

THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE ANCIENT PEOPLES

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses transcendental and immanent gods, the teachings of ancient peoples about God, the transition from monotheism to polytheism, the pantheon of gods, and the concept of a supreme deity.

KEYWORDS: *Transcendent And Immanent Gods, Monotheism, Polytheism, Deus Otiosus, High God, The Supreme God, Pantheon Of Gods, Adudva, Maya, Quetzalcoatl, Olympic Gods, Al-Lat, Allah.*

INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times, people have been interested in studying the essence of religious teachings about God, determining their features and comparative studies. Every religion has its own idea of God, whether it be a world religion, a national religion, or some other type. According to the teachings of religions: monotheistic religions - Islam, Christianity and Judaism, dualistic (there are two opposing deities) religions - Zoroastrianism and Monism; Hinduism and Confucianism are recognized as polytheistic religions.

According to the ideas about God, it can be conditionally divided into two: transcendent and immanent gods. The first type may include a deity or gods (for example, Islam, Judaism, and partly Christianity) that are outside the world and experience of people and free from flaws. The second type of immanent deities, as opposed to the concept of transcendent ones, are “gods who are seen as part of nature, resembling humans, but possessing supernatural powers such as creation, destruction, and maintenance” [1]. There are a number of other views on the transcendence and immanence of God, some of which are listed below: God is also transcendent and immanent in His world [2]. In addition, Amanda Jenkins (Doctor of Philosophy in Theology) said that the concepts of transcendent and immanent often come together and said: “The transcendence of God means that God is outside of humanity’s full experience, perception or grasp. The immanence of God means that he is knowable, perceivable or graspable. For example, Jesus Christ is God incarnate (in the flesh) and therefore he was immanent in the first century among those who knew him, perceived of him or experienced him with one or more of their five senses. Although Jesus Christ was imminent during his earthly life, the Christian Worldview believes that God is transcendent. God’s transcendence means that he is other and outside of human comprehension” [3]. The beliefs and myths of ancient peoples seem to emphasize a greater number of immanent deities, but believers in monotheism can be seen in every period since the creation of man.

Primitive religions, people, their customs, rituals, and mythology can be studied on the basis of oral and written sources. According to the German scientist W. Dilthey, myths are an act of religious imagination and understanding of the world. Myth is not only a simple religion, but also an easy scientific theory [4]. It appears that the imaginations of some of the people of that period recognized immanent gods. That's why they described them as themselves or an animal. Immanent deities are embodied in anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, or zoantropomorphic forms. A number of literatures contain ethnographic information about how ancient peoples embodied the gods according to their appearance, feelings, and characteristics. One such literature is E. Taylor's "Primitive Culture", which specifically states: "Man so habitually ascribes to his deities human shape, human passions, human nature, that we may declare him an Anthropomorphite, an Anthropopathite, and (to complete the series) an Anthropophysite" [5]. This means that members of different tribes may have imagined, described, and formed a pantheon of gods based on their life activities, their nature, the work they performed, and the classes among the population.

Because the ancient African peoples had a tribal system, each tribe had its own god. The highest position is occupied by the supreme deity of the creator. It is called Adudva (baule), Alurua (ashanti), Amma (do-gon), Atana (tura), Vele-khakaba (vagusu), Vulu (mano), Vulbari (krachi). Although no prayers were made for him, he was acknowledged as the supreme, omnipotent deity. The reason they did not pray to him was that in their understanding he was called by different names, despite the fact that he was so great and essentially performed the same function. Thinking that the supreme deity in the Pantheon was far from human beings, they preferred to worship a deity at a lower level. This is probably the reason why the term Deus otiosus came into science. "Deus otiosus - (Latin: "inactive god"), in the history of religions and philosophy, a high god who has withdrawn from the immediate details of the governing of the world. The god has delegated all work on earth to ancestors or nature spirits, who act as mediators between the god and humans. This concept of god occurs widely in Africa, Melanesia, and South America. In Western philosophy, the deus otiosus concept has been attributed to deism" [6].

While in ancient African nations the supreme deity was recorded as a motionless god, the God in motion was considered closer and more accurate to humans than he was. An example is the god Ngai (Engai) of the Masai tribe. There is information that he was simultaneously the god of rain, lightning, war [7]. It is often depicted as a god of thunder as well as in human form.

Among the ancient American peoples was the goddess Quetzalcoatl, who was depicted as a mixture of bird and snake. Among the tribes in this area, there was human sacrifice (cannibalism). One of the next ancient peoples, the Mayans, believed that the god created the Mayan people from corn, whose gods ruled over the whole universe, the creatures. Only kings can communicate with them. In order for their purpose to be fulfilled, the people had to provide food for the gods. Joshua J. Mark says of the pantheon of Mayan gods: "There were over 250 deities in the pantheon of the Maya and, owing to the mass burning of their books by Bishop Diego de Landa in 1562, much information about the gods (and Maya culture) was irretrievably lost. The Quiche Mayan religious text, the Popol Vuh, gives one set of names for the gods which the Yucatec Maya knew by other names". It turns out that the Mayans believed in more than 250 gods and worshiped them under different names.

Another striking example of polytheistic religions is the belief of the ancient Greeks. They also have a pantheon of gods, led by the supreme god Zeus. According to reports [9], the highest deities of the Greeks were the gods of the third generation, who were also called “Olympic gods”, “twelve Olympians”. The reason for their naming was that the Greeks considered them to be on Mount Olympus and that they were twelve.

Although the names of the gods are different in polytheistic ancient religions, they have much in common. This can be seen in the following table:

Greek	Rome	Egypt	Function
Zeus	Jupiter	Osiris	supreme god
Hera	Juno	Isis	queen of the gods, goddess of family, women
Athena	Justitia	Maat	goddess of justice
Ares	Mars	Montu	god of War
Artemis	Diana	Anhur	goddess and god of the hunt
Aphrodite	Venus	Hathor	goddess of love and beauty
Heracles	Hercules	Horus	hero of myths, son of supreme god
Tyche	Fortuna	Seshat	goddess of fate

The next pantheon of deities belonged to the Arab tribes and was in the religions of Ibrahim (pbuh) until Amr ibn Luhay, an elder of the Khuzaa tribe, brought an idol named Hubal from Damascus and called them to worship. “He set Hubal inside the Ka'bah, he had no right hand, and the Quraysh made him a golden hand”. Thus, as in other regions, polytheism prevailed in the Arabian Peninsula for some time before Islam. There were 360 idols inside and around the Kaaba. The Arabs offered various sacrifices to the gods and begged them to help achieve their wishes. Al-Biruni: “When the heathen Arabs had imported into their country idols from Syria, the also worshipped them, hoping that they would intercede for them with God”.

Because there was a tribal order in Arabia, each tribe had its own idol. When a dispute arose between the tribes, the defeated tribe began to worship the god of the victorious tribe, or the victorious tribe added the god of the defeated tribe to their pantheons. Among the Arabs who believed in polytheism in ancient times, most believed in gods and deities such as al-Lat, al-Uzza, Manat, and this is reflected in historical books. In addition to worshiping a number of gods, they acknowledged Allah as the greatest of the gods, which is why the term “mushrik” (one who associates another god with Allah) is used in Islam. This is because, according to Islamic teachings, it is obligatory to believe that there is no god but Allah and not to associate partners with Him. Islam forbade the worship of idols and commanded people to worship only Allah, the One God.

There are verses about this in many places in the Qur'an, for example: “Your god is one God: There is no god but He, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful” (Surah al-Baqarah, verse 163), “He is the true God in the heavens and the earth. He knows what you conceal and what you reveal, and He knows what you earn” (Surah al-An‘am, verse 3), “This is Allah: your Lord, there is no God but He, the Creator of everything; so, worship Him. He is Guardian over everything” (Surah al-An‘am, verse 102), “We did not send before you any messenger but We revealed to him that

there is no god but I, so worship Me” (Surah al-Anbiya, verse 25), “... while they were not ordered but to worship Allah, making their submission exclusive for him with no deviation, and to establish Salah and pay Zakah. That is the way of the straight religion” (Surah al-Bayyinah, verse 5). Through these verses, we learn that there is only one God in Islamic teaching, that there is no god but Him, that He is the Creator of all things and that He alone is worthy of worship, that He has revealed Himself to man through the Prophet since the creation of the world.

In view of the above, it can be said that in the beginning there was monotheism, but over time some people have moved away from their previous beliefs and worshiped idols, their symbols from different objects and various things in the surrounding world (water, trees, fire, etc.). thus polytheism came into being. Even today, Even today, we can sometimes see that water, plant, stone, a tree or a pillar in a shrine is considered sacred and miraculous by the natives [13]. Over time, some religious beliefs may remain in history, forgotten by people, but it can be briefly concluded that certain elements of them are passed down from generation to generation in the form of customs and traditions.

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