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Stone People, Tree People and Animal People in Turkic Asia and Eastern Europe

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In the 17th century the Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi, who was visiting the Turkmen nomads from the Karakoyunlu tribe in the north-west of Iran, was extremely surprised by one of the key elements of the faith of the people, who were nonetheless Muslim: worshipping trees, beside which they lit candles and to whose bark they attached pieces of iron. Two centuries later the same astonishment can be read of in the report presented to the Ottoman sultan Abdul-hamid II by one of his agents on the topic of some nomad peoples from Anatolia in present-day Turkey; in this report it says they blindly worship 'the great trees and monumental rocks that are touched by the first rays of the rising sun'.[1] Ethnologists witnessed the same phenomenon in Anatolia and the Balkans in the 20th century; one of them noted that the tree cult was very much alive in the second area and even invented the neologism 'dendrolatry'.[2]

The relationship with nature of the Turkic-speaking peoples of Europe (Balkans), Turkey and central Asia has several special features that do not exist among their Muslim co-religionists in the Middle East and North Africa. They are the consequence of a cross-fertilization of beliefs and practices inspired on the one hand by Islam, more especially Arab-Muslim philosophy (Ibn Sina, al-Farabi) and Sufism, and on the other by animism, shamanism and Buddhism. This cross-fertilization is not reflected in the Islam of the large urban centres of Islamo-Turkic civilization (Konya, Istanbul, Bukhara, Samarkand), where the rule is in fact fidelity to the most orthodox religious tradition as handed down by Arab scholars. It appears in human groups that settle at a distance from centres of learning, in the forests and plains of the Deliorman and Dobroudja (present-day Bulgaria and Romania), in central and eastern Anatolia (Turkey), in desert areas (Turkmenistan), steppes (Kazakhstan) or high mountains (Tianchan, Pamirs), as well as some isolated oases in eastern Turkestan (Kashghar, Turfan). This cross-fertilization, which began with the introduction of Islam into central Asia (7th century), is still continuing today in these areas and all those where Turkic peoples settled (Russia, Asia

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Minor/Turkey and eastern Europe). It took the form of an Islam, labelled 'heterodox', which was first of all restricted to rural areas before being carried by the flight from the land in the 20th century into the heart of the old centres of learning, which today have become big modern cities: Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, Kazan, Istanbul. This heterodox Islam inevitably found itself in conflict with orthodox Islam, which rapidly became dominant as the state ideology of the Ottomans and in the various central Asian emirates, and remained the standard religion for the Turks in kemalist Turkey and ex-soviet and Maoist central Asia. In Turkey the representatives of this heterodox Islam, who used to be called Turkoman, Kïzïlbash (red heads), have been known since the late 19th century by the name Alevi; at the present time they form a population of around 10–15 million individuals. In central Asia heterodoxy runs through popular Islam but is not a distinguishing feature of any particular group.

In Islam, as in Judaism and Christianity, nature is in general seen as a place, which may be unique but is ordinary, where man lives, the only creature worthy of 'salvation', to whom alone the holy texts are addressed in order to teach the 'right way'. The respect or sympathy that is sometimes directed towards nature/creation seems ancillary and in no way resembles, as we shall see below, the great esteem accorded it by most Asian religions, more especially those that are still influenced by animism and shamanism. However, exception must be made of certain marginal mystical or theosophical sects (Kabbala, magic, alchemy, Sufism), which do have several similarities to these Asian religions. Nevertheless the vision of nature is quite different in Turkish and central Asian heterodox Islam and some strands of Muslim mysticism (Sufism).

The religious and philosophical influences that come together to form this original vision of nature are threefold. The first is from the animistic and shamanistic faith of the Turkic nomads of Asia, which has much in common with that of the region's other nomadic peoples. The second influence, which might be described as an immanentism, is a descendant of Neoplatonic philosophy, recast in the context of Arabo-Muslim philosophy and Sufism. This strand has similar features to the 'magic panvitalism' of Paracelsus[3] and the 'energetism' that prevails in eastern Asia. And finally the third influence comes from belief in the transmigration of beings borrowed from shamanism or central Asian Buddhism.

Thinking on Supernature

Roberte Hamayon writes that the concept of 'Supernature' seems more appropriate than animism to characterize 'a mode of thought that attributes to natural beings and things a soul similar to that of humans', and to indicate 'all the symbolic entities associated with nature': '"Supernature" is "above" or prior to nature only insofar as it animates it and determines its "life"; it is the symbolic component of nature but can only express itself through nature: in other words, every supernatural being has a natural form.'[4] In animistic Asia the worship of mountains, springs, stones, rocks, plants and animals predominates; these are all beings with which human communities have a number of relationships. And traces of that worship were introduced into

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the Mediterranean region, west of the Urals and into Europe by Turkic nomads who had embraced Islam. All the creatures of Supernature and nature are linked through alliances forged between human groups and animal societies, or by the willing transformation of people into animals or plants or even stones. And so it comes about that all beings in nature see themselves as clothed in the same dignity, with none being superior to another.

The cult of trees and the forest, which is linked to that of mountains and water, predominates; indeed trees play a part in legends of the origin of Turkic peoples since they are thought to be an emanation of the Supreme Being Tangri. The beech (*kayïn agaçï*), the juniper (*ardïç*), the pine or fir (*çam*), the oak (*çïnar*) and the poplar (*servi*) are especially venerated.[5] In central Asia the shaman is sometimes identified with the beech (*kayïn agaçi*), a tree that is planted when he starts to officiate then is cut down when he dies.[6] The shaman also inscribes on his drum, under the drawing of the rainbow, the name 'Mr Beech'. This name is confirmed in a sacred song dedicated to the tree: 'Holy Beech with the golden leaves / Holy Beech with the eight shadows / Mr Beech with the nine roots and the eight golden leaves.'[7] The name also exists among Bashqurds, who give it to old trees, and in the Altaï mountains, from which the Turks originated.[8] The usage spread among Muslim Turks, who still address trees calling them 'Mr' (*bey / bay*). This can be seen from the late 11th century in the first literary classic in Turkic, by Mahmûd Kashgharî, which mentions the toponym 'Mr Tree' (Bay Yïgaç), situated between the towns of Kucha and Uch in eastern Turkestan (now in China).[9] And still today Islamized shamans in the region use beech leaves to treat their sick.

On the other hand, in the Oghuz Turks'[10] epic cycle – the 'Book of Dede Korkut' – God (Allah in his Tangri shape) is mentioned with the 'face of Water', and it is noteworthy that the most important of the ritual prayers is performed in honour of a tree: 'may your tree with the generous shade not be cut down' – Tangri being sometimes identified with a majestic tree.[11] Further to the west, in Muslim Anatolia among the Tahtacï, we find a prayer addressed to the elements: 'mountains, stones, great trees and rivers, carry away the sickness my child is suffering from!'[12] Finally we know of several 'tree saints', such as Çïnar Dede (the oak saint), Çitlenbik Dede (the terebinth saint), Agaç Baba (the tree saint), Aqteräk Khojam (the white poplar master), an indication that a being can pass at will from the human mode of life to the plant mode.

This phenomenon is even more marked between people and animals, especially with deer, high shamanism's favourite animal, and with birds.[13] For instance, the Yürük and Tahtacï tribes still living in present-day Turkey think deer live in communities on the human model and form a tribe with its own law, organization and chiefs, a belief that is without a doubt inherited from ancient Turkic societies where human clans maintained relations with animal clans.[14] A tribe in Turkmenistan even calls itself 'the Grey Deer'. What is more surprising is that, according to a Pamir tale, after a long period of hunting-war during which men and ibex were killed, a peace was concluded between the two societies and a young Kirghiz took a female ibex as his companion.[15] So human and animal societies are no longer opposed but complementary. Patrick Garonne, who has studied the bestiary of central Asian beliefs, draws the conclusion that one of the ways of perceiving animality in central Asia is to see it as 'variants of Supernature', with the region's peoples conceiving of species

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as ‘fundamentally undifferentiated’.[16] In Turkish Islam, just as we find ‘tree saints’, we also discover the presence of saints who are identified with deer and birds, imitate their society or live close to them or simply worship these animals: Geyikli Baba (the deer Baba), Karaca Ahmed (Ahmed the roe), Karaca Oglan (son of the roe), Ghaz Khojam (the goose master), Lachin Khojam (the falcon master), Khoraz Khojam (the cockerel saint).

Veneration of mountains, and by extension rocks and stones, is just as important in the Turkic world, as noted by the sultan’s agent quoted above, who described the cult of ‘monumental rocks touched by the first rays of the rising sun’. However, we find very few stone men, unlike plant men and animal men, and I have not recorded the existence of any ‘stone saint’ analogous to the tree or stag saints. Nevertheless, in the whole of Anatolia, isolated piles of rocks between hills and valleys are given the name *dede*, a title normally granted to respectable people or Sufi *shaykh*. And the people believe that some of these stones represent men who have lost their lives at the spot where they stand; they are called *düshek* (deceased) and tradition requires that they be highly respected.[17] The stone man identification is thus a reality, even if it is not as widespread as the plant or animal identification. In another context stones, a rock or a wall may be made to move, ‘brought to life’ by Sufi saints who bestride them in order to move about, but in this case nothing indicates that the stone, rock or wall possesses a life of its own. Several of the ‘holy stones’ are, like trees, the object of worship in the sanctuaries of heterodox Islam. To quote examples, there are the 40 stones of Abdal Musa’s mausoleum (Turkey), that are arranged in a circle and according to legend are said to have thrown themselves into the ecstatic dance of the Sufis (*samâ*), or the ‘exceptional stones’ (*khasiyyatlik tash*), two impressive blocks, almost perfectly oval in shape, in Akhtäm Buzrukvar mausoleum (Xinjiang, China).[18]

Today the Turkic world is largely Islamized and beliefs from animistic and shamanistic sources that promote an intimate relationship between humans and all creatures, animate and inanimate, are fiercely combated by orthodox Islam’s representatives. Nevertheless those beliefs dominate in regions where Islam has not been firmly planted – the rural context – and central Asia, the area they originated from, where there survives today an ‘Islamized shamanism’, unknown among western Turks, which retains part of the shaman’s original functions.[19]

The mysticism of immanence

Greek Neoplatonism (Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus) passed on to Islam part of its cosmology and vision of nature. After being revisited by Muslim philosophy (Ibn Sina, al-Farabi), it then became a mystical theory via certain strands of Sufism, particularly in the writings of Ibn Arabi. Two of the four great principles structuring Greek Neoplatonism, according to Pierre Hadot, are the principle of immanence in which ‘all multiplicity is somehow contained in the unity that transcends it’; which leads to an interpenetration of all things in their state of involution within the principle, before those things separate off in their state of evolution. The second principle rests on ‘the existence of a dynamic continuity due to which beings or ideas

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pass into each other . . .'.[20] Between the One, Reality or Pure Being, which stands at the apex of the Neoplatonic world, and animate or inanimate bodies of matter – the world and nature as we know them – there are intermediate worlds emanating from original Unity that are more or less subtle or corporeal depending on how close they are to the apex or the base. This vision of the world, which also influenced Jewish Kabbala, Christian theology (Denis the Areopagite, Master Eckhart) and its esoterism, is known as the 'theory of hypostases', 'emanative theory' or 'theory of processions'. Nature is at the lowest level in this emanative process; as Pierre Hadot writes, it is definitely the lowest part of Reality, in fact an 'invisible corporeal power wrapped in visible corporeal forms'.[21] Thus gods, demons, humans, animals, plants, stones 'have a part', to a different degree, in Reality and the One.

The theory of emanation retains its philosophical dimension in Muslim thinkers like Avicenna or al-Farabî, but loses it in the mystical theology of Sufism, where theory turns into an article of faith. In the school following the Andalusian mystic Ibn Arabî, it assumes the title 'theory of the Oneness of Being' (*vahdet-i Vücûd*) and requires of individuals who have become aware of their state as ultimately emanated, and understood their community of essence with the whole of the rest of creation, the duty to make their way back towards their creator, towards their origins, towards the state of 'perfect individual' (*insân-i kamil*).[22] Similarly the theory of the Oneness of Being is harmonized with the credo of Islam: emanation becomes 'manifestation' (*tecelli*). The theory did not affect Islam's scholarly circles alone but also spread, in rigid ossified forms, into the popular world. The chief Turkish mystical poets, starting with Yunus Emre in the 13th–14th century, referred to it constantly. The theory of the Oneness of Being was also transmitted, in symbolic mode, through the choreography of the dances performed by the whirling dervishes (*Mevleviye*), who in that way experienced the descent and return of beings and went through all stages of the created.

It is in the poetic expression of this theory of the Oneness of Being, as it occurs in the literary genre known as 'cyclical mode' (*devriyye*),[23] which was used in both scholarly and popular contexts, that the intimate relationship between human and other animate and inanimate forms of creation is most obvious. The poetic genre is a mystical confession in which the Sufi poet tells of his lived or imagined experience of souls' descent and return; thus he experiences in turn the modes of existence of the separate soul, the human, the animal, the plant and even the mineral.

> The Creator turned me into a palace of clay and straw, then he turned me into a human being, then he turned me into an animal, a plant, a metal, a leaf, earth. Now he turned me into a spiritual teacher, now a young disciple . . .
>
> (Kaygusuz Abdal, 15th century)[24]

> I have travelled much in the world of the elements
> I was a wandering wind crossing the mountains,
> I kneaded the earth; turning to water, I overflowed,
> Due to the force of the flood, I reached the ocean.
> Sometimes below, sometimes above,
> I swam in the seas, I flew in the skies,

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A gazelle, I took my ease in waterless deserts,
Because of the light of consciousness, I reached the animal [stage].
. . .
After obeying the rules, I reached the human stage.

(Rïza Tevfik, 20th century)[25]

And so, in accordance with the theory of emanation and in a different mode from that inspired by the thinking on Supernature, the Muslim mystic becomes a stone man, a plant man and an animal man; his love and consideration thus extend to all creatures, animate and inanimate, as to all expressions of the original source from which everything emanated. Unlike thinking on Supernature this theory influenced not only heterodox Islamic groups but several other mystical schools associated with orthodoxy, and Sufi brotherhoods in the Muslim world in general and Turkey in particular. Furthermore, according to a commentary on it, the theory may show a marked tendency towards pantheism, which drew strong condemnations of it from doctors of religion.

This was only one step away from deducing reincarnationism (*tenasûh*, *hulûl*) and the idea of the transmigration of souls from the theory of the Oneness of Being. That came about slowly in Turkic mystical and heterodox circles that were influenced by Asian ways of thinking, shamanism[26] and Buddhism. Indeed residual Buddhist beliefs were absorbed by the Turks of central Asia, traces of a period when that religion was dominant in the region.[27] Belief in the transmigration of souls is firmly rooted among the Alevis and the Sufis from the Bektashi order. The former, for example, maintain that after they die individuals will take on a human form if they have done good during their lives; if the opposite is true, they will be reincarnated as animals. But we should note that reincarnationism of Buddhist origin has been fused with the animistic belief in change of state or transformationism.

Several views of nature

So the original vision of nature offered by Turkic heterodox groups is the result of a combination of thinking on Supernature, the theory of the Oneness of Being and reincarnation. However, this combination is not uniform and, according to human groups and periods, one or other of these strands predominates in the mix. This is still the case today; some Alevi groups clearly demonstrate their belief in the transmigration of souls, while this belief is denied by others, who instead emphasize transformation. In fact present-day reincarnationism among the Alevis and the Bektashis is an incomplete syncretism. Similarly worship of trees or rocks is not as strong from one region, or even one village, to another, and even among the Alevi groups living in towns. These beliefs, which are found throughout the Turkic world, are also firmly rooted historically in eastern Europe, mainly in the Balkans (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia), where Alevi populations have lived for several centuries, and recently among the Alevis of the Turkish diaspora in France and northern Europe. For instance, two Bulgarian ethnologists have recorded, in a study of the Kïzïlbash (Alevis) from two villages in eastern Bulgaria

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(Deliorman region), that they see the whole of creation, animate and inanimate, as 'emanating from a single light identified with God'.[28]

On the other hand it must be stressed that man occupies a pre-eminent place in the theory of the Oneness of Being and that he is able to return to his origins as a 'perfect man'; but there is no reference to a 'perfect animal' or a 'perfect plant'. So the theory assumes, as between animate and inanimate creatures, a hierarchy that destroys the 'equality' normally the rule in Supernature.[29] This hierarchy exists in Buddhism too. Where ideas about Supernature are not dominant we find as a consequence that the feeling of altruism towards the wider living world is weakened or even disappears, and that there is a realignment with Islamic thought.

It would also be possible to raise the objection that veneration of trees or stones exists in Islam and is present in the Koran. Indeed an interest in nature is not lacking in Muslim holy places in general. Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen points out, for example, that the Muslim saint's grave is often associated with nature and that a particular tree is often found nearby – certain species being favoured – or a grove of trees; and that 'the tree may be worshipped directly, but people talk about the sheikh (or jinn) that lives in the tree and makes it sacred rather than a tree that is in itself sacred'. Similarly doctors of religion accept the sacred character of trees in sanctuaries or holy places (*hîma*).[30] So there may be worship of a stone, plant or animal without that implying a belief in Supernature; this is what is observable in the cult of saints in general. But in the cult of certain Anatolian or central Asian saints the presence of thinking about Supernature involves a new relationship to the natural elements that goes beyond it.

And so we are justified in making a distinction between venerating a particular stone or tree and venerating stones and trees in general, and questioning the basis of a stone's or plant's sacred character. Is the tree or stone venerated because it figures in Muslim tradition or because it became sacred as a result of a significant relationship with a religious figure or a saint, or finally because it is an element of Supernature? In many cases there is convergence of the two modes; a particular tree is designated as sacred by a saint because it is already venerated in Supernature. Thus it is sometimes the tree that gives its sacredness to the spot and for that reason receives the saint's grave, therefore being incorporated into his hagiography. However we should note that the veneration given by heterodox Muslims from Anatolia or Asia to natural elements was distinct enough from what Islam might grant them to surprise an orthodox believer, as is shown by the two instances quoted at the beginning of this paper. According to Evliya Çelebi's report in the 17th century and that of the sultan's agent in the late 19th, it is not *one* tree that is worshipped but *trees*, just as it is not *one* stone lit by the rising sun that is venerated but the *stones* lit by that sun.[31] It is here that we find the dividing line between the cult of saints in Islam and the 'ecolatrous' cult of heterodox Islam. The same phenomenon is recorded in the 20th century, for in 1949 a Turkish folklorist discovered in an Anatolian village (Çubuk province) that trees were the object of veneration similar to that described by Evliya Çelebi in the 17th century: candles were lit around them and pieces of iron were attached to their bark.[32] This practice is still observed in the whole of the Turkic world, from Istanbul to Kashghar, and in the Balkans.

We may compare certain heterodox saints' mausoleums and their 'sacred garden'

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with Chinese or Japanese gardens in which are expressed 'the idea of humankind and nature, the idea of life endlessly perpetuating itself, the idea of resonance in nature of all beings one to the others'.[33] Those mausoleums are visited either for religious reasons by pilgrims come to beg for the saint's intercession, or purely for pleasure, for the natural beauty of the spot, or else – and this is case in central Asia – by a (Muslim) apprentice shaman who is attempting to communicate with Supernature. The presence of these sacred gardens near mausoleums, of stones and trees that are venerated, makes them 'cult groves', to use the expression employed by Dinh Trong Hiêu to describe Vietnamese gardens or 'pagoda gardens' that surround places of worship, where the trees, which are usually tall, are venerated. Dinh Trong Hiêu observes that in Vietnam the people's veneration for these trees is very strong and it is impossible to fell them without difficulty.[34] Some important sites for Anatolian heterodoxy are huge 'cult groves', such as the mausoleum of Hacï Bektash[35] in central Anatolia. Apart from visiting the saint's grave, pilgrimage to this spot includes devotions performed before some trees (mulberry, acerola, juniper), caves, springs, rocks and stones. These 'inanimate creatures' each occupy a place in the saint's hagiography and are generally associated with his many transformations into birds of different species.[36] Cult groves of a more modest size proliferate throughout the Turkic world. Annual pilgrimages to these spots are the occasion for a festive return to nature. We could cite, for example, the mausoleum near Bursa of Geyikli Baba, the stag saint, which is adorned with dozens of antlers of deer, whose annual feast-day on the first Sunday in August is attended by thousands of Alevis and traditionally dedicated to respect for nature and animals. In 1999 the festival's politicization aroused bitter reactions among the Alevis.[37]

Veneration of trees is especially strong among the semi-nomad Tahtacï from the Taurus mountains in southern Turkey, whom Jean-Paul Roux studied in the 1960s:

> Working with wood determines most Tahtacï behaviour. When they talk about trees they never fail to say they love them because they live constantly in touch with them and due to their work they draw their livelihood from them . . . Because they are 'closely bound up with trees', because they 'love' them very much, the Tahtacï insist that they never harm them. They fell them nevertheless. But to do so they are required to follow a number of laws whose meaning sometimes escapes us.

In fact the Tahtacï say prayers to the trees they fell and even apologize for having to do it (they also apologize to an animal they have to kill). J.-P. Roux reports that by chance a forestry manager who was in charge of a team of Tahtacï woodsmen witnessed a secret ceremony organized by the Tahtacï before the felling: the man leading it had to wash ritually before proceeding to the act. In the ceremony it was the women who carried out the washing. On the other hand some ancient trees are never voluntarily felled and when they have to be, under pressure from a non-Tahtacï boss for instance, it is with great sadness that this is done and with the feeling that a sacrilegious act has been performed.[38] It is noteworthy that in the examples cited by J.-P. Roux respect is given to all trees without exception and not one tree in particular.

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Conclusion: an 'ethics of the environment' (*çevre ahlakï*) in Turkey

Over the last 10 years the cult of a wider nature has inspired a spiritual type of ecology in some intellectual circles. It is true that a powerful ecological feeling is present at Alevi devotional sites where, alongside the saints, veneration is also given to animals, plants and minerals. The annual festivals associated with these places are thus the occasion for pilgrims to demonstrate their attachment to nature in general. This religious feeling took on a political character in the 1990s in the face of the dangers (industrialization, urbanization) with which modernity threatens nature, and it turned into a crusade in defence of the environment. Nukret Endirçe's book *The Environment in Alevism and Bektashism*, published in 1998,[39] which does not represent Alevism generally and is not the manifesto of any particular structured group, encourages the political authorities, as do the other Turkish ecological associations, to adopt specific measures to protect the environment. But the author justifies his ecological views with reference both to thinking on Supernature and the immanentism of the theory of the Oneness of Being, to which he adds the teachings of the Koran and Muslim tradition concerning nature. His 'sacred ecology' invites us to see nature not as a material structure but as a spiritual entity. 'Bektashi-Alevi thought', he writes, 'sees nature (*doga*) as a unit . . . it sees a harmony that unites all things.' He illustrates his ideas with the poetry of heterodox authors; for example, he quotes Sultan Abdal, who identifies the (Sufi) dervish with the autumn crocus (*çigdem*), and a contemporary Alevi poet, who confesses the deep friendship that connects him to trees, which are presented as his friends (*arkadash*). In Endirçe's book we also find the text of a prayer of apology addressed to trees, probably borrowed from the Tahtacï tradition. The author explains that in Bektashi-Alevi belief 'every creature, from insect to plant, is enlivened by the divine spirit and is a manifestation of God (*Tanrï'nin tecellisi*)' – we recognize the sign of the theory of the Oneness of Being. So the whole living world must be respected and protected in the context of an 'ethics of the environment' (*çevre ahlakï*), which the author fervently hopes will be adopted. This ethics of the environment is found in a widely available text published by an Alevi group on their website. One of the paragraphs from that text is entitled: 'Alevism is the friend of nature and the environment.'

> Alevism acknowledges that each thing has a soul or spirit (*can, ruh*). For this reason the Alevis attribute a soul to all animate and inanimate beings in nature: mountains, stones, trees, rivers, insects. So none of them must be harmed. The Alevis are friends of nature; they are opposed to it being harmed or the environment in which humankind lives being destroyed and besmirched. What is more, Alevis recognize that trees, mountains and waters are sacred. The sanctity of this holy life thus requires that nature should be protected.
>
> ('Aleviligin Evrensel Degerleri', www.hubyar.org)

This spiritual ethics of the environment is partly 'mystical', given the soteriological nature of the theory of the Oneness of Being; indeed, human beings occupy a central, privileged place in it, and cultivate an ideal of transcendence that will lead them back to the origin of all beings. So protection of the environment appears as a defence of the human, not indirectly, as other ecologies do, but directly since the

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essence that gives human beings life is also the one that gives life to minerals and plants. But there is nothing mystical about the animistic character of this spiritual ethics, since human beings in Supernature have no soteriological goal and are content with just *being*, that is, being aware of their non-privileged position in a nature where they are closely bound up with everything that exists. And so it would be more accurate to speak of a mystico-animistic ethics of the environment.

A similar ecology, which did not survive, appeared in Germany in the late 19th century. But it lay at the point of intersection between modern biology and evolutionism. Its founder Ernest Haeckel (1834–1919) invented the word 'ecology',[40] whose definition – 'science that studies the conditions of existence of living beings and the interactions of all kinds that occur between these living beings' – remains valid, according to Roger Dajoz.[41] But Haeckel defended an immanentism, known as 'monism', that rejects any 'dividing line or distinction between animal and plant kingdoms or between animals and humans' and posits 'a spirit in all things'.[42] To back up his ideas Haeckel did not hesitate to quote the names of philosophers and thinkers: one followed *Naturphilosophie* (Goethe); another the Neoplatonism of the Florence Accademia (Giordano Bruno); a third, Spinoza, was inspired by the Kabbala. In these three cases it was the theory of the Oneness of Being that bestowed a certain legitimacy on monism, even though it was not its source. But early in the 20th century some Turkish intellectuals, members of the Bektashi Sufi order (which has many beliefs in common with Alevism) *recognized* their theory of the Oneness of Being in Haeckel's monism. Furthermore the book in which Haeckel explained monism – *Monism as Connecting Religion and Science* – was translated into Turkish in the first decade of the 20th century with the title 'Oneness of Being' (*Vahdet-i vücûd*).[43]

The mystico-animistic ethics of the environment not only predominates among the Alevi peoples but has also been absorbed by Sufi individuals and circles open to the thinking of Ibn Arabi, who inspired the theory of the Oneness of Being. However, this is far from being the case for Sufism in general in that Ibn Arabi's system has for several centuries been contested within Muslim mysticism. And so in Turkey, as in the rest of the Turkic world, the mystico-animistic ethics of the environment comes up against representatives of orthodox Islam, who reject its religious and philosophical basis, even if they in their own way argue for a policy of preserving the environment and protecting nature.[44] They may be simply friends of stones, plants or animals, but they do not recognize any commonality of essence and destiny between humans, minerals, plants and animals. Thus, in the vast area of Turkic culture that stretches from the Balkans to China, human beings' view of nature is plural and conflicted, as are the religious convictions inherited from an extraordinary mixing of civilizations, which has juxtaposed Asian and Abrahamic beliefs but never managed to harmonize them.

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Notes

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2. Paul Henri Stahl (1965), 'La Dendrolâtrie chez les Turcs et les Tatars de la Dobroudja', *Revue des études du Sud-Est européen*, III, 1–2, pp. 297–303.
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24. Translated into English from the Turkish to French translation in Catherine Pinquet (2002), 'Remarques sur la poésie de Kaygusuz Abdal', *Turcica*, 34.
25. From the French translation in T. Zarcone (1993), *Mystiques, Philosophes et Franc-Maçons en islam*, Paris, Jean Maisonneuve, p. 480.
26. R. Hamayon, *La Chasse à l'âme*, *op. cit.*, pp. 563–5.
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29. It is true that there is also a hierarchical structure in Supernature, but it does not automatically place man or the universal Spirit at the centre of the world.
30. Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen (2000), 'Tombeaux, Mosquées et Zâwiya: la polarité des lieux saints musulmans', in A. Vauchez (ed.), *Lieux sacrés, lieux de culte, sanctuaires. Approches terminologiques, méthodologiques, historiques et monographiques*, Rome, École Française de Rome, p. 137.
31. See note 1.
32. Yalgïn, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–60.
33. Lu Dong (2000), 'Place des jardins dans la culture chinoise', in *Extrême-Orient, Extrême Occident*, 22: *L'Art des jardins dans les pays sinisés, Chine, Japon, Corée, Vietnam*, Université de Vincennes, p. 13.
34. Dinh Trong Hiêu (2000), 'Jardins du Vietnam: la nature entre représentations culturelles et pratiques culturales', in *L'Art des jardins dans les pays sinisés*, *op. cit.*, pp. 144–8.
35. The eponymous founder of the Bektashi brotherhood, a figure revered by the vast majority of Alevis.
36. T. Zarcone (1995), 'Le Mausolée de Hâcï Bektâsh Velî en Anatolie centrale (Turquie)', in H. Chambert-Loir and C. Guillot (eds), *Le Culte des saints dans le monde musulman*, Paris, École Française d'Extrême-Orient, pp. 309–19.
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38. Jean-Paul Roux, *Les Traditions des nomades de la Turquie méridionale*, pp. 189–90, 197–201, 280. On the secret ritual that precedes tree-felling, see also Zeynel Gül (1998), 'Anadolu Aleviligin Özünü Bozmadan Yashatan Toplum: Tahtacïlar' [The Tahtacï, a community that maintains and continues the specificity of Anatolian Alevism], in *Alevilik Arashtïrmalarï*, Aachen, 1, 1, pp. 175–6.
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42. Ernest Haeckel (1895), *Monism as Connecting Religion and Science*, London. The original was published in German in 1892.
43. For further details, see Zarcone, *Mystiques, Philosophes et Franc-Maçons en islam*, *op. cit.*, pp. 157–8.
44. The Turkish Islamic party has included protection of the environment in its various programmes since the 1990s.

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