively low cost. Tacit knowledge on the other hand, can be difficult and costly transfer, making it considerably less mobile than more explicit forms. Tacit knowledge is hard to replicate and “invisible” to outside

observers (Mascitelli, 2000: 183). Consequently it is possible to see products but tacit tacit knowledge creating these products is difficult to imitate by competitors (Grant 1991: 124-127; Wernerfelt, 1989: 5-8; Amit and Schoemaker, 1993: 33-40; Dierickx and Cool, 1989: 1507-1509; Johannessen et al., 2001: 11).

Trying to imitate tacit knowledge looks like a romanticism of a poet or a painter. While it is possible to see the high ability or the expressing power from the picture or the lines of the poetry, it does not make an assurance to reach the spirit from which romanticism is coming out. Therefore tearing the picture and poetry document or scratching up the hearts of the artists with a desire to reach the places at which artists' creative spirits live will not be useful for anybody.

Acquiring in a long time by overcoming many difficulties and having various experiences makes it difficult to replicate or imitate tacit knowledge for others. Otherwise it will not be a just way. For this reason, trying to reach the same knowledge stock or experience of a craftsman who had accumulated for many years as in a one-year program will not go further than a dream. This reality including the difficulty or even the impossibility of having a knowledge stock of many years in a shorter time is defined by the Law of Time Compression Diseconomies (Dierickx and Cool, 1989: 1508). As the knowledge of a craftsman is not a knowledge type accumulated in a few days, it is necessary to strive and accept the risk of passing the same patience-process to reach tacit knowledge as the formers. So it does not seem possible to imitate tacit knowledge except to experience.

Imitating difficulty of tacit knowledge on the other hand, means that nobody can easily acquire tacit knowledge stock unless the owner wants to share it. Moreover, as the knowledge is the most critical power to create a sustainable competitive advantage in every field and every position, there can be a personal tendency to get a monopoly on knowledge, especially tacit one which is to be easily hidden. For example, if a master or a craftsman has not a desire to share his knowledge, apprentices may not have many chances to learn much knowledge from this cooperation. For that reason, the main principle of Akhism was sharement. Furthermore, the dictionary meaning of "Akhi" is "generous" coming from Turkish "Akı" word explained in the oldest Turkish dictionary, Kutadgu Bilig (Demirbilek, 2004: 277; Dinçer, 2004: 315). And also Akhi accepts other as a brother. So he is generous and ready to share his assets with his brothers (Çağatay, 1989: 199). For Akhis, sharement is a unique way to catch human happiness. Especially, knowledge is the most valuable thing to share in the world for Akhis. Therefore ignorance and unemployment were accepted as the most two shameful things in the world for an Akhi, whereas learning, teaching and working were accepted as worshipping (Şeker, 2004: 837-850).

On the other hand, imitation was forbidden in Akhism. For example some goods were produced by all craftsmen or tradepeople, whereas some were being produced by only a few ones and their prices were different. If a craftsman developed a special thing, its production right belonged to him. And other craftsmen promised that they would not copy it. For example, the production right of weight-cutting prayer rugs belonged to Nišo, a non-muslim master, and all prayer rug producers promised to not copy it (Tesob, 2006). So this application was a means of encouraging tacit knowledge using among Akhis. This method, forbidding imitation, in Akhism can be an effective way for modern organizations to explore tacit knowledge potential and hender it effectively to create a sustainable competitive advantage.

Activity Based Learning/Learning By Doing: One of the major characteristics of tacit knowledge is its operational relevance. This knowledge, which is derived from personal and contingent practical learning, is actually oriented towards the accomplishment of specific tasks. Therefore, this practical knowledge is rooted in action, commitment, and involvement in a specific context (Boiral, 2002: 297). For example, a dancer's personal knowledge embraces the use of certain body techniques, personal movement skills and other acquisitions concerning the whole process of creating choreography and performing it. By repeating movement exercises and listening to the moving body, a dancer acquires a knowledge of dancing that can not be reached by any other means such as reading books on the subject (Ropo and Parvainen, 2001: 7). Similarly it is impossible to see a barber or a carpenter who acquired his practical knowledge only by reading or listening, whereas possible to see many skillfull ones who does not know reading or writing. This is an important sign that tacit knowledge is practical, action-oriented but does not create a meaning that there is no need for explicit one to support tacit knowledge sharing. On the contrary, organizational knowledge is created through a continuous dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge (Johannessen et al., 2001: 8).

Because of its operational characteristics, tacit knowledge is usually expressed in terms of "knowing how" and "power coming from experience" which brings a wine or an oil-expert experiences to the minds. To become an expert wine or oil taster, one has to acquire a knowledge of innumerable different wines or oils by testing and studying them. On this account, tacit knowledge is characteristics of the expert who acts, makes judgements and so forth without explicitly reflecting on the principles or rules involved (Ropo and Parvainen, 2001: 4).

All told above shows that on-the-job activities, learning by doing, using experimenting and interacting are the most valuable processes to constitute tacit knowledge in organizations. Therefore many different systems or concepts in management such as delayering, employee empowerment, participative management, flexible or

autonomous working conditions are recommended in recent studies to create a more suitable environment for employees to show and share their skills and knowledge.

We hope that the following Akhi story talked about for centuries in Turkish culture is an outstanding event to show how Akhis consider *learning by doing*, *apprenticeship* and *commitment* important issues in acquiring tacit knowledge.

An apprentice working for many years in a place producing earthenware water jugs, vases, and jars decides to leave and open his own workshop as he thinks that he becomes an expert. He says his leaving decision to his master and adds that he has a right to open his own employment place. The master, at first, smiles and says to him “you have not learned the the key “püf” point of the matter yet”. The apprentice objects to the words of his master and do not pay attention to his endless advices. Finally the apprentice opens a workshop to produce earthenware water jugs, vases and jars without getting the master’s approval. But he could not managed to produce well-made jugs, vases and jars in spite of the same earthenware he used as well as the same methods he applied. All jugs, vases and jars clack in spite of all fastidious struggles of the apprentice. When the apprentice realizes that he can not stop these clacks, he goes to tell the problem to his master in an ashamed manner. The master listens to his old apprentice and says to him “I have already said to you, there is a most important part (püf point) of this craft to become a specialist and you have not learned it yet”.

The master decides to teach the key “püf” point of the craft to his old apprentice. He puts some earthware on the workbench and says to his old apprentice “make a jug now!”. When the apprentice begins turning the roller by his foot and shaping the earthware by his hands, the master follows the roller carefully and sometimes he blows on (with sounds of “püf” coming out between the lips of master) the earthware on the roller and removes all bubbles which can clack the jug later. In this way, the apprentice learns the “püf” (the most important/delicate) point of the craft. Since then, the phrase “there is a “püf point” of every craft and work” is told in Akhism as well as Turkish culture (Tesob, 2006).

The “püf point” story is a metaphorical example emphasizing the significance of *learning by doing* and *commitment* in Akhism to secure a high position in a craft or art. We know that recent researches highlight the effectiveness of using metaphor as a way of communicating a guiding vision in an almost subliminal manner, so that much of its significance is tacitly understood. So metaphorical descriptions or phrases are particularly recommended for organizations to enable team members to free-associate and “dream” of an ultimate design that captures the essence of a guiding vision, rather than simply following explicit specifications (Mascitelli, 2000: 186; Jones and Estes, 2005: 110-113). In that context, “püf point” is a perfect meta-

phor guiding all Akhis to perceive the role of commitment and activity based learning in tacit knowledge sharement. Also we see that many metaphorical stories, phrases inherited from Akhism are used in Turkish culture to emphasize key elements to succeed in economic and social life. For example the phrase “pabucu dama atılmak” means one loses his esteem in Turkish culture. Because Akhis used it when one lost his esteem among coworkers and had to close down his workshop because of a poor quality good. Similarly, the phrase “eline, diline, beline sahip olmak” means that one always keep himself under control not to hurt anybody with his actions and behaviours. This phrase was the main principle in Akhism. Also it is possible to count more phrases guiding members in Akhism. But it is obvious that these stories and phrases facilitated tacit knowledge sharement among Ahis (Erden, 2004: 388-389; Seyfeli, 2004: 801-820). In other words all principles of Akhism or Akhi culture which were tacitly understood by all members through these stories and phrases can be an outstanding example for today’s modern organizations.

Testable outcomes of tacit knowledge: Nontestable of tacit knowledge: The work done by the use of tacit knowledge can be tested for quality, durability, reliability and for reductions in the cost of production. Tacit knowledge is as real as explicit knowledge but the processes to get this kind of knowledge, i.e. tacit knowing, rely on awareness of details we can not specify or test in any scientific way (Johannessen et al., 1999: 127). For example, two different hand-made armchairs can be compared with respect to durability, aesthetic, ergonomics criteria. Similarly taste and appearance criteria can be used to compare foods. But there seems to be impossible and not a scientific way to instantly measure the tacit knowledge potential of two carpenters or cooks, or how they acquired it. So the outcomes explain why many people prefer the same carpenter or cook in their lives.

As a result of the outcomes being only concrete fruits of tacit knowledge, Akhis considered quality important and punished the craftsmen who did not succeed in getting a certain quality in any branch of an art or trade. In Akhism, there were definite principles for the number of apprentices to be employed in a workshop as well as product quality. The master was not able to employ more than what a limit the Akhi organization determined to sustain a quality in production and education facilities besides an effective control in a workshop (Akkuş, 2002: 95-100; Kılavuz, 2004: 615-628). Moreover in any cases of supplying the goods of poor quality, obeying the production standards, not paying the salaries of apprentices, exploiting an errand boy labour, and finally not teaching the craft to the apprentices, the master was sentenced to close down his workshop (Perşembe, 2004: 775-784; Erden, 2004: 389-392; Erbaş ve Ersöz, 2004: 360-364). As a result, just the high quality of works and goods living for centuries and even can create admirations today is the most impor-

tant evidence that the work and moral principles followed by Akhis succeeded in increasing tacit knowledge potential and sharement in every craft and art of Akhism. Therefore, the principle “take care of work, not words” of Akhism can be a basic policy for modern organizations to develop tacit knowledge and get the tangible outcomes of tacit knowledge.

Conclusions

It is a common agreement that organizations are living in a rapidly changing world characterized by globalization, turbulence, complexity and hypercompetition. Within this picture, signifying the transition from an industrial society to a knowledge-based society, we have witnessed an increasing focus on knowledge, especially tacit one as the most important resources for organizations (Johannessen et al., 2001: 3-4). Clearly, main characteristics of tacit knowledge, namely rooted in action and difficulties of codifying, transferring, copying and measuring make it more valuable and vital for organizations in a continuous innovation and sustainable competitive advantage (Mascitelli, 2000: 179-193; Lubit, 2001: 164-178; Koskinen, 2000: 179-193; Koskinen and Vanharanta, 2002: 57-64; Johannessen et al., 1999: 121-139; Dierickx and Cool, 1989: 1504-1513; Reed and DeFillippi, 1990: 88-102; Hamel and Prahalad, 1989: 63-76).

On the other hand, we know that the more tacit an organization's productive knowledge, the harder it is to replicate not only by competitors, but also by the organization itself (Johannessen et al., 2001: 11). For this reason, many have argued that how organizations can develop and spread tacit knowledge among their employees. But perhaps the most important part of these discussions and studies is many ways or methods recommended for ongoing organizations were already used similarly in Akhism. In other words, many vital tools of modern management techniques such as face-to-face interactions, informal meetings, apprenticeship, stories, metaphors, commitment, trust, love and respect among employees for effective sharing of tacit knowledge were also main Principles of Akhism. Moreover, we believe that Akhism is still relatively unexplored and has many secrets and principles for modern organizations to spread and share tacit knowledge. For example, sharing without expecting any benefits, accepting others as a brother and teaching him, learning and teaching during all life are some key principles of Akhism for tacit knowledge sharing in organizations as well as world peace. In this context, this article may be seen as part of an effort to focus attention on Akhism to get special clues for modern organizations and management techniques. It is hoped that this article will prove useful to further research by searching for tacit knowledge in Akhism.

Ahilik Kültüründe Örtülü Bilgi Arayışı

Özet: Bu makale örtülü bilginin kavramsal bir analiziyle birlikte, örtülü bilginin sanat ve ticaret sahipleri arasındaki gelişim ve paylaşımını artıran genel Ahilik ilkeleri üzerinde durmaktadır. Makalenin amacı, sürdürülebilir bir rekabet avantajı yaratmada örtülü bilginin kilit rolünü vurgulamakla beraber, çağdaş örtülü bilgi geliştirme yöntemleri ile Ahilik ilkeleri arasındaki çarpıcı benzerliklere dikkat çekmektir. Bu anlamda makale Ahilik prensiplerinin örtülü bilgi potansiyelini yayma ve geliştirmede günümüz organizasyonlarına bir kaynak ya da bir rehber olup olamayacağını konu edinmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Örtülü bilgi, Ahilik.

References

- Amit, R. and Schoemaker, P. (1993), "Strategic Assets and Organizational Rent", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 14: 33-46.
- Akkuş, A. (2004), "Ahilik Teşkilatlarına Tarihsel Bir Perspektiften Bakış", *I. Ahi Evran-ı Veli ve Ahilik Araştırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı*, G. Ü. Ahilik Kültürünü Araştırma Merkezi, C. 1 (Kırşehir): 27-41.
- Akkuş, M. (2002), "Farklı Bir Ahilik İcazetnamesi", *Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi*, S. 21, Bahar: 95-100.
- Bayram, M. (1987), *Bacıyan-ı Rum*, (Konya).
- Bayram, M. (1995), *Ahi Evren Tasavvufi Düşüncenin Esasları*, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları (Ankara).
- Bekki, S. (2004), "Ahiliğe Giriş Törenlerinin Bilmecelerle İlişkisi", *I. Ahi Evran-ı Veli ve Ahilik Araştırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı*, G. Ü. Ahilik Kültürünü Araştırma Merkezi, C. 1 (Kırşehir): 163-176.
- Berman L. B., Down J. & Hill W. C. (2002), Tacit Knowledge as a Source of Competitive Advantage in The National Basketball Association, *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (2002): 13-31.
- Boiral, O. (2002), Tacit Knowledge and Environmental Management, *Long Range Planning*, 35: 291-317.
- Burak, M. ve Özçelik, N. (2004), "Ahilik Eğitim Anlayışının Cumhuriyet Dönemi Meslek Eğitimine Yansımaları", *I. Ahi Evran-ı Veli ve Ahilik Araştırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı*, G. Ü. Ahilik Kültürünü Araştırma Merkezi, C. 1 (Kırşehir): 201-212.
- Çağatay, N. (1989), *Bir Türk Kurumu Olan Ahilik*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, (Ankara).
- Çağatay, N. (1990), *Ahilik Nedir*, Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, (Ankara).
- Çalışkan, N. ve Yeşil, R. (2004), "Evrensel Değerler Açısından Ahi Evran'ın Didaktik Anlayışı ve Türk Mesleki Eğitim Sistemine Yansımaları", *I. Ahi Evran-ı Veli ve Ahilik Araştırma-*

- ları Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı , G. Ü. Ahilik Kùltürünü Arařtırma Merkezi, C. 1 (Kırřehir): 261-268.
- Çalıřkan, Y. ve İkiiz, M. Y. (2001), *Kùltür Sanat ve Medeniyetimizde Ahilik*, T. C. Kùltür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2. Baskı (Ankara).
- Demir, G. (1999), "Osmanlı İmparatorluđu'nun Kuruluşunda Ahilerin Rolü", *II. Uluslararası Ahilik Kùltürü Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, T. C. Kùltür Bakanlığı Yayınları, (Ankara): 95-112.
- Demir, G. (2001), "Ahilik ve Yükselen Deđerler", *Görüř*, Ocak: 76-82.
- Demirbilek, S. (2004), "Ahilik Kelimesinin Kökenine Dair", *I. Ahi Evran-ı Veli ve Ahilik Arařtırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı* , G. Ü. Ahilik Kùltürünü Arařtırma Merkezi, C. 1 (Kırřehir): 277-283.
- Dierickx, I and Cool, K. (1989), "Asset Stock Accumulation and Sustainability of Competitive Advantage", *Management Science*, Vol. 35, No. 12: 1504-1513.
- Diñer, A. (2004), "Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü'nde Ahilikle İlgili Kavramlar", *I. Ahi Evran-ı Veli ve Ahilik Arařtırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı* , G. Ü. Ahilik Kùltürünü Arařtırma Merkezi, C. 1 (Kırřehir): 311-322.
- Dođan, İ. (2004), "Bir Sivil Toplum Kuruluşu olarak Ahilik", *I. Ahi Evran-ı Veli ve Ahilik Arařtırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı* , G. Ü. Ahilik Kùltürünü Arařtırma Merkezi, C. 1 (Kırřehir): 323-335.
- Edmondson, A., Winslow, A., Bohmer, R. and Pisano, G. (2003), "Learning How and Learning What: Effects of Tacit and Codified Knowledge on Performance Improvement Following Technology Adoption", *Decision Sciences*, Vol. 34, No. 2: 197-223.
- Ekinci, Y. (1990), *Ahilik ve Mesleki Eđitim*, Milli Eđitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1. Baskı (Ankara).
- Erbası, A. ve Ersöz, S. (2004), "AB Programına Uyum Çerçevesinde KOBİ'lerin Rekabet Gücü ve Kalitesindeki Artı Deđerlerin Geliřtirilmesi Adına: Ahilik", *I. Ahi Evran-ı Veli ve Ahilik Arařtırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı* , G. Ü. Ahilik Kùltürünü Arařtırma Merkezi, C. 1 (Kırřehir): 359-369.
- Erden, O. (2004), "Ahilik Kùltürünün Endüstriyel Kalite Kontrolüne Yansımaları", *I. Ahi Evran-ı Veli ve Ahilik Arařtırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı* , G. Ü. Ahilik Kùltürünü Arařtırma Merkezi, C. 1 (Kırřehir): 381-397.
- Erken, V. (1999), "Ahilik Teřkilatının Vizyonu", *II. Uluslararası Ahilik Kùltürü Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, T. C. Kùltür Bakanlığı Yayınları, (Ankara): 125-138.
- Fleck, J. (1996), Informal information flow and the nature of expertise in financial services. *International Journal of Technology Management*, 11 (1-2): 104-128.
- Grant, M. R. (1991), "The Resource-Based Theory of Competitive Advantage: Implications for Strategy Formulation", *California Management Review*: 114-135.
- Hamel, G. and Prahalad, C. K., (1989), "Strategic Intent", *Harvard Business Review*, (May-June 1989): 63-76.

- Horata, O. (2004), "Osmanlı Toplum Yapısının Temel Dinamikleri: Mevlevilik, Bektaşilik ve Ahilik", *I. Ahi Evran-ı Veli ve Ahilik Araştırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı*, G. Ü. Ahilik Kültürünü Araştırma Merkezi, C. 1 (Kırşehir): 527-539.
- İbicioğlu, H. ve Doğan, H. (2006), *İşletmelerde Örtülü Bilgi ve Önemi*, Ekin Kitabevi (Bursa).
- Johannessen A. J., Olaisen, J. & Olsen B. (1999), Aspects of innovation theory based on knowledge-management, *International Journal of Information Management*, 19: 121-139.
- Johannessen A. J., Olaisen, J. & Olsen B. (2001), Mismanagement of tacit knowledge: the importance of tacit knowledge, the danger of information technology, and what to do about it, *International Journal of Information Management*, 21: 3-20.
- Jones, L. And Estes, Z. (2005), "Metaphor comprehension as attributive categorization", *Journal of Memory and Language*, 53: 110-124.
- Keskin, M. (1999), "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Hayatının Tanziminde Ahiliğin Oynadığı Rol", *II. Uluslararası Ahilik Kültürü Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, T. C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, (Ankara): 203-213.
- Kılavuz, M. (2004), "Ahilik Kurumunda Din ve Ahlak Eğitimi Anlayışı", *I. Ahi Evran-ı Veli ve Ahilik Araştırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı*, G. Ü. Ahilik Kültürünü Araştırma Merkezi, C. 2 (Kırşehir): 615-628.
- Küçükdağ, Y. (1999), "Osmanlı Döneminde Konya'da Ahilik ve Ahiler", *II. Uluslararası Ahilik Kültürü Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, T. C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, (Ankara): 214-228.
- Lubit, R. (2001), Tacit Knowledge and Knowledge Management: The Keys to Sustainable Competitive Advantage, *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 29, No. 4: 164-178.
- Malone, D. (2002), Knowledge Management: A Model For Organizational Learning, *International Journal of Accounting Information Systems*, 3: 111-123.
- Mascitelli, R. (2000), From Experience: Harnessing Tacit Knowledge to Achieve Break-through Innovation, *J. Prod. Innov. Manag.*, Vol. 17: 179-193.
- Perşembe, E. (2004), "Günümüz Türk Toplumunda Meslek Ahlakını Geliştirmede Ahilik Kültürünün Önemi", *I. Ahi Evran-ı Veli ve Ahilik Araştırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı*, G. Ü. Ahilik Kültürünü Araştırma Merkezi, C. 2 (Kırşehir): 775-784.
- Polanyi, M. (1966) *The Tacit Dimension*, Doubleday & Company (New York).
- Reed, R. and DeFillippi, J. R. (1990), "Casual Ambiguity, Barriers to Imitation, and Sustainable Competitive Advantage", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 15, No. 1: 88-102.
- Ropo A., Parvainen J. (2001), Leadership and bodily knowledge in expert organizations: epistemological rethinking, *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 17: 1-18.
- Sarıkaya, S. (2002), *XII-XVI Asırlardaki Anadolu'da Fütüvvetnamelere Göre Dini İnanç Motifleri*, Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları (Ankara).
- Sarıkaya, S. (2003), "Alevilik ve Bektaşiliğin Ahilikle İlişkisi", *İslamiyat*, S. 3: 93-110.
- Seyfeli, M. (2004), "Ahi Evran-ı Veli İle İlgili Kırşehir'de Anlatılan Efsane ve Menkabeler", *I. Ahi Evran-ı Veli ve Ahilik Araştırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı*, G. Ü. Ahilik Kültürünü Araştırma Merkezi, C. 2 (Kırşehir): 801-820.

38 Hulusi Dođan

Şeker, M. (2004), "Fütüvvetnameler ve Ahilik", *I. Ahi Evran-ı Veli ve Ahilik Araştırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı*, G. Ü. Ahilik Kültürünü Araştırma Merkezi, C. 2 (Kırşehir): 837-850.

Tesob (2006), www.tesob.org.tr/ahi.htm. Ahilik Nedir? .

Torun, A. (1998), *Türk Edebiyatında Türkçe Fütüvvet-Nameler*, Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları (Ankara).

Wernerfelt, B. (1989), "From Critical Resources to Corporate Strategy", *Journal of General Management*, Vol. 14, No. 3: 4-12.

Yıldız, A. (2002), www.ilkadimdergisi.com., "Ahilik ve Kültürümüzdeki Yeri".