

Wathanism: Arabian Paganism & Its Revival Before Judgment Day

There are many Signs of the Last Day given to us by Muhammed (pbuh). Among them is this one:

"...When you see barefooted, unclothed bedouins competing in the construction of tall buildings, and worshiping pagan idols of their ancestors in secret, and destroying sacred places in the name of Islam. They'll hate me in secret, and worship their idols, and try to bring back idols inside Kaaba"

(From the Collection Sahih Muslim)



Look at him in awe of his idol!

إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ أَنْتُمْ لَهَا وَارِدُونَ

Innakum wama taAAbudoona min dooni Allahi ha_ṣabu
jahannama antum laha wa_ṣaridoona

Indeed, you and what you worship besides Allah (are)
firewood (of) Hell. You to it will come.

The namesake of this book, wathanism (from the Arabic word for idol, wathan), is the popular and unofficial term for Arabian polytheistic reconstructionism among online pagan circles, but as a personal preference I call the religion 'Ibadat al-Alihah or 'Worship of the Gods' or simply arwahiyya, 'animism'. Arabian polytheism has an animistic approach to Semitic theology, with the emphasis on the superiority of fate; the natural world and supernatural forces, which appealed to me spiritually.' The word 'wathanism' which only translates to 'imageism' is sparse terminology and does it no justice. Additionally, I want to make it clear that Arabian polytheism is a branch of the ancient Semitic religions and NOT derived from the Vedic religion or Hinduism and the Allah of the Muslims is NOT a 'moon god'. I also use the loose terms 'Arab' and 'pagan' here to refer to the Semitic inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula who practised a polytheistic religion.

Arabia's ancient past on show at the Louvre

For the first time, the ancient past of Saudi Arabia is at the heart of an exhibition at the Louvre museum in Paris, which is showing works that have never left their country before.

The exhibition, which opens on Wednesday, comprises works that "have never been seen not just in the West, but for the most part not in Saudi Arabia," Beatrice Andre-Salvani, director of the department of Near Eastern Antiquities at the Louvre, told AFP.

The show is the outcome of a 2004 accord between the Louvre and the Saudi commission for tourism and antiquities. It will present around 320 pieces, of which two-thirds predate the birth of Islam in the early seventh century.

Called "Roads of Arabia: Archaeology and History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," the exhibition was to have been inaugurated Monday by Saudi Arabia's 86-year-old King Abdallah, but his visit to Paris was postponed.

Though no reason was given, the Saudi state news agency SPA said Saturday the visit would be rescheduled.

The first fruit of the collaboration agreement, an exhibition in 2006 of masterpieces of Islamic art from the Louvre presented at the National Museum in Riyadh, was opened by King Abdallah and then French president Jacques Chirac.

For several years, the Saudi royal family has shown a sustained interest in Paris' prestigious museum. The building of new halls devoted to Islamic arts was partly financed by a 17 million-euro (21.4 million-dollar) donation by Saudi Prince al-Walid ben Talal.

The works, which will be shown until September 27, come mainly from the collections of the National Museum in Riyadh, the Archaeological Museum at the University of King Saud and regional museums.

"They reveal in particular the little-known past of a dazzling, prosperous Arabic world now being gradually discovered by archaeologists," the Louvre website said

One of these is a small man-shaped statue in sandstone dating from the fourth millennium before Christ that is

on show for the first time. The head is leaning slightly to one side, expressing pain or sadness. "I call him 'the suffering man,'" said Andre-Salvini, who is one of the curators of the exhibition.

This funeral statue and similar works could have been interpreted as "pagan idols, those that the Prophet destroyed," she explained.

Riyadh Museum at Night: Among other ancient artifacts, the Museum houses ancient Idol Gods which were worshiped by Saudi ancestors. These Idols are reported to have been found by Saudis in various Archaeological sites in the Kingdom.



Carved in stone, this Idol God is considered to be 4000 years BC. It is given extra-ordinary importance and focus in Riyadh Museum, as well as in Saudi Archaeological Exhibitions in the world. Courtesy - www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/art/shades-of-arabia-for-the-louvre



The Idol was placed in the first gallery of "Arabian Routes Exhibition" Paris, France, during July 16 – Sept 27, 2010.

The Arabian Routes Exhibition was later shifted to La Caixa, Barcelona, Spain, during Nov 4, 2010 – Feb 6, 2011. In Spain also, this ancient Idol God was provided with special focus of attention by Saudi organizers.

The Arabian Routes Exhibition will be held in three more American cities during 2011-12.



In 1944, G. Caton Thompson discovered this idol in Southern Saudi Arabian excavation which is considered to be the Moon-God of Pagans (also known as Hubul). This was confirmed by well-known archaeologists, like Richard Le Baron Bower Jr. and Frank P. Albright, "Archaeological Discoveries in South Arabia", Baltimore, John Hopkins Univ Press, 1958, p.78ff, and Ray Cleveland, "An Ancient South Arabian Necropolis", Baltimore, John Hopkins Univ Press, 1965; Nelson Gleuck, "Deities & Dolphins" NY, Farrar-Strauss-Giroux, 1965).



In the 1950's a major Moon-God-Temple was excavated at Hazor, Palestine. Two idols of the Moon-God were found. Each was an Idol sitting upon a throne with a crescent moon carved on his chest. The accompanying inscriptions make it clear that these were idols of the Moon-God. Several smaller Idols were also found which were identified by their inscriptions as the daughters of the Moon-God (Popularly known as al-Lat, al-Uzza, and Manat).

The preservation and display of archaeological heritage is the most important aspect of Saudi Government policy for the past 100 years.



The idols worshiped by Saudi ancestors are preserved for their future generations as important specimens of Saudi Arabian culture and tradition. Courtesy Arab News:

arabnews.com/lifestyle/art_culture/article199019.ece

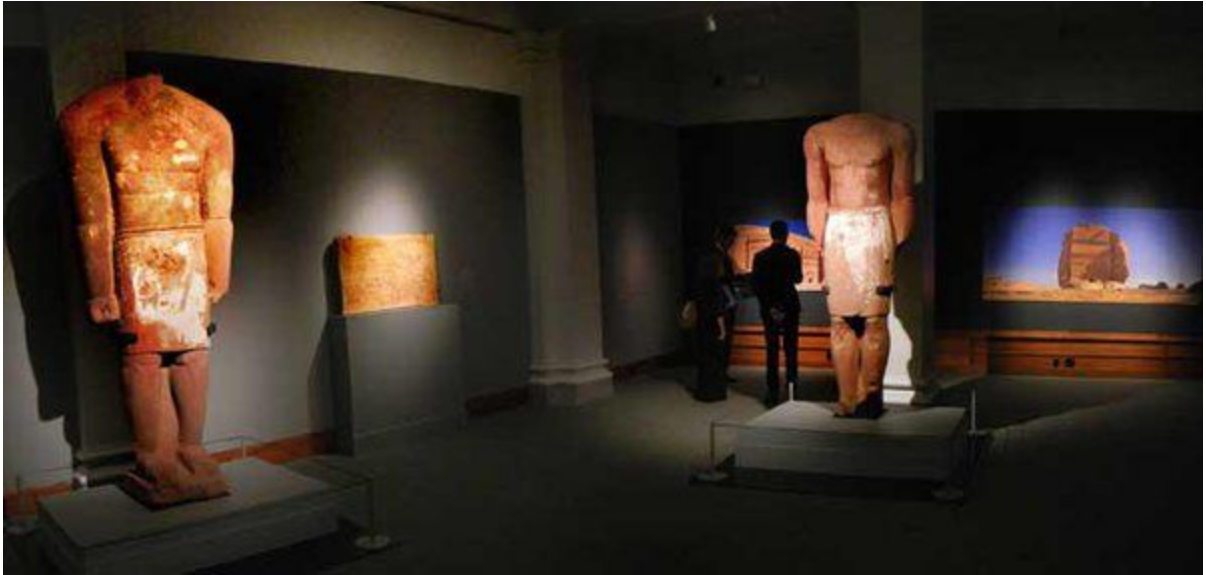
The Saudi Department of Museums and Antiquities has undertaken the task of excavating, classifying and maintaining the Idols worshiped by Saudi ancestors. The Department of Archeology at King Saud University in Riyadh is also an important Institution which preserves ancient Heritage of Saudi Arabia.



The most important Restoration Work of Najd was undertaken recently was at Diriyah, Najd, the ancestral home of Saudi Royals.



Tarut is an island, four square kilometers in radius, in Arabian Gulf near Al-Qatif, Najd. Several archaeological sites have been recorded around this island showing evidences of Idol worship in ancient Najd.















Ancient South Arabian script



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Panel_Almaqah_Louvre_DAO18.jpg



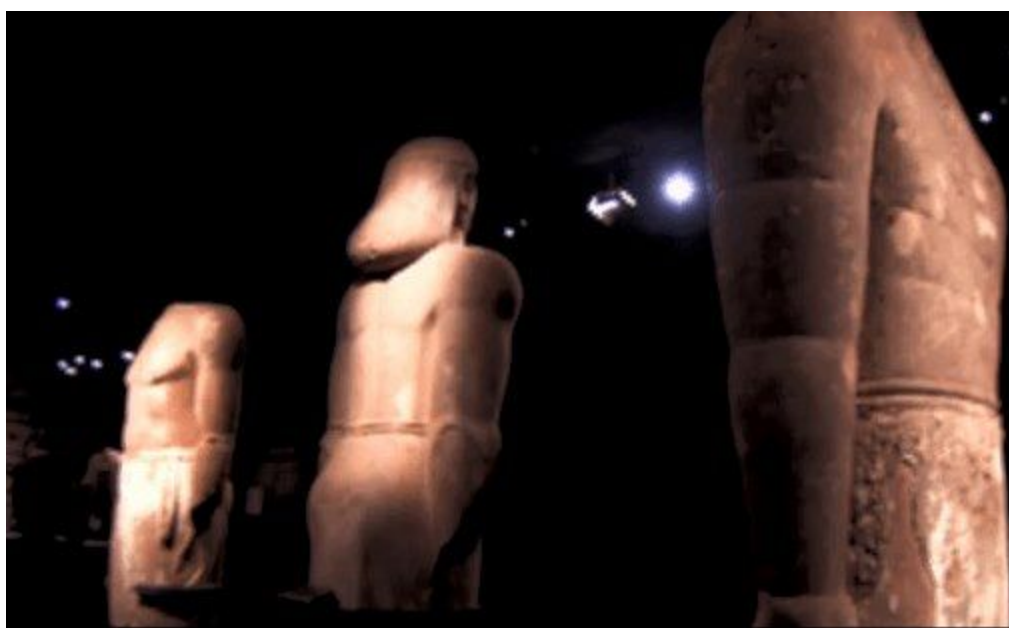








Saudi's pre-Islam treasures







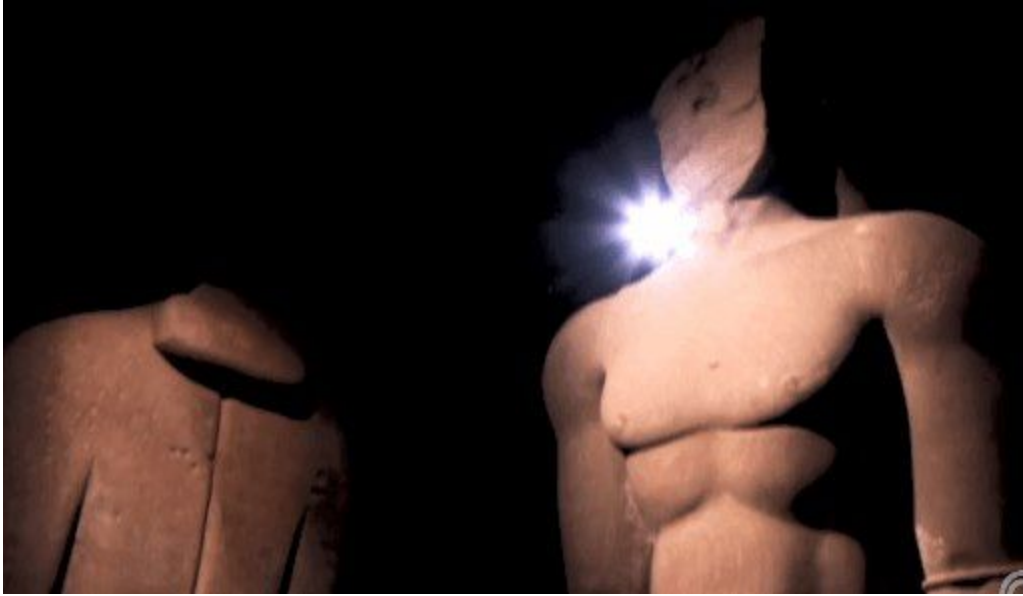
Look at him in awe of his idol!

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Promoting Idolatry while destroying muslim holy sites.



Mythology and religion of pre-Islamic Arabia: Deities, Spirits, Figures and Locations.

A miscellaneous and unorganized archive of deities; spirits; figures and mythological people and places from Arabian polytheism and from the era before and during the time of Muhammad. The gods and goddesses of the pre-Islamic Arabs were usually tribal deities; legendary ancestors; spirits of place (jinn), or personifications of natural and social phenomena unique to the individual Arabian tribes: although there were certain deities that were widely recognized throughout the pre-Islamic Arabian peninsula.

The religious beliefs of the Arabs often differed from region to region; smaller tribal pantheons being found among the merchants and Bedouin of the Hijaz and Najd; with more advanced religious structures thriving in the Yemen. In the sparse desert regions inhabited by nomadic Bedouin such as the Nefud desert, religious thought took the form of a practical animism chiefly concerned with pastoralism and tribal life – this is not to say that the pagan Bedouin did not enjoy a rich spiritual experience: their belief in many gods, angels, spirits, ancestors and sacred sites confirms otherwise.

Al-'Uzza, the Mightiest One.



Al-Lāt (Arabic: اللات) is the Meccan mother goddess and the chief deity of the tribe of Banu Thaqif whose major seat of worship was a popular shrine which was located at the west Arabian town of at-Ta'if in the Hijaz region of Arabia. The idol of al-Lāt was a cube of white granite, which was in the custody of the clan of Banu 'Attab ibn Malik of the tribe of Banu Thaqif; the nearby tribes of Banu Lihyan; Banu Hawazin; Banu Khuza'a, and Banu

Quraysh also making regular pilgrimages to Ta'if to offer their worship. The goddess was reputed to enjoy offerings of barley porridge (*sawiq*) and small cereal cakes: her devotees prepared these dishes especially, as barley and other grains were considered symbolic of her. Animals that were considered sacred to al-Lāt included gazelle; lions, and camels, among others depending on the region and tribe, as the cult of the goddess was found all across Arabia and as far as Palmyra in southern Syria.

In the pantheon of the Hijaz (western Arabia) specifically, al-Lāt was one of the three chief goddesses of Mecca and one of the three daughters of the high god Allāh: her main role being an earth-goddess who was responsible for the fertility and soil quality of Ta'if and elsewhere in the Hijaz region, thus making her highly important among the Arabs. The goddess had many epithets throughout the Hijaz including *Umm al-Alihah* (Mother of the Gods) and *Umm ash-Shams* (Mother of the Sun goddess) and was also worshiped in order to gain protection whilst travelling. At the holy sanctuary (*haram*) of al-Lāt in the town of Ta'if, all life within was considered inviolable: no plant could be gathered; no tree could be felled; no animal could be killed and no human blood could be shed in accordance with sacred law.

The farmers and merchants of Ta'if who belonged to the ruling tribe of Banu Thaqif venerated al-Lāt as the goddess of vegetation, agriculture and fertile soil; their livelihood, wealth and tribal status being largely dependent on the trade of their crops, which were mainly of barley; figs; roses, and dates. The fertility and prosperity of the region was considered by the Banu Thaqif to be a blessing upon them by their tribal goddess al-Lāt; who eventually became the chief goddess and guardian deity of the town of Ta'if, as she was seen as the divine provider of trade, wealth and power. The shrine of al-Lāt in Ta'if eventually became a place of trade and pilgrimage among the Arabs, often sharing the large amount of pilgrims from nearby Mecca. Historically, the town of Ta'if was famous as "*the garden of the Hijaz*" – the fertility of the region being attributed to the power of its tutelary goddess.

The pan-Arabian goddess al-Lāt had her counterparts across the Arabian peninsula under many different names in the Semitic languages and dialects, for example: to the people of Ta'if, she was also known by the name of *ar-Rabbat* ('The Lady'); to the Himyarites, she was worshiped as *'Athiratan* or *Ilāt*, the mother of Athtar; the Hadramites to the east of the Himyar called her *Ilāhatan*, and the Aramaeans of Syria knew her as *Elat*. As al-Lāt

was the goddess of the earth, she was worshiped in nearby Syria as *'Arsay* and in Canaan as *Aretzaya*: these names derived from the Aramaean and Hebrew words for 'earth', *'Ars* and *'Aretz* (also cognate to Arabic *ardh*). The earth goddess in Canaan and Syria was considered to be a protector of the spirits of the dead who dwelt under the earth.

In the religion of the Meccans and the other pagan tribes of the Hijaz, al-Lāt was not the wife of the high god Allāh but was one of his daughters, along with the other two chief goddesses, Manāt and al-'Uzzā. The cult of al-Lāt was not only popular in the Hijazi towns of Ta'if and Mecca; the Nabataean Arabs of southern Jordan worshiped her as an earth goddess and as the mythical consort of their chief deity Dhu'l-Shara, who was a god of vegetation and mountain springs. The Onyx stone, a variety of chalcedony, was among the treasures along with gold that were discovered at the shrine of al-Lāt in Ta'if, and as such is considered sacred to the goddess. In the inscriptions and writings of the Safaitic Bedouin who dwelt in the Syro-Arabian desert in pre-Islamic times, al-Lāt was called upon to show mercy and grant ease, prosperity and well-being to the worshiper; in addition to being invoked for protection against an enemy, vengeance against aggressors and favorable weather.

Al-'Uzzā (Arabic: العزى) is the Meccan goddess of power, might and the planet Venus as the Evening Star who was worshiped by the Arabian tribes of Banu Quraysh; Banu Sulaym; Banu Ghanim; Banu Ghatafan; Banu Khuza'a; Banu Thaqif, and Banu Kinānah. The main idol of al-'Uzza, which the goddess herself was believed to often manifest in, was a cluster of three acacia trees that were situated in the valley of Nakhla near the town of Mecca. Al-'Uzza had a second temple (*bayt*) in Mecca called *Buss* which was made of brick, and was situated not far from her shrine at Nakhla. Inside the Buss temple was another important idol of al-'Uzza: a thigh bone shaped slab of granite which was venerated and offered sacrifice to by the pre-Islamic Arab tribes of the Hijaz, as they believed that the goddess herself spoke through the idol and would grant an oracle to the worshiper.

The Arabian tribes living around Mecca regularly sought the blessing and protection of al-'Uzza by offering sacrifices of animals and rarely human slaves or prisoners of war at an altar (*Itr*, *madhbah*) called *al-Ghabghab* which was located near the temple of *Buss*. The powerful Meccan tribe of Banu Quraysh would call upon al-'Uzza as a war goddess before going into battle and their women would perform music and sing chants

exalting al-'Uzza; such as they did against the early Muslims in the Battle of Uhud. The last custodian (*sadin*) of al-'Uzza's shrine was a man named Dubayyah ibn Haram as-Sulami, who had a reputation of being exceptionally generous, kind and hospitable until he was slain by Khalid ibn al-Walid, an early convert to Islam; who had also cut down the sacred trees of the goddess and destroyed her shrine upon the orders of Muhammad: this was done in order to effectively put an end to the cult of al-'Uzza among the Arabs of the Hijaz.

In the south of Arabia, the kingdoms of Himyar and Yemen knew al-'Uzza as *Uzzayan* who was a goddess of healing; wealthy Himyarites would offer small golden images to Uzzayan on behalf of their sick children. The name *Amat-'Uzzayan* meaning "*Maid of Uzzayan*" was a popular women's name in south Arabia, and the male theophoric name *Abd al-'Uzza* meaning "*Devotee of al-'Uzza*" was popular among the Meccans. Not so far from the Ka'aba itself in the valley of Hurad; the Banu Quraysh tribe dedicated a vale called Suqam to al-'Uzza, where they would visit to swear oaths and pray. During a battle, it was traditional for the women of Mecca to sing chants in the name of al-'Uzza and her consort, Hubal, to inspire valor in the warriors and gain victory against the enemy.

The goddess al-'Uzzā was also known as al-Zuhara and Kawkabtā and was venerated by these names as the ruling goddess of the planet Venus; particularly in her incarnation as the Evening Star, which itself was believed to be either a manifestation of the goddess herself or her palace in the heavens. The planet Venus as the Morning Star was believed to be a male god called Athtar and was a separate divinity to the goddess al-'Uzza. The pre-Islamic Arabs also called upon al-'Uzza as Venus to bless and consecrate marriages. The equivalent of the Arabian al-'Uzza throughout the Semitic Middle East is the Canaanite war goddess 'Anat; the divine lover of the nature god Baal, who was named in Hebrew as *'l'Uzza Hayyim* ('*the strength of life*').

Allāh (Arabic: الله) is the Meccan creator god and the supreme deity of the pre-Islamic Arabian pantheon, who was worshiped by the pagan Arabs primarily in times of despair, need and drought as he was believed to grant life-giving rain and intervene in times of extreme crisis. The three chief goddesses of Mecca; al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā and Manāt, were believed to be his daughters and were invoked alongside many other deities to intercede for the worshiper on behalf of Allāh: all the tribes of pre-Islamic Arabia venerated him as the High God and supreme

being, but direct worship of him was rare. After creating the universe, Allāh then retired into the position of a silent and remote spectator who dwelt in '*Aliyyin*' (Hebrew: *Elyon*), the highest heaven, and only intervened in human affairs in extreme cases of drought or danger. In pre-Islamic Arabia, the practice of calling upon God or gods to send rain ('*istisqā'*) continued with Islam although the practice of calling upon any other god other than Allah is a grave sin in Islam.

The pre-Islamic Arabian tribes who followed the native polytheistic religion, in particular the Banu Quraysh of Mecca, acknowledged Allāh to be the creator of the universe; the father of the gods, angels and jinn, and the supreme being who controls the mechanisms of the universe: the Arabian counterpart of the ancient Hebrew creator god El. The Jewish and Christian tribes of pre-Islamic Arabia called their Biblical god *Allāh*, although the Allāh of the Arab polytheists was distinct in concept to the Christian and Jewish Allāh. Officially, the god Allāh had no idol assigned to him, however; a black meteorite called *al-Hajar al-Aswad* was kept at a shrine in the corner of the Ka'aba: Allāh was believed to house a portion of his power within this mysterious black stone due to its alleged heavenly origins.

The pre-Islamic Allah was believed to reside in a distant heaven called *'Aliyyin* or *Lahut* - the uppermost stratum of the universe and the highest plane of existence: with the other gods (*ālihah*) and angels (*malā'ikah*) ruling from lesser heavens which were located in the sky (*as-Samawat*). In addition to having the gods and the angels under his command, the pre-Islamic notion of Allah enjoyed a special relationship with the jinn: primordial spirits of the land that functioned as lesser gods beneath the rank of angels who ruled the desert wilderness and desolate places.

The cult of Allāh in pre-Islamic Arabia, aside from that among the monotheistic *hanifs* who followed an Abrahamic religion which was not Judaism or Christianity; was not prominent in society: the god Allāh was represented with only one baetyl, the Black Stone of the Ka'aba, and had no other idols apart from this. In Arabian polytheism, Allāh is considered far too powerful and immense to be interested in the affairs of humans so worship is instead directed towards his children, the *ālihah*; the pantheon of gods and goddesses who intercede for humans on behalf of Allāh. In pre-Islamic Mecca, the status of Allāh as creator deity and high god did not earn him the status of patron god of the town itself: this honor was afforded to Hubal; a warrior

rain-god and one of the 'offspring' of Allāh; who was considered in the theology of the pagan Meccans to be more interested in the well-being of the common man than Allāh himself was.

Although the pagan Arabians believed in a multitude of gods or *ālihah*, they knew Allah to be the Lord (*Rabb*) of the Heavens (*as-Samawat*) and the Earth (*al-'Ardh*), and as the ultimate deity with authority over the gods, angels, jinn and mankind: existing before Time (*Dahr*) itself and was described as being "neither accident nor essence". The concept of a high god, creator deity and supreme deity with power over all the other gods was common to the mythologies of all the ancient Semitic religions; the Arabian *Allah* playing the same role as the Babylonian *Ilu*; the Phoenician *Elos*; the Aramaean *Elaha*; the Hebrew *Eloah*, and the Canaanite *El*. In pre-Islamic Arabian religion, the words "*ilāh*" (*god*) and "*ilāhat*" (*goddess*) were used to refer to any deities other than Allāh. The belief in Allāh among the polytheists of Mecca was so prominent that even the most notable opponents of Muhammad, in particular with Amr ibn Hisham al-Makhzumi (*Abu Jahl*) and Abd al-'Uzza ibn Abd al-Muttalib al-Hashmi (*Abu Lahab*), would often swear oaths by his name.

Hubal (Arabic: هبل) is the Meccan warrior god who was believed to have power over victory in battle, fortune and rainfall; the chief god of the tribes of Banu Khuza'a, Banu Kinanah and Banu Quraysh. The idol of Hubal was a large carnelian sculpture in the form of an old bearded man and was located inside the Ka'aba. Hubal was considered to be the consort of the goddess al-'Uzzā; the son of Manāt, and the brother of the moon god Wadd, and was the chief god of the town of Mecca and the Ka'aba during the rule of the Quraysh in Muhammads time. Before beginning a battle, the pagan Quraysh would invoke the god for his blessing of protection and victory by crying "*U'lu Hubal*" meaning "*Exalted is Hubal*". The mythology of Hubal in Mecca may have been consolidated with that of the minor god al-Bā'li (Canaanite: *Baal*, Himyarite: *Bāl*): a deity whose cult was popular in Canaan and Yemen, but largely ignored by most Arabian tribes. It is also equally likely that Hubal and al-Bā'li were two distinct and unrelated deities.

In addition to appealing to Hubal for rain, victory in battle and success in mercantile activities, the pagan Meccans would consult Hubal as an oracle by means of cleromancy or *'istiqsām*; divination by drawing sacred arrows (*al-Azlām*) from a quiver during rituals accompanied by large sacrifices before his idol, which the

scholar al-'Azraqi reports once consisted of one hundred camels. The people of Banu Quraysh tribe held the idol of Hubal in such high regard that the men of that tribe crafted a hand of solid gold for this god when his original carnelian one was once broken. The cult of Hubal was also popular with the Nabataean Arabs of southern Jordan and north Arabia; a people whose culture was a mixture of Arabic and Aramaic traditions, beliefs and language. One of the other personal names of Hubal was *al-Ghanm* meaning "The Bountiful". In the religion of the Nabataeans and the north Arabian tribes, Hubal was a god who personified rising water vapor and was associated with thermal springs; the Nabataean name *Hblw* (*Hubalw*) is translated as '*vapor*' or '*spirit*'.

Manāf (Arabic: مناف) is the Meccan god of the mountains and valleys who had an idol which was a large stone sculpture of a man that was worshiped at the Ka'aba of Mecca by the west Arabian tribes of Banu Quraysh and Banu Hudhayl. The name of the god translates into English as '*Height*' or '*Elevated*' in relation to the role of Manaf as the ruling spirit and personification of the numerous mountains, valleys and peaks of the Mecca region: these high places were sacred to the Arabs who followed the native polytheism, as pagan ritual practice included ascending to the high places to offer worship

and sacrifices. In pre-Islamic Mecca, the devotees of Manaf would gather to augur before the idol of the god but menstruating women were not allowed near it. Manaf was an important deity in the pantheon of Mecca with many members of the Quraysh tribe, including the famous Qusayy ibn Kilab, naming their male children *Abd-Manaf* ("Devotee/Servant of Manaf") in honor of the god.

Prior to the expansion of the cult of Hubal among the citizens of Mecca, Manaf held the position of patron god of the town and the Ka'aba: however, early into the 5th century AD, his cult's popularity began to wane and by the birth of Muhammad was eventually demoted to the less important status of a minor geographical god. In spite of the cult of Manaf becoming less popular among the urban Meccans, the gods' idol was still consulted for oracles and offered sacrifice but was lesser in status to the idol of Hubal. There is also evidence of the cult of Manaf extending from beyond Mecca to Palmyra in southern Syria where the Greco-Romans called him as *Zeus Manaphis*, in addition to the feminine name *'Amat-Manaf* ("Maid of Manaf") being found in inscriptions from that city. .

Manāt is the Meccan goddess of destiny, fate and death whose idol was in the form of a large outcrop of black marble which was housed in a temple at al-Mushallal on the shore of Wadi Qudayd, not far from the city of Yathrib (later known as Medina). Manat was the chief goddess of the two main Arab tribes of Yathrib: the Banu 'Aws, and the Banu al-Khazraj. In addition to having a major cult center in Yathrib, the goddess was highly popular and well-known to many Arabian tribes of the Hijaz (western Arabia), and as such also enjoyed the worship of the tribes of Banu Quraysh, Banu Tamim and Banu Hudhayl; in addition to also being revered by the Nabataean Arabs of the far north of Arabia. Many tribes from across the Hijaz and Najd made the *hajj* pilgrimage to her shrine; in mythology, Manat was considered one of the eldest of all the gods and goddesses, second to Allāh himself: and as the wife of the thunder god Quzah. Manāt was called upon in Nabataean rituals to protect tombs along with Qaysha, Taraha and Dhu-Shara.

In pre-Islamic Meccan mythology, Manāt was the eldest of the three chief goddesses of Mecca and the Hijaz, created by the high god Allāh before her sisters al-Lāt and al-Uzza. The power and influence of the goddess was feared by the Arabs as she was believed to change the fate of those who displeased her for the worse: an oath sworn

by Manāt was considered to be the most serious and sincere. The hajj pilgrimage was not considered complete until the tribes of Banu 'Aws and Banu al-Khazraj visited her and shaved their heads. When the shrine of Manat was demolished under the orders of Muhammad, a sacred casket containing many treasures including the sacred swords *Mikhdam* and *Rasub* was looted by 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and brought back to the prophet Muhammad. It was common in Arabia for the shrines of popular gods and goddesses to contain depositories or pits for the treasures that were offered to them.

A'rā is a Meccan god of fertility, one of the 360 gods and goddesses that were worshiped in and around al-Ka'aba in Mecca. The idol of the god was a stone sculpture which had a white mark on its forehead and he was considered to be the Meccan equivalent of Dhu'l-Shara. The idol of A'rā was notorious to the pagan Arabs for the large number of sacrifices offered at his shrine.

Quzah is the Meccan god of storms, thunder and the clouds who was worshiped by the tribes of Banu Khuza'a and Banu Quraysh at his shrine in the vicinity of al-Muzdalifah, located not far from Mecca. Quzah was, in Meccan mythology, portrayed as a giant archer who lived in the clouds and fired hailstones at the *shayatin*

(demonic spirits) from his bow: the crashing of thunder, said to be the battle-cry of the god, was believed to scare away spirits of disease and misfortune. The rainbow that appeared after a rainstorm was considered by the polytheists of Mecca to be a ladder to the heavens and Quzah was its guardian. In the northern regions of the Arabian peninsula, Quzah was often the consort or husband of Manat, goddess of destiny.

The cult of Quzah in the Hijaz may have originated among the cousins of the Arabs; the Edomite tribes of southern Jordan, whose chief deity was a sky god called Qos in their language. The belief in Qos continued through with the Nabataeans who represented him a king flanked by bulls, holding a multi-pronged thunderbolt in his left hand. The memory of the god is still retained in modern Arabic with the words *qaws' Quzah* meaning "Bow of Quzah", a metaphor for a rainbow. The *'ifada* was a feast in pre-Islamic times which was held by the polytheists of the tribe of Banu Quraysh at Muzdalifah in veneration of Quzah as part of their *tahannuth* (devotional religious practices) and *istisqa* (rain-making rituals), during the hallowed month of Ramadan.

Isaf and **Na'ila** are Meccan water deities: the dual guardian spirits of the holy well of Zamzam who

possessed large stone idols each of which were situated atop two nearby sacred hills located close the Ka'aba, and were called as-Safa and al-Marwa respectively. From these hills the local Meccan tribes of Banu Khuza'a and Banu Quraysh would worship their idols from afar but never touch them as they were considered too sacred. The polytheists of pre-Islamic Mecca would travel back and forth to the idols of the god and goddess seven times as part of their fertility rites during the *hajj*, which in Muslim sources is a corruption of the Abrahamic interpretation of Hagar running between the mountains in search of water for Ishmael.

The god Isaf was also nicknamed *Mu'tim at-Ta'ir* or "Feeder of the Birds" as idols made of date meal were offered at his hill of as-Safa and birds would eat them; to the Arabs, this was believed to be a confirmation that the god has received the offering and is pleased with it. In later Islamic legend, the mythology of Isaf and Na'ila is retold as the two deities originally being a man and a woman from the tribe of Banu Jurhum who fornicated inside the Ka'aba of Mecca: an act that greatly angered Allah, who consequently turned them into stone for their sins. The Arabs were said to have then, in later times, forgotten the sins of Isaf and Na'ila and began to worship their petrified forms as gods.

Ath-Thurayya is the Meccan goddess of the Pleiades star cluster who was worshiped chiefly by the tribe of Banu Khuza'a; a Qahtanite (Yemenite) tribe that ruled Mecca prior to it being taken by the tribe of Banu Quraysh, who later also adopted the cult of Ath-Thurayya. The worship of the goddess was performed in the mountains where the people appealed to her for rain and good fortune as the appearance of the Pleiades in the sky heralded the rainy season. The Persian neighbors of the Arabs also adopted the Semitic custom of worshiping stars and planets and so their name for the goddess Ath-Thurayya was *Parveen*.

Duwar is the Meccan goddess of maidens who was worshiped by the youngest women of the Banu Quraysh by performing *tawaf* (circumrotation) around her idol and by making libations to her. Duwar is one of the 360 gods and goddesses that was worshiped in and around the Ka'aba of Mecca in pre-Islamic Arabia.

Al-Ikrimah is a Meccan fertility god whose idol was a statue of a dove carved from aloe wood that was worshiped inside the Ka'aba of Mecca by the tribe of Banu Quraysh. His idol was accompanied by sacred doves and it was likely that the god was an "import" from Syria.

Ikrimah, however, was a popular name among the Arab polytheists in Mecca and Najd and it is possible that god originated as an ancestral totem.

Hilal is the Meccan moon god; the deification of the very slender waxing or waning crescent moon which was first visible before and after a new moon, heralding the start of the month of Ramadan: this was a sacred time for the pre-Islamic Arabs of Mecca and the Hijaz, during which they fasted and feasted, and all tribal feuding and misbehavior was forbidden. The influence of the moon god was considered to be beneficial and encourage the growth of date palms: whereas the sun goddess Shams would scorch the ground and cause discomfort, particularly in the high summer of the month of Ramadan, a time when Hilāl was called upon especially. Amulets in the shape of crescent moons were worn to gain the influence by and protection of the moon god by many Semitic cultures.

Hilāl was an important deity of the tribe of Banu Kinanah who lived to the south of Mecca, and the significance of the crescent moon as the marker of the beginning of Ramadan heightened the gods status in the religion of the Arabs of the pre-Islamic Hijaz. The classical Arabic name of the god in his form of the full moon is *al-Qamar*. Other

names for the moon god across the Arabian peninsula include the classical Arabic *an-Nayyir* ('The Luminous One'); *Sayin* (cognate of the Babylonian *Sin*) to the ancient Hadramites; *Kahl* to tribe of Kindah; *Wadd* ('Platonic love') to the Minaeans and *Warakh* ('Wanderer') to the Himyarites and Sabaean. A common act of moon-worship among the Semites was to kiss the hand upon seeing it.

Zuhāl is the Meccan goddess of the planet Saturn to whom the tribe of Banu Jurhum consecrated the Ka'aba after they had gained control of it by conquering the *al-Amaliqah* (Amalekites) tribe who ruled Mecca in ancient times. In other regions of Arabia, Zuhāl was a male deity known as *Nakruh* or *Kaywan*, the latter of which was also worshiped by Chaldean (*Kaywannu*) and Hebrew tribes (*Kiyyun*). As one of the rulers of the world beneath the earth along with al-Merrikh/al-Muharriq, the planet Mars; Zuhāl, the planet Saturn, was believed to have power over the cultivation and produce of the soil and was said to punish anyone who ruined even a small area of arable land: although along with Mars, she adores those who till the earth.

Awf is a Meccan oracular god whose idol was in the form of a large bird of prey that was situated near the Ka'aba.

An early totemic god of the Banu Quraysh tribe, he was seen as a divine ancestor among them, and the name *Abd-'Awf* was a popular theophoric name. Awf was consulted as an oracle as he was thought to control the movements of birds which could be then interpreted as omens: this form of divination was known to the pagan Arabs as *zajr*.

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Buāna is a Meccan god to whom the tribe of Banu Quraysh were devoted to. This god was one of the 360 deities worshiped at the Ka'aba and he was said to give oracles if offerings and sacrifices were made at his shrine.

Ash-Shi'rā is the Meccan goddess of the star Sirius who had a popular cult among the pagan Arabs who lived in and around pre-Islamic Mecca in the Hijaz: the goddess was venerated chiefly by the tribes of Banu Khuza'a and Banu Qays. The cult of ash-Shi'ra was so prominent among the tribes of pre-Islamic Mecca that it was specifically highlighted and condemned in the Qur'an. As the one of the brightest stars in the sky, ash-Shi'ra was thought to grant wealth and good fortune to her worshipers and oaths were often sworn in her name; another of which was *Mirzam al-Ḥawza'* and was believed to be the 'Doorkeeper of Heaven'.

The worship of stars (*najm*) and other celestial objects (*kawkab*) was a common religious practice among the pre-Islamic Arabs and other Semitic peoples; especially among the nomadic Bedouin who grazed their flocks at night and observed the stars for directions. The temples of the sedentary Arab tribes who dwelt in the towns, most notably the Ka'aba of Mecca, were designed by certain corners facing certain stars: a common Semitic religious feature including temples having rooftops from where stars and planets could be worshiped and observed.

The night sky was considered sacred to the pagan Arabs with every star and planet believed to either be a god or the home of a god. Meteorites (*shihab*) too were worshiped by the pagan Arab as they held them to be sacred objects; gifts from the gods and animistic fetishes in which spirits were believed to dwell. The star Sirius was sacred to many ancient peoples, including the neighbors of the Arabs, the Persians, who worshiped it as the rain god Tishtrya; and the Egyptians who worshiped Sirius as the goddess Sopdet. In Islam, the pagan association of the star Sirius is stripped away as the Qur'an proclaims Allah to be the "Lord of Sirius" (Surah an-Najm: 49) thus emphasizing the dominance and

superiority of Islam over the old pagan religions of Arabia. The goddess was said to be the consort of the god Suhayl, patron of the star Canopus.

Suhayl is the Meccan god of the star Canopus whom the ancient Yemenite tribe of Banu Jurhum honored by constructing the Ka'aba so that its south-eastern corner faced the star itself. In pre-Islamic mythology, the god Suhayl is the admirer of the star goddess ash-Sh'ira and was also worshiped by the tribe of Tayy in the Najd desert of central Arabia. Suhayl was believed to bring great fortune upon all who he shined and was an auspicious star to the Arabians.

Dhātu-Anwāt is a Meccan tree goddess whose idol was large *sidr* (lotus) tree that was located on the road halfway between Mecca and Yathrib, and was an important deity of the Banu Quraysh tribe. The polytheists of Mecca and Najran were especially known to go on a pilgrimage to her tree-idol and hang ornaments, jewelry and weapons on its branches as well as offering animal sacrifices. The pre-Islamic Arabs associated trees with sources of water and thus as divine sources of life: sacred groves, known to the pre-Islamic Arabs as *masha'ir*, were considered to be the abode of a god and were often located as part of a *haram* or sanctuary.

Abu Waqid al-Laythi said "The pagans have a lote-tree, which they would frequent and hang their swords upon. They would call it Dhātu-Anwāt (*"She who possesses the Ornaments of Honor"*). The pagan community of Najran would hold festivities and feasts in honor of Dhātu-Anwāt and it was considered ill fortune to damage her tree. The worship of tree spirits was common in pre-Islamic Arabia: with an old Bedouin ritual of offering an animal sacrifice to a sacred tree on behalf of an ill family member, cooking the meat, and then splitting the meat among the family being typical of the tribal animism in the sparse desert regions. The Tree of Life (*Shajarat al-Hayat*) motif was common to Semitic religious thought throughout the Near East, continuing with the Hebrew *Tree of Knowledge* and the Islamic *Sidrat al-Muntaha*.

Various unique trees and shrubs which were found whilst wandering the desert were known to the Bedouin as *manahil* (sing. *Manhal*): places where angels and jinn were believed to descend to and rest. The belief in sacred trees was common among the desert Semites with the story of Moses and the Burning Bush and Abraham planting a sacred grove in Beersheba for the worship of God being comparable to the pagan Bedouin worship and adoration of trees. Another tradition among the Arabians existed

where beads, swords, jewelry and clothing were hung upon certain manahil trees: this is shared by the biblical Hebrews in II Kings 23:7 "where the women wove hangings for the grove"; and also by the Canaanites who venerated objects called *asherim*, sacred trees and poles representing the nature goddess Asherah.

The belief in sacred trees did not end with Abrahamic religions: even in Islamic mythology, a cosmic lote-tree called *Sidrat al-Muntaha* is believed to mark the end of the seventh heaven, where no creation can pass; and a magnificent tree called *Tuba* that bears all the fruit in the world is believed to grow in Paradise. In pre-Islamic Bedouin mythology, jinn were thought to frequent and inhabit dense dark colored shrubs known as '*osaj*', which were found chiefly in deserts and graveyards. The Bedouin would refuse to cut the wood from an '*osaj*' bush and would approach it respectfully, throwing a small stone into the bush to appease the jinn inhabiting it. It was common for the Semites living in desert regions to make animal sacrifices to *manhal* trees to gain the favor of the spirit inhabiting it, whilst also believing that if a person slept beneath one they were said to have a prophetic dream. The Bedouin tribe of Bani Mu'ahib, who lived at Wadi Dibr in north-west Arabia, held the belief that if one was to light a fire beneath or damage a sacred

tree, the person and their animals would suffer a horrific death.

Al-Habhah is a Meccan guardian god who the tribe of Banu Quraysh sacrificed camels to at his *nusub* (sacred stone) which was located at the Ka'aba.

Suwā is the west Arabian goddess of the night who had an idol which was the sculpture of a woman that was situated in a temple in an area called Ruḥat which was located in Yanbu al-Bahr; a coastal town near Yathrib in the Hijaz. The idol of Suwā was notably attended to by the women of the tribes of Mecca and Yathrib as she was thought to grant beauty and youthfulness to her worshipers, in addition to being a deity that was associated with peace and rest. Suwā was also worshiped as the maintainer of the many natural freshwater springs and fountains that were found across the vicinity of Yanbu, which were crucial in helping the population of the town grow and prosper.

In addition to being popular among the women of the Hijaz, Suwā was the chief goddess of the tribe of Banu Hudhayl, who were the custodians of her temple, and was revered mainly by them in addition to receiving pilgrimage and offerings from the nearby tribes of Banu

Quraysh; Banu Khuza'a; Banu Lihyan; Banu Daws and Banu Hamdan. In pre-Islamic mythology, the goddess was the consort of the lunar god Wadd. The idol of Suwā was demolished in 630 AD by the Muslim commander 'Amr ibn al-'As, an act which ended the cult of the goddess in Yanbu.

Wadd is an Arabian moon god who was the chief god of the tribe of Banu Kalb and was the patron deity of the oasis settlement of Dumat al-Jandal. The oasis was first settled by the Minaean Arabs, emigrants from Yemen, and they established a temple to Wadd there that housed an idol which was a large sculpture of a bearded man. The members of the tribes of that area used to bear amulets inscribed with the formula "*Wadd-Ab*" meaning "Wadd is my father" and these were believed to bring health and prosperity to the wearer. Wadd was considered by the Minaean Arabs to be the ruler of the night sky along with his consort Suwa, the goddess of the night itself: his holy animal was the serpent, and his holy symbol was the crescent moon with the small disk of Venus.

According to Malik ibn Harithah, a former devotee of Wadd, his idol was "*the statue of a huge man, as big as the largest of human beings, covered with two robes, clothed with*

the one and cloaked with the other, carrying a sword on his waist and a bow on his shoulder, and holding in one and a spear to which was attached a standard, and in the other, a quiver full of arrows." In the beliefs of the pagan Arabs, Wadd not only symbolized the moon, water and fertility: he also represented *muruwwa*, the Bedouin concept of masculinity; and *hamasa* ("courage/bravery"): just as his consort, the goddess Suwa, represented feminine virtues and the feminine aspects of the natural world. Whereas most of the gods and goddesses of the pre-Islamic Arabian pantheon were usually offered blood as a sacrifice, milk was the choice offering to Wadd.

At his seat of worship in Dumat al-Jandal, Wadd was primarily associated with the moon, friendship and paternal love by the Minaeans and their successors, the Banu Kalb in addition to being a deity that was consulted for oracles and worshiped to bring victory in battle. In later times with the arrival of Islam, the temple and idol of Wadd at Dumat al-Jandal were destroyed in an expedition led by the Muslim general Khalid ibn al-Walid, who fought in battle against the local tribes of Banu Abd-Wadd and Banu 'Amir al-Ajdar: the men of these two tribes formed a resistance against the Muslims and sought to defend the shrine of Wadd, but were all slain. In pre-Islamic times, Wadd was known across Arabia with

his cult being found among the Banu Quraysh of Mecca and the Nabataean Arabs. The god of the moon was known under various names in pre-Islamic Arabia; examples including: Hilal, one of the chief gods of the tribe of Banu Kinanah which lived in the Hijaz; Sayin, worshiped among the citizens of the Kingdom of Hadramawt; and Warah, venerated by the Himyarites and Sabaeans as a divinity that was subordinate to the sun goddess Shams, who was their chief deity.

Al-Fals is a central Arabian mountain god who was worshiped by the tribe of Tayy at a shrine on the black mountain of Jabal Aja which is situated near the town of Ha'il in the Najd highlands. The idol of al-Fals was a distinctive outcrop of red granite which took the shape of a man; the deity presided over the growth of vegetation around the town of Ha'il and the mountain of Jabal Aja itself was considered sacred and inviolable (*hima*) by the local tribes. The area surrounding the gods shrine was used as a refuge by both animals and people and the custodians of gods idol was the Banu Bawlan clan of the Tayy tribe.

Another pre-Islamic law was that if an animal is found grazing on the mountain of Jabal Aja then that animal would then belong to al-Fals: with divine wrath believed

to fall upon any who harmed the gods' sacred animal. Al-Fals was the tribal god of the Tayy tribe and was one of their chief gods along with Kuthra, al-Mushtari, Suhayl and Allah. The Tayy used to sacrifice animals and make libations to this god. Al-Fals is a divinity that was typical to the pagan Bedouin, being a god of nature and the wild; the mountain that he ruled over becoming a sanctuary from the inter-tribal warfare that occurred between the Tayy and the other Najdi tribes. The Semitic belief in mountain deities and mountains being sacred ground is comparable to the ancient Hebrew veneration of Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments and the covenant from Yahweh.

Shams is the Arabian goddess of the Sun and the chief goddess of the Himyar tribal confederation; believed by the inhabitants of the fertile lands of south Arabia to be a preserver of crops and domestic life. The sun goddess had a temple with an idol in the south Arabian city of Sana'a where frankincense was continuously burnt to her; at one point in time, Shams was the most popular goddess in the Himyarite Kingdom, above all others. The cult of Shams was popular among many Arab tribes including the Himyar; Banu Daws; Quraysh; Dhabbah; Uqayl; Tamim and Hamdan although her worship was popular and common across all of the Arabian peninsula.

In the arid desert highland regions, however, where farming was not possible and water was scarce, the nomadic Bedouin held a more fearful view of Shams - believing her to dry up the grazing areas for their flocks.

The Bedouin were more prone to worshipping the moon god instead of the sun goddess as Shams would scorch the desert in the day, and the appearance of the moon god Sayin/Wadd/Hilal/Warah at night provided relief and dew for the weary desert nomads and their flocks. In spite of Shams' malefic and hostile tendencies, the Bedouin would still respect and fear the goddess; appealing to her for mercy and attempting to placate her with a sacrificial offering. The worship of the sun goddess was performed by bowing to the east and praying at sunrise, noon and sunset and rituals which could be done in the open air or at one of her temples, the most important of which was located at Sana'a in the Yemen. In addition to being the goddess of Sun, Shams was a goddess of justice as she could see all human actions and bring all injustices to light, with oaths often being sworn by her name.

The Arabian Shams was known to the Hebrews as Shemesh, to the Aramaeans as Shemsha and to the Babylonians in the male form of Shamash. A clan called

the *Banu Abd-Shams* ("Sons of the Servant of Shams") of the Quraysh tribe were prominent in Mecca during pre-Islamic times and the male theophoric name *Abd-Shams* was popular with both the Arabs of Himyar and Hijaz. To the Sabaean of Yemen this goddess was known interchangeably as *Shams-'Aliyyat* ("Shams the Most High"), *Tanuf* ("Lofty") or *Dhat-Himyam* ("Lady of the Heat"). The Himyarite tribe of Banu Bata' would ritually hunt oryx and ibex in worship of the sun goddess who was believed to in turn grant them bounty and wealth.

Al-Mundhir is a west Arabian god of justice, whose name means "The Cautioner". He was worshipped by the tribe of Banu Aws in the city of Yathrib (later known as Medina); the name *Abd al-Mundhir* being found among the chieftains of the Banu Aws.

Al-Ashhal is a west Arabian god whose name means "The One with Bluish Black Eyes". The name *Abd al-Ashhal* was found in Yathrib as the name of a chieftain of the Banu Aws tribe.

Yaghuth (يَغُوثُ "He Helps") is the south Arabian god of strength and war who had an idol that was a statue of a lion which was situated on a hill in Yemen: the chief god

of the Sabaean tribe of Banu Madh'hij who lived around Najran and Marib. Yaghuth was worshiped for assistance and protection in any venture, but before a battle, the tribesmen would call upon the god to bless the warriors with might and courage. The tribes of Madh'hij, Murad and Jurash worshiped Yaghuth as their chief deity, and those tribes were known to carry his idol into battle on a *qubba*, a type of portable domed shrine, to ensure victory. The cult of Yaghuth was found across Arabia, with men of the tribes of Banu Khuza'a and Banu Quraysh in the Hijaz bearing the name *Abd-Yaghuth* ('Servant of Yaghuth') and *Abd al-Asad* ('Servant of the Lion') in his honor.

In pre-Islamic Arabian mythology, the **Jinn** (Arabic: الجن) are supernatural beings who personify and control minor natural phenomena: spirits of the wilderness and the inhospitable forces of nature who were recognized by the pagan Arabs as divinities of inferior rank to the gods (*ālihah*) and the angels (*mala'ikah*). The jinn are nature spirits that are believed to inhabit stones; trees; the earth; space; the air; fire; the sky, and bodies of water, and are thought to be fond of remote and desolate places such as the desert wilderness. The jinn played an important role in the beliefs of the pagan Arabs as they were seen as personifications of natural forces; spirits of the land and mediators between mankind and the gods.

In Arabian mythology, the jinn were created by Allah from a supernatural fire called *samum* ("scorching wind"); while the gods were formed from *ruh al-quddus* ("holy spirit"); the angels from *nur* ("light"), and earthly creatures from *adamah* ("red clay").

The cult of the jinn as guardian or nature deities was popular across the whole of pre-Islamic Arabia since ancient times; to the extent that certain tribes such as the Banu Mulayh of the Hijaz and the Banu Hanifa of Najd worshiped the jinn exclusively and sought intercession from no other deities except them. The jinn also had the ability to appear as wild animals, and sacred animals play a role in pagan Arabian belief as guests or clients of the gods, and as totems of particular tribes. The Bedouin believed that the gods (*ālihah*) were related to the jinn, and the jinn to the wild animals: thus the jinn ultimately personified the merciless and hostile side of nature that was to be respected, worshiped and feared.

The pagan Arabs believed the sound of the desert winds to be music or voices of the jinn, which was known to them by the name of *'azif*. The pre-Islamic Bedouin Arabs considered the oases and springs of the desert to be jealously guarded by the jinn and so they would offer a

small sacrifice to placate them and persuade them to not visit their wrath upon the people and animals.

To the Jewish clans of Arabia and the pagan Arabian tribes who inhabited Palestine, the jinn were sometimes known as *Azab al-'Akaba* who appeared and acted much like the satyrs mentioned in Greco-Roman mythology and the Hebrew Bible. To the Hebrews, the jinn were called *shedim* - originally protective spirits with the feet and claws of a cockerel whom animal sacrifices were offered to. The Mahra tribe of Oman and eastern Yemen called the jinn *ke'yoy* in their Himyaritic language.

Dhu'l-Ka'abat is an Arabian tutelary god who had a sacred stone (*nusub*) in which he was believed to reside, and he was worshiped by the tribes of Taghlib and Banu Bakr ibn Wa'il in the east of Arabia.

Ba'alat-Sahra is a north Arabian goddess of the underworld and of the desert who was an important goddess of the nomadic Semites; known to the Amorite tribe of southern Syria as Belet-Seri, the wife of their chief god Amurru.

Rudā is a central Arabian rain goddess who was worshiped by certain tribes of the Najd desert which

were of Adnanite origin, in particular, the Banu Tamim and Banu Rabi'ah. In the religious outlook of these, neglecting the worship of the goddess was believed to incur divine wrath in the form of misfortune and drought.

Rudā was worshiped and invoked in inscriptions mainly for protection and the well-being of the tribe. In the inscriptions of the Lihyan and other north-western Arabian tribes, the goddess Rudā is named as *Rdʿw* and is a male deity; in the religion of the Safaitic Bedouin who dwelt in the Syro-Arabian desert and north-central Arabia, however, Rudā remains as a female goddess.

Nahastāb is a south Arabian fertility god who was worshiped by the Minaean Arabs. This god was associated with serpents who were recognized as omens of bounty and fertile ground.

Al-Uqaysir is a north Arabian tutelary god who was worshiped by the tribes of Banu Judham; Banu al-Quda'a; Banu 'Amila; Banu Lakhm; and Banu Ghatafan. Pilgrims from these tribes would visit his shrine in the hills of Syria to hold ceremonies and swear oaths before his baetyl; their most notable and peculiar ritual being them shaving their hair and mixing it in with flour and making

bread from it, which would then be offered to the god in turn for his protection and to honor him as a guardian of the spirits of dead ancestors. Hair as a sacrificial offering was usually part of pre-Islamic funerary rituals, where it was shaved off and offered to the spirit of the deceased along with sprinklings of blood.

Su'ayr is a north Arabian oracular god who was worshiped by the Bedouin tribes of Anazah and Banu Bakr ibn Wa'il in northern Arabia and southern Syria. The idol of the god was a baetyl (*nusub*) which stood in a deep pit in the desert; the tribesmen of the Anazah and Bakr would perform *tawaf* (circumrotation) around it, holding ceremonies and offering sacrifices to the god in the hope that he would reward their devotion with an oracle, which was said to be an audible voice from the idol. The clans of Banu Yaqdum and Banu Yadhkur were the custodians of the shrine of Su'ayr.

Al-Jalsad is a south Arabian god of pasture and fields who was worshiped by the Banu Kindah tribe of Hadramawt. The idol of al-Jalsad was a giant statue of a man who had a torso of white stone and a head made of black stone, and it stood in a large *hawtah* (sacred enclosure); Kindite priests and soothsayers would lay down to sleep in the sanctuary with the aim of receiving an oracle from the

god in their dreams. The tribesmen of the Kindah would also let their animals pasture and graze in the *hawtah* of al-Jalsad and offer sacrifices of their first-flock to him there, in conjunction with the lunar god Kahl.

Ashar is a north Arabian war god whose cult was popular near Palmyra in southern Syria and was depicted as archer with a bow and quiver seated on a horse and was worshiped alongside the god Sa'ad. These jinn were believed to protect human lives and enterprises.

Nuhm (*The Comforting*) is a west Arabian guardian god who was worshiped by the Bedouin tribe of Muzaynah, who lived to the south of Yathrib. The Muzaynah offered animal sacrifices to the idol of Nuhm as he was believed to be responsible for the well-being of tribe and its animals; the last custodian of his shrine being Khuza'i ibn Abd-Nuhm of the clan of Banu 'Ida.

Ni'mat is a north Arabian fortune goddess who was worshiped by the Banu Lihyān tribe of Tayma and Dedan in turn for her blessing. The goddess is mentioned in ancient Safaitic inscriptions along with the creator god Allah.

Hāwlat is the Arabian goddess of magic and power and patron goddess of the oases of Dumah and Hejra. The name of the goddess means "to change (fortunes)" and "to avert".

Dhu'l-Kaffayn is a west Arabian tribal god who was worshiped on the south eastern coast of the Hijaz and was venerated by the clan of Banu Munhib of the Banu Daws tribe. His idol was an outcrop of rock which was in the shape of a hand.

Abgal is a north Arabian tutelary god, a deity of the desert and the patron of Bedouins and caravan drivers who was honored at Palmyra in southern Syria.

Amm'anas is a south Arabian agricultural god who was worshiped by the al-Adim clan which belonged to the Sabaean tribe of Khawlin: the people of that clan would aside the first portion of their crops for the god in order to show gratitude to him for the harvest. In addition to being worshiped by the Khawlin tribe, he was also the chief god of the Arabs of Qataban who worshiped him as a weather deity. The Qatabanian Arabs called themselves the Banu 'Amm ("The children of 'Amm") in reverence of him.

Nasr is the south Arabian god of the deep desert whose idol was a sculpture of a large vulture (in some sources an eagle) that was situated in a temple in the village of Balkha in Yemen where he was worshiped by the people of the Himyar tribe, in particular the clan of Dhu'l-Kala'. The sacred animal of Nasr, the vulture, was venerated by his worshipers as a totem of insight and sharp character; as well as this, the god represented the hostile and unforgiving aspects of nature, in particular, the desert: a place that town-dwelling Arabs such as the Himyarites were reluctant to visit. Nasr was a major god of the Himyarite Arabs of Yemen prior to their majority conversion from paganism to Judaism and then to Islam, and they would place images of vultures on the doors of their temples and official buildings.

The cult of Nasr and other deities almost entirely disappeared from among the city-dwelling Himyarites during the reign of the Jewish Himyarite king Yusuf As'ar Yath'ar; although Nasr and many other gods and goddesses continued to be venerated by the pagan tribesmen of the remote Yemeni highlands until the arrival of Islam. The Arabic name of the god *Nasr* is cognate to the Hebrew *Nishra* and the Assyrian *Nisroch*, both representative of vultures or birds of prey.

Dhu'r-Rijl is a south Arabian tribal god whose idol was an outcrop of stone in the shape of a foot that was worshiped by the tribe of Banu Daws.

Tanuf is a south Arabian sun goddess who was worshiped at Gadaran in Yemen and was invoked in Himyarite inscriptions alongside the sky god Ilmuqah and Athtar, the god of the planet Venus. The name of the goddess means "Lofty" in reference to the Sun and she was a Sabaean epithet of the pan-Arabian sun goddess Shams who was also called Dhat-Himyam ("Lady of the Heat"). In the language of the Mahra tribe to the east of the Himyarites and Hadramites, the sun goddess was known as *Eyum*.

'Utarid is the Arabian god of the planet Mercury who was a patron of writing, learning and eloquence and was worshiped primarily by the tribe of Banu Asad ibn Khuzaymah, who lived near Mecca. This god played a similar role to the Babylonian god Nabu; the Himyarite 'Anbay; the Nabataean al-Kutbay, and the northern Arabian Mu'nim, who were all associated with learning, intelligence and the planet Mercury.

Qaysha is a north Arabian funerary goddess who was invoked by the Nabataean Arabs of southern Jordan along

with the fate goddess Manat and the fortune goddess Taraha in order to protect tombs and curse those who disturbed the remains of the entombed.

Dhu'l-Khalasah is a south Arabian oracular god who was worshiped by the tribes of Banu Daws, Khath'am, Bajilah and Banu al-Azd and had a temple in the town of Tabalah, which was situated on the road between Mecca and Sana'a. The idol of Dhu'l-Khalasah was a pillar of white quartz which many tribes made pilgrimages (*Hajj*) to in pre-Islamic Arabia. His shrine in the south-west of Arabia almost rivaled the Ka'aba of Mecca in terms of popularity and his worshipers there used the divinatory method of cleromancy (*istiqsam*) to discern his messages. The white quartz idol of Dhu'l-Khalasah was decorated with a crown and beautiful necklaces, and was offered gifts of barley; wheat; milk, and ostritch eggs.

According to some sources from the 1800s, the gods cult was revived in a remote area of the 'Asir region of southern Arabia until 1815, when his idol was destroyed by Wahhabi gunfire. The goal of the Wahhabi Ikhwan militia of Ibn Saud itself was to discipline sedentary Arab and nomadic Bedouin society and cleanse it of perceived pre-Islamic polytheistic practices such as shrine worship and magic. Islamic scholars of the time claimed that some

of the Arabs of the Tihama and the Najd Desert had reverted back to pagan practices such as worshiping at shrines, ignoring Islamic law in favour of tribal law and using talismans.

Dhātu-Ba'dan is the south Arabian goddess of the oasis, nature and the wet season and was worshiped by the people of the tribe of Himyar at tree-circled oases; with Himyarite settlers eventually bringing her worship to the north of Abyssinia and Somalia. This goddess was said to forbid any invocation to her when "there was not present in her sanctuary, a seeress or a priestess". In the sanctuary of Dhat-Badan, a female priestess called a *khalimah* (literally 'Dreamer') would lie down and sleep before the sacred tree(s) of the goddess, with the aim of receiving an oracle in the form of a prophetic dream.

In the language of the Semites of Abyssinia, Dhātu-Ba'dan was called *Ẓat-Badar* and was a popular goddess of the polytheists of Axum, an ancient city which was originally founded by early Semitic settlers from the Arabian Peninsula. The *wa'la* or she-ibex was sacred to this goddess and it was said that an island in the Red Sea was inhabited by ibexes was under her protection.

Akhwar is the north Arabian god of the planet Jupiter who was attested to in inscriptions left by the tribe of Banu Lihyan at Thamud and Safa in the Old North Arabian dialect. The people of those tribes would name their children *Taym-Akhwar* ('Servant of Akhwar') in honor of this deity. The planet Jupiter was clearly visible in the night sky of Arabia and was considered to be a fortunate 'star' that held an auspicious influence and was worshiped under many Arabic names such as *al-ʔadd*, *as-Sadiq* and *al-Mushtari*: other Semitic peoples venerated the planet under similar names such as *Tzedek* ('Righteous') or *Gad* ('Fortunate') to the Hebrews and *Gadda* ('Fortunate') to the Aramaeans.

Taraha is a north Arabian fortune goddess who was invoked in inscriptions for well-being and prosperity by the Nabataean Arabs of Hejra along with the goddesses Manat and Qaysha. This goddess was also known as *Tadha* and was believed to watch over the tombs of the dead.

Dhu'l-Khabsa is an Arabian fertility god whose idol was worshiped by the tribe of al-Azd near Sana'a. Nothing else is known about this deity.

Sakbu is the north Arabian god of fortune who was worshiped by the Nabataean Arabs and may have been an epithet of the west Arabian god Jadd. The etymology of the gods name comes from the Arabic word for "gift" or "reward", *sakib*.

Ar-Rā'iyu (*The One Who Sees*) is the Arabian god of dreams (*ru'ya*) and prophecy. All dreams were considered to be messages from the gods in pre-Islamic Arabia and soothsayers specialized in interpreting them. This god was believed to be an all-seeing guardian and had origins with the Hebrew *El Roi* ('The Seeing God') who was believed to be the deity who protected Hagar, the mother of Ishmael and the ancestor of the Arabs, during her time in the desert.

Al-Ghurab is a Meccan god whose idol was in the form of a raven that was housed in the Ka'aba along with three-hundred and sixty other idols of gods and goddesses. Ravens were sacred to this god as guardians of the spirits of the dead: in Islamic mythology however, ravens are seen as evil and corrupt creatures, the bird that taught the first murderer Cain how to bury his murdered brother Abel.

‘A’im is a south Arabian war god who was worshiped by the Yemenite tribe of Banu al-Azd who dwelt in the Sarat mountains of Tihama in south-western Arabia, where they were custodians of his shrine and idol.

As-Simāk (*'The Uplifted One'*) is a west Arabian star god who was the deification of the star Arcturus in the constellation of Bootes and was worshiped to bring riches, renown and honor. The symbol of the god was the lance (*ar-rimah*) and was also named as *Haris as-Samā'*, 'the Guardian of Heaven'.

Ka'ibah (also known as *Chaabou*) is a north Arabian maiden goddess who was worshiped by the Nabataean Arabs of southern Jordan as the virgin mother of the nature god Dhu'l-Shara.

Kuthrā (*"The Most Rich"*) is a central Arabian goddess of prosperity and fortune who had a shrine and an idol in the vicinity of Ha'il in the Najd Desert, where she was worshiped by the tribe of Banu Tayy.

Khomar is the south Arabian god of wine and vineyards who was worshiped by the Himyarite Arabs of Yemen. The Himyaritic name of the god *Khmr* is etymologically

related to the Classical Arabic word *khamr* meaning 'wine'.

Hakmish is a south Arabian artisan god who was invoked for victory and assistance in battle and conquest. In the religion of the cousins of the Arabs, the Moabite tribes of southern Jordan, the god was their chief tribal deity and was known as Kemosh. The ancient Semitic kingdom of Ebla in northern Syria; whose people spoke an East Semitic language related to Akkadian, worshiped a divinity named Kamish or Chemosh who was a war god and a patron of weapon-crafting and smiths.

Dhu'l-Samawi is the Arabian god of the night sky, the stars and the constellations whose name translates as "*Lord of the Heavens*"; the chief god of the Banu 'Amir tribe whose primary seat of worship was at the Minaean city of Yathill in the northern highlands of Yemen, on the border of Najd. Bedouin tribes would bring their animals to the shrine of Dhu'l-Samawi when they were injured and they also sent sick people to reside at his shrine in order to receive healing.

Dhu'l-Samawi had his equivalent in the pantheon of the Palmyrenes of southern Syria, where was known as Ba'l-Samayn or Balshamin; a sky god who was similar to

the Greek deity Zeus. The cult of Dhu'l-Samawi existed among the Banu 'Amir as a form of henotheism or monolatry: a system of belief where the existence of other deities (*alihah*) was acknowledged but only Dhu'l-Samawi was consulted for all needs.

Dhu'l-Shara is an Arabian god of vegetation and freshwater springs who was worshiped by the tribe of Banu Daws and by the clan of Banu al-Harith ibn Yashkur ibn Mubashir of the tribe of al-Azd in west-central Arabia. The idol of the god was a large rectangular block of stone which was situated by a sacred spring and an area of wild vegetation. The people of those tribes allowed the area allotted to Dhu'l-Shara to grow naturally and be undisturbed from human activity (*hima*) in order to gain the gods favor and protection.

In the far north of Arabia and southern Jordan, Dhu'l-Shara was worshiped as the god of the oasis and mountainous fertile land, and was the chief god of the Nabataean Arabs. He had a large temple in the city of Petra where his worship was known to the Romans of Arabia who called him Dusares. As a result of extensive contact with the Romans, the cult of Dusares was eventually brought over to Italy from northern Arabia by

Nabataean merchants; a shrine and an inscription to Dusares being discovered at the port of Puteoli.

Ya'uq is the south Arabian god of protection and preservation who was associated with swift thought and intelligence: this deity was worshiped in the south of Arabia by the tribes of Hamdan, Khawlin and Khaywin and he was believed to swiftly come to the aid of his devotees. Ya'uq had a temple in a village of the Khaywin near Sana'a and his idol was in the form of a horse. The people of those tribes would carry small horse-shaped idols of Ya'uq around with them for the gods blessing and protection.

Sa'd is a west Arabian god of good fortune who was worshiped chiefly by the Bedouin tribe of Banu Kinānah who would visit his idol with their flocks; a large outcrop of rock on the seashore of Jeddah in the Hijaz, in order to obtain the gods' blessing. In the far north of Arabia, Sa'd is found as *Saad* who appears with Ashar and they are known there as *ginnaye (jinn)*, the 'good and rewarding gods'.

Al-Muharriq is an Arabian underworld god who was represented as a fierce deity at a red shrine and whose totem animal was the adult male lion (*usamah*). The

worship of al-Muharriq (also known as *al-Merrikh*) was mainly found in eastern Arabia and southern Iraq where his cult was prominent among the Bedouin tribes of Banu Rabi'ah, Banu Abd al-Qays and Banu Bakr ibn Wa'il. This god was the Arabic counterpart of the earlier Babylonian god Nergal, both sharing the same attributes such as being deities of the underworld; fire; the planet Mars, and the desert.

Al-Muharriq, like his Babylonian counterpart Nergal, had a wrathful disposition; he was believed to send disease and plague if he was angry with the population. The name of the god means "the Burner" as he represented the scorching heat of the desert, in addition to the heat of disease and as well as fire (*Harriqah*) itself. To the Mahra tribe who inhabited the deserts of Oman, this god was known as Harka and was a deity who had to be placated with animal sacrifices. In the far north of Arabia, al-Muharriq was called Arsuf who was a later Arabian development from the ancient Canaanite god Reshef; a deity associated with plagues and the underworld.

Salman or **Salim** is a north Arabian god of the oasis who was worshiped by the tribe of Banu Lihyan which dwelt at the oasis town of Tayma, and was associated with peace, harmony and the well-being of the tribe. In the religion of

the western Semites, Shalim was a god of the underworld and the dusk, and his name '*Shalim*' (*Peace*) was meant as an allegory for the peace of the grave.

Jarnan is a south Arabian fertility god who was worshiped at the ancient town of Izki in pre-Islamic Oman by the tribe of al-Azd and had an idol that was a statue of solid gold in the form of a bull. Jarnan was associated with tribal and animal welfare and imparted health and wealth as he was a patron deity of cattle. The idol of Jarnan is identical in description to that of the Golden Calf of the Hebrews.

'Awd is a north Arabian god of pasture and the seasons worshiped by the tribes of Anazah and Banu Bakr ibn Wa'il alongside the oracular god Su'ayr in southern Syria. Animal sacrifices were made to 'Awd by the Bedouin tribesmen and blood was offered at his baetyl. This deity was especially associated with nomads.

Kawim is a south Arabian god of agriculture, vegetation and the monsoon worshiped by the Himyarite Arabs of Yemen. The name of this god means "The Sustainer".

Al-Dabaran ("*The Follower*") is an Arabian star god who was worshiped by the tribes of Misam and Tamim who

believed that the veneration of his star (Aldebaran) in the constellation of Taurus, brought rain. If the star of Aldebaran had a heliacal rising that was unaccompanied by showers, it was seen as an omen of drought. In pre-Islamic Arabian mythology, the star god al-Dabaran was the admirer and follower of Ath-Thurayya, goddess of the Pleiades. The male camel was the sacred animal of this god.

Shadrafa is a north Arabian god worshiped for protection and prosperity by the Arab and Aramaean tribes living in and around Palmyra in southern Syria. The sacred animals of the god were the snake and the scorpion and he was depicted as an armed bearded man in military clothing wearing a cylindrical headdress.

Aranyada is a south Arabian god of nature and the tutelary deity of the city of Nashshan in Yemen where he was worshiped by the Sabaean Arabs. The various totems and symbols of this god include ostriches, ibises and trees.

Sahar is the north Arabian goddess of the dawn who was believed to be the wet nurse of the moon god Hilal/Wadd/Sayin/Qamar. Sahar is the sister of the god Athtar, the planet Venus and the god Salman.

Basamum is the south Arabian god of healing who was worshiped by the tribe of Himyar. The god was associated with balsam plant and healing shrines and sanctuaries were built in Yemen that were dedicated to him.

Hawbas is a south Arabian oracular goddess who was consulted for prophecies by the Sabaean Arabs of Yemen and was the consort of Athtar, the god of the planet Venus.

Bashir is a south Arabian god of prosperity worshiped by the Sabaean tribes of Bakil and Hashid.

Rahmaw or **Rahmanan** is a south Arabian god of mercy and protection whose mythology was later absorbed into that of the creator god Allah. Rahmaw was a popular god of the Sabaean Arabs of Marib where he was represented as a sphinx with votive plaques and dedications being offered to him. It is possible that this god is just another epithet of the god Allah, as the name Rahman was used to refer to him. The name *Rahman* was not recognized by the polytheists of Mecca and its usage as a divine name was mainly confined to Najran and al-Yamama in Najd.,

Ta'lab is the south Arabian god of the pastures whom the Himyarite tribes of Banu Riyam, Banu Su'may and Banu Sukhaym worshiped and sought oracles from at Tur'at on the mountain of Jabal Itwa in the Yemen. The idol of Ta'lab was a palm tree and the south Arabians associated him with the constellation of Capricorn, and as the husband of the water goddess Nawasam. The Himyarites were known to carry around votive healing amulets with the name of Ta'lab inscribed on them as a sign of devotion.

It was probable that the amulets dedicated to Ta'lab were inspired by Roman healing cults as they were in the normally in the form of a human body part. The polytheists of the Yemen would often name their children *Wahb-Ta'lab* in honor of this god and worshiped him to bring good health.

Shangilā is the north Arabian god of the stars who was worshiped by the tribe of Banu Lihyān who dwelt at the oasis of Tayma.

Al-Jadd is an Arabian god of luck who was believed to allot fortune to mankind and was worshiped chiefly by the Safaitic tribes of Awdh and Dhayf; who associated him with Manāt, goddess of destiny, and the planet

Jupiter. The god who represented fortune was known under various different names across the Semitic Middle East, including the Hebrew *Gad* and the Aramaic *Gadda*. The Arabic name '*Abd al-ʿJadd*' meaning 'Slave of Jadd' was found across the Arabian peninsula from tribes including Quda'a and Tamim.

Jihār is a west Arabian god of longevity, wisdom and the marketplace (*suq*) who was worshiped chiefly by the tribe of Banu Hawazin, and was the patron deity of the 'Ukaz market which was located near Mecca in the Hijaz. The worshipers of Jihār invoked the god in their processional chant (*talbiyah*) during the *Hajj* pilgrimage, asking him for guidance; a long life and to be merciful to them for their sins.

Al-Ab'ab is a north Arabian god of shepherds whose sacred animal was the mountain goat and he was worshiped by the tribes of Banu 'Udhrah and Banu al-Quda'a in the north of Arabia.

Mirtadam is a south Arabian fortune god invoked for assistance and divine intercession and was the chief god or *bāl* of the Himyarite tribe of Banu Mawad'am.

Bahar (or **Bajar**) is the south Arabian god of the ocean who was a chief deity of the Banu al-Azd tribe of Oman, in addition to being adopted as a god by the neighboring Himyarite tribes of Banu al-Quda'a and Banu Tayy. The last custodian (*sadin*) of the idol of Bahar was Mazin bin Gadhuba al-Ta'i who later destroyed the idol when news of Islam reached Oman. However; after the death of Muhammad, a faction of the Banu Azd tribe abandoned Islam under their chief, Laqit bin Malik al-Azdi, and returned to worshipping Bahar. This polytheist faction was later destroyed by an army sent by the caliph Abu Bakr that was under the command of Hudhayfah ibn Mihsan.

Omani mythology eventually inspired the story of the Old Man of the Sea who tormented Sinbad the Sailor on his fifth voyage in the Arabian Nights literature, a late echo of the sea god. In Abyssinia, he was known as Biher and was considered to be the brother of the god Athtar, both gods worshiped by the Axumites before their conversion to Christianity.

Dathan (or **Datin**) is a north Arabian oracular god who functioned as a dealer of divine justice and was worshiped near the oasis of Tayma by the tribe of Banu Lihyān. The god was also seen as a provider of food by the

peoples of Hisma and Tayma, with inscriptions such as '*by Dathan is our bread and pasture*'

Isāt is the south Arabian goddess of fire who played a minor role in the religious beliefs of the Sabaeans and Himyarites of Yemen. This deity was the South Arabian counterpart of the Canaanite fire goddess Ishat, a daughter of El, who opposed the god Ba'al and was later vanquished by the war goddess Anat.

Yurhim is a north Arabian god associated with joy and happiness, the etymological origin of his name being the Arabic *rahuma* ("to be enjoyable") with the name of the god meaning "He who makes happy". The belief in Yurhim originated from the Edomite tribes of Jordan and was eventually passed on to their successors, the Nabataean Arabs, who worshiped him as the father of the mother goddess Allat.

Harimtu or '**Athiratan** is the south Arabian goddess of fertility; the mother of the gods and the wife of the sky god Ilmaqah whose role in the religion of the agricultural tribes of Saba, Ma'in and Qataban involved preserving the quality of the soil, the abundance of harvest and the health of crops. These tribes considered her to be the mother of Athtar, the Morning Star, who presided over

the irrigation systems and dispensed rain. At the oasis of Tayma in the north of Arabia, this goddess was known as Ashira who was believed to control the growth of the date palms. The Semitic peoples living in Palestine and Syria worshiped her as Asherah and she was considered to be the wife of El Elyon (or Yahweh) and was the Queen of Heaven. The gazelle was the sacred animal of the goddess.

Shay al-Qawm is the north Arabian god of war, valor and the night who was worshiped by the Nabataean Arabs of southern Jordan as a guardian of camel caravans, protecting the travelers whilst they slept in their tents and was honored as one of their chief deities at Petra. It was customary for Nabataean knights to call upon Shay' al-Qawm before going in to war as the warrior Ubayd bin Ghanim bin Sa'ad-Allat of the Nabataean tribe of Rawah did before going to battle near the Euphrates. Shay al-Qawm was believed to be a god who abstained from wine, which was a popular beverage in pre-Islamic Arabia.

Qaynan is the south Arabian god of metalworkers and smiths, and was worshiped by the Sabaean tribe of Khas'am who lived in Yemen.

Al-Kutbay (or **al-Aktab**) is the north Arabian god of writing, prophecy and merchants who was the scribe of the gods and recorder of all deeds and events: worshiped by the Nabataean Arabs of southern Jordan and northern Arabia. Al-Kutbay had an oracular shrine at the city of Petra and the Bedouin tribes and merchants of southern Jordan brought the worship of al-Kutbay to Egypt and the Sinai peninsula. This god was worshiped primarily by the Banu Lihyān tribe who lived, intermarried and traded with the Nabataeans.

Anbay is the south Arabian god of prophecy and divination who was worshiped by the Arabs of Qataban and Himyar in Yemen and was associated with the planet Mercury. The name of the god Anbay means '*The Caller*' and he is the south Arabian equivalent of the Babylonian god Nabu who also presided over prophecy, the planet Mercury and wisdom.

Hawkam is the south Arabian god of justice and the judge of the dead, who was worshiped by the tribe of Himyar near Zafar in conjunction with the oracular god Anbay. In the region of eastern Yemen, the cousins of the Himyarites who are called the Mahra worshiped this god as *Hokam* in their language and thought him to be the chief judge in the gods' court.

Dhu'l-Ghabāt is the north Arabian god of palm groves whose name means *The Lord of the Thicket* and was worshiped at the oasis towns of Tayma and Dedan by the tribe of Banu Lihyan; who held thanksgiving ceremonies in honor of Dhu'l-Ghabat and thanked the god for his blessing of an abundant date harvest.

Al-Ya'bub is a central Arabian ancestral god who was worshiped by the Jadilah clan of the Tayy tribe and whose totem was a horse. The tribesmen of the Jadilah would fast for a period of time to honor the god.

Nakruh is the south Arabian god of the planet Saturn who was worshiped by the Minaean and Himyarite Arabs and had a shrine and sanctuary (*hawtah*) at the city of Baraqish in Yemen, where the sick and persecuted went to receive healing in times of need. The planet Saturn was associated with the subterranean world in Semitic mythologies and thus was a protector of agriculture and the fertility of soil. In the south Arabian pantheon, Nakruh was the brother of the moon god Wadd and his character was solemn, yet benevolent. The Himyaritic name *Nkrh* should not be confused with the Arabic word *makruh* ('hated') as the two words are unrelated.

Ri'am is a south Arabian oracular god who had a temple (*bayt*) in the city of Sana'a which was in the custody of the Himyar tribe who offered their worship and sacrifices at his idol, in return for oracles. Many Arab tribes from across the peninsula made a pilgrimage (*al-hajj*) to the temple of Ri'am as the answers, advice and foresight he gave was considered reliable. In legend, the temple of Ri'am was said to be inhabited by a giant black dog that was destroyed along with the idol and the shrine by Tubba Abu-Kariba Asad in his mission to convert the Himyarites to Judaism.

Al-Bā'li (also known as **al-Bā'l**) is an Arabian god of underground springs and palm trees who was regarded by the pagan Arabs as the Lord (*Ba'l*) of cultivated land. In the lands of Palestine and Syria, his counterpart there was known as Ba'al and he was a major weather deity; his cult in that land being in competition with Judaism and later, Christianity. In the Syro-Arabian town of Bakk, there stood an idol of Ba'l that was made of solid gold and had four faces; the people of Bakk relied on this god for oracles although Islamic mythology states that the idol was inhabited by demons. In the religion of the kingdoms of Himyar and Saba, al-Bā'li who was a divinity of groundwater, a rare occurrence in Arabia, occupied a position in the pantheon that was lesser than that of

'Athtar, the god of the Morning Star and of artificial irrigation: which was the opposite to the Semites of the Levant.

In most of pre-Islamic Arabia however, al-Ba'li was only a minor aquatic deity that received attention mainly from the southern tribes of Himyar and Mahra where he was called Bāl: the latter viewing the god in especially high esteem as the master of humanity, provider of rain and patron of nomads and pastoral life who leads the Mahra tribe like a shepherd leads his flock. The Mahra tribe are speakers of a South Semitic language that is related more closely to the old Himyaritic language of Yemen and the Amharic language of Abyssinia than it is to the Central Semitic language of Classical Arabic which was spoken by Adnanite and Qahtanite tribes living in Najd and Hijaz in pre-Islamic times. In modern times, the word *Ba'l* in Arabic refers to palm trees which relied on an underground water source ("*palms watered by Ba'l*"); retaining a distant memory of the pagan gods function.

Sa'nun is a south Arabian god of incense worshiped by the Himyarite tribes at Baynun in Yemen.

Yatha' is a south Arabian savior god worshiped by the Himyarites in Aden and Abyan in conjunction with Shams

and Nasr and was the guardian deity of the city of Aden. This gods worship was conducted through drumming and he was called upon for relief and delivery from misfortune and was also worshiped at Umm al-Jimal in Jordan by the Nabataeans under the name of *Yitha'*.

Ishtarut (Arabic: عشتروت) is an east Arabian fertility goddess and the patron goddess of Tarut Island in the Arabian Gulf which is named after her. This goddess was an Arabian epithet of the Palestinian Ashtart and the Babylonian Ishtar: Tarut Island itself was considered by the Arabs to be inhabited by jinn and supernatural beings. Ishtarut was a goddess of the ancient province of Gerrha (*Hagr*) in the east of Arabia, whose inhabitants were a people of mixed Arabian and Syro-Chaldean descent.

The culture of Gerrha however was predominantly Arabian, with Arabic names of Gerrhaeans such as *Taym al-Lat* and *Zayd al-Lat* appearing in inscriptions. It is also possible that the worship of Ishtarut was brought to eastern Arabia by the various Semitic peoples who sought to trade with the Arabs of Gerrha in the Arabian Gulf including the Sabaeans, Aramaeans, Babylonians and Palestinians.

Yahwah (Arabic: يهوه) is a north Arabian weather god, worshiped as a divine warrior who rides on the clouds and leads the armies of Heaven by Bedouin tribes, nomadic desert-dwelling Semites who lived near the Gulf of Aqaba and southern Palestine. In the religion of the Hebrew tribes of ancient Palestine, their deity Yahweh was originally one god among many; although in later times he developed into a major tribal god and eventually the Hebrews elevated him to the status of all-powerful creator god above all the others: a position that was held previously by El, who became an epithet of Yahweh. In ancient times, the cult of Yahweh was not restricted to the Hebrews alone: their cousins, the Midianites; Canaanites; Moabites; Edomites; Ammonites and Arabs also adopted him as one of their many gods, the husband of the goddess Asherah (or sometimes Anat). The god was also known as Ea to the Babylonians, Yahweh to the Hebrews and Canaanites and Yahu to the Aramaeans.

Azizan (also known as **Azizos**) is the north Arabian god of the planet Mars who was associated with victory in battle and was depicted as riding on a camel alongside his brother Mun'im: their cults both became Hellenized due to Graeco-Roman influence in Syro-Arabia. The name Azizan meaning "The Strong" continues to be heard even in Islam as one of the 99 names of Allāh as *Al-Aziz*. In

other regions of Arabia, the god of Mars was known under various other names such as *Merrikh*, *al-Muharriq* and *'lmn* (in Safaitic).

Mun'im (also known as **Monimos**) is a north Arabian astral god who was associated with the planet Mercury and wisdom. Alongside Azizan, he was worshiped at Palmyra and his cult came under Greek influence.

Maher is a south Arabian war god worshiped by the Himyarite Arabs and the Abyssinians. In Abyssinia, he was considered to be the son of the chief god Astar

Awal is an east Arabian sea god who was worshiped by the tribes of Taghlib, Iyad and Banu Bakr bin Wa'il at the province of Bahrain. The idol of Awal was said to be in the form of a shark and the god was said to be the primordial guardian of the waters of the Gulf.

Ramān is a south Arabian god of wind and storms who was worshiped by the Sabaeans and was envisioned to be a warrior that rode on the clouds. This god was the South Arabian counterpart of the Aramaean god *Rimmon* and the Babylonian *Rammanu*, who were also respectively called *Haddad* and *Adad*.

In the language of the north Arabians, Ramān was known as *al-Haddāh* ("The Crasher/Thunderer") and to the Himyarites as *Haddam*; and was worshiped as a bringer of refreshing rain and vegetation. The mythology of this god in the kingdom of Saba in Yemen was eventually absorbed into that of the chief storm god Ilmuqah or was just another of his epithets.

Ba'lat-Mafrash is a south Arabian fertility goddess who was believed to grant oracles; protect children and the family; improve the health of the crops and guard against enemies. The name of the goddess means '*The Mistress of Mafrash*' and the Sabaean Arabs dedicated incense altars to her.

Ilmuqah (also known as **Ilumquh** and **Almaqah**) is the south Arabian god of the sky and the chief tribal deity of the Sabaean Arabs; his seat of worship being at the temple of Awwam near their capital of Ma'rib. The god was worshiped as the protector of artificial irrigation and his divine symbol was a cluster of lightning bolts surrounding a curved sickle. Bulls were the sacred animals of Ilmuqah. The name of the god means "*The God Who Gives Health*" and it probable that he was a uniquely Sabaean-Himyarite equivalent to the central Arabian creator god Allah. Along with many of the other gods of

the Sabaean pantheon, the worship of Ilmuqah was brought to countries that the Sabaeans settled and traded in such as Abyssinia and Somalia.

Athtar is the south Arabian god of the planet Venus as the Morning Star who was worshiped by the Minaeans, Sabaeans and Himyarites of Yemen, who venerated him as a provider of water and a protector of irrigation systems. The holy symbol of Athtar was a spear-point as he was also a war god, and his sacred animal was the Arabian oryx (antelope). An inscription from the ancient central Arabian kingdom of Qaryat al-Faw names this god as *Athtar ash-Shariq* or "Athtar the Radiant", where he was worshiped along with Allāh and Kahl. Athtar was thought to not only provide water by rainfall; the god was also believed to control it in the useful form of a wadi, being central to a regions fertility. Athtar had a *hawtah* (sacred enclosure) in the land of Yemen which was a patch of undisturbed forest that was haunted by lions.

In the religion of the tribes of northern Arabia around the 8th century BC, Athtar was known as Atarsamayn or "Athtar the Heavenly" and specifically represented the planet Venus. The planet Venus played an important role as an auspicious heavenly body in the Arabian pantheon and was known as "the Lesser Fortune" with the planet

Jupiter (*al-Mushtari*, *Sadiq*) being known as "the Greater Fortune". The worship of Athtar was so popular with the Arabs of Yemen: his cult was eventually brought to Abyssinia where he was known as *Astar* and was worshiped alongside other deities of Arabian and local Abyssinian origin until the arrival of Christianity in that region. In the kingdom of Saba in ancient Yemen, the goddess Hawbas was his wife and consort.

Kahl is a central Arabian moon god and was the tutelary deity of the city of Qaryat al-Faw in the Najd Desert, where he was worshiped by the tribe of Banu Kindah to grant protection and strength of mind, along with the creator god Allah; the Sun goddess Shams; the moon god Sayin; and Athtar, the god of the Morning Star. Kahl had a shrine in Hadramawt to the south of Najd, where he was worshiped along with the god al-Jalsad.

Hol is the south Arabian god of longevity and patron deity of the incense traders of Hadramawt who worshiped him alongside the moon-god Sayin and the earth-goddess Ilāhatan at their capital of Shabwah. The symbol of the god was the phoenix and his counterpart in other Semitic religions is the Hebrew *Chol*.

Al-Mushtari is the Arabian god of the planet Jupiter who was worshiped primarily by the tribe of Banu Tayy who lived around the town of Ha'il in the highlands of Najd. The worship of the god was directed to both a stone idol and the planet itself; that was clearly visible in the night sky of Arabia. Al-Mushtari was worshiped as he was believed to grant wealth, protection and growth, in addition to being a patron deity of merchants. The god was said to dislike the desert and 'everything forlorn and desolate', and love cultivation and prosperity.

In Arabian mythology, the planet Jupiter had a high status as the king of the planets in the heavens and was the personification of fortune and happiness. Another notable fortune god often associated with the planet Jupiter was worshiped at Palmyra as Gadda and in the north of Arabia as al-Jadd. Al-Mushtari was an important god of the Banu Tayy, and also of the tribes of Banu Lakhm and Banu Judham before their majority conversion to Christianity. This god was also called *Sadiq*, meaning "the Trustworthy".

Nawasam is a south Arabian goddess of underground water to whom wells and water cisterns were dedicated and consecrated to. The Himyarites often sacrificed

female sheep and bovine to Nawasam while the males were offered to Ta'lab, the husband of the goddess.

Raziqa (or **Razeka**) is a south Arabian goddess of the earth and fertility who was worshiped by the ancient tribes of Thamud and 'Ād as a provider of food and sustenance.

Dhat-Zuhran is a south Arabian goddess of the planet Venus as the Evening Star and was worshiped by the tribes of Sumhuran, Radman and Khawlan and also by the Qatabanian Arabs of central Yemen. A temple to Dhat-Zuhran was located at the city of Raybun which was the seat of her worship. It is possible that this goddess is was simply an epithet of the widely venerated pan-Arabian goddess al-'Uzzā, who was called 'Uzzāyan in the South Arabian languages.

Nuha (or **Nahi**) is the north Arabian goddess of wisdom and intelligence. The name of the goddess means "The Wise" and she was worshiped by the Adnanite tribes of the northern region of the Najd desert along with the deities Atarsamayn and Ruda.

Samih is the south Arabian god of well-being who was worshiped by the tribe of Himyar in Yemen; the name of

this god means "The Hearer" and he was called upon in inscriptions and hymns in times of need.

Ma'n is a north Arabian god of water who was worshiped by Bedouin tribes near Ras as-Shar in southern Syria alongside the gods Azizan, Sa'ad and Ashar. Ma'n was a popular god with the Arabians of Syria who gave him the epithet of the 'good and bountiful god', as he was the personification of clean and life-giving freshwater.

Khādir is an Arabian god of plants and vegetation who was believed to have become an immortal through drinking the water that springs from beside the Tree of Life (*Shajarat al-Hayat*). He is believed to wander and watch over the earth; ensuring that vegetation and water still appears in the desert.

Hagaram is a south Arabian earth god who was worshipped by the Sabaean Arabs and was associated with the various ancient dolmens and standing stones (*qayaf*) that were found across Yemen.

Sayin (also known as **Syn** and **Dhu-Mayfa'an**) is the south Arabian god of the Moon and the chief god of the Arabs of Hadramawt, with his seat of worship being the city of Shabwah. Frankincense was sacred to him and he was the

South Arabian equivalent of the Babylonian moon god Sin. Arab tribes from across Yemen would visit his temple on their pilgrimage to Shabwah and leave votive offerings of statues and hold feasts, ceremonies and sacrifices to gain the blessing and favor of Sayin, who they called "*The lamp of Heaven*".

Across the pre-Islamic Middle East, the moon god was held in high regard by the Arab tribes and was known variously as Hilāl (the new crescent moon), Wadd, Warah and al-Qamar (the full moon). The function of the moon god was to provide nourishing dew and causing the orchards to bloom in the desert in pre-Islamic Arabian mythology, as well as ruling over the months of the calendar.

Hafidha is a south Arabian goddess of travel and journeys who had an idol that was worshiped by the ancient Arabian tribe of 'Ād who dwelt in eastern Yemen and Oman. The merchants of the 'Ād called on her to protect them from danger while trading in foreign lands, her cult continuing until the era of the Sabaeans.

Jamhara is a south Arabian war god whose idol was made out of solid copper and was worshiped by the Yemenite tribes of Banu 'Akk, Banu Salif and Banu Ash'ar who

revolted against the caliph al-Ma'mun and abandoned Islam for paganism.

In pre-Islamic northern Arabia, **Ubaydah I**, or Obodas as he was known to Romans, was a king of the Nabatean Arabs who was worshiped by them as a god after his death. He was the successor of al-Harith (Aretas), and was famed for his victory against the Hasmonean kingdom in Judah. The Nabateans worshiped Ubaydah as a protective deity against illness and misfortune: the practice of worshiping powerful kings and famous tribal chieftains being common among the pagan Arabs and other Semitic peoples.

In pre-Islamic south Arabian mythology, **Tarifah bint al-Khayr al-Himyar** was a priestess of the tribe of Himyar who possessed the ability to accurately predict future events, such as the collapse of the Ma'rib Dam: an event that proved to be a disaster for the Sabaeans and Himyarites as it caused their irrigation systems to fail; forcing them to migrate in their thousands into greater Arabia. The priestess Tarifah gained her fame after she advised her tribe, the Himyar, to go to war with the neighboring tribe of 'Akk; who the Himyarites successfully defeated despite the 'Akk being supported by a jinni named Jaza' ibn Sinan. Tarifah then became a

heroine of the Himyar tribe and her story proved that human beings who were proficient enough in the arts of divination and magic could sometimes overcome supernatural forces, such as the jinn.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, **Ma'ad ibn Adnan** was an important ancestor of the tribes of Hijaz and Najd, a chieftain who led them in victory against the Christian kings of the Banu Ghassan tribe and against the Sabaean tribe of Banu Madh'hij. Ma'ad was widely venerated as part of the tribal ancestor cult of the pagan Arabs and was considered to have led them to glory. The displacement of the people of Ma'ad was considered to be a disastrous event to the pagan Arabs.

In Arabian mythology, the **Holy Spirit** (Arabic: **ar-Ruh al-Quddus**) was thought of as the creative force of the high god Allāh. The Arabs described it as "What pushes the human soul into the mothers womb". Due to the cohabitation with Jewish and Christian tribes and peoples, later Arabian polytheism often borrowed from those other Semitic religions: in turn, the folk beliefs of the Jewish and Christian Arabs were highly influenced by pre-Islamic Arabian polytheism.

Later Islamic mythology describes the archangel Jibril as the personification of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit may have also been thought of as female, with the Arabian *al-Quddus* being of the same etymology as the Canaanite goddess *Qudshu*. The term *ar-Ruh al-Quddus* could also refer to any angelic being or agent of a god.

Qusayy ibn Kilab ibn Murrah is a pagan Arabian saint who was accredited with peacefully uniting the pagan tribes of Mecca and creating the first “town hall” in the Arabian Peninsula, where tribesmen could meet and discuss topics of a commercial or cultural nature. Shaykh Qusayy created laws so that pilgrims who went to Mecca were protected and supplied with food and water, which was paid for by a tax that he persuaded his people to pay. He was a revered ancestor of the ruling tribe of Mecca; the Banu Quraysh, and he had three children called Abd ad-Dar, Abd-Manaf and Abd al-Uzza who were consecrated to the three famous Meccan deities.

Warakh ("The Wanderer") is an early south Arabian moon god who was worshiped by the Sabaeans and Himyarites of Yemen; with amulets in the shape of crescent moons being popular among these peoples. In the polytheistic folk religion of the early Hebrews he was worshiped as Jarah and to the Canaanites he was known as Yarikh. In

pre-Islamic Bedouin religion, the moon god was believed to cause the orchards in the desert to bloom and bear fruit.

Mawt is the Arabian god of death and sterility; the Arabian counterpart of the ancient Canaanite death god Mot. The god Mawt of the Arabians was thought of in a more abstract way than compared to Mot and had a less developed mythology. The god was represented by an owl, his sacred animals: night-owls (*boum*) were often associated with death and ghosts in Semitic mythologies. Like Mot of the Canaanites and Maweth of the Hebrews, the Arabian Mawt was not worshiped or venerated but thought of as an abstract concept or force to be feared.

After a person died, their soul (*nafs*) was believed to descend to the land of Mawt, the *akhirah*; where they lead a calm, yet gloomy, existence as spirits (*arwah*) and as shades (*ashbah*). The pagan Arabs believed the hereafter to be neither a place of reward nor punishment, but simply as a state of existence without pain or pleasure that most people would lead as a *shabah* or shade: these ghosts were believed to be mostly powerless as they were bound to the will of the gods. The spirits of important ancestors, priests and powerful and honored people, however were believed to ascend to a heavenly

otherworld (*al-Munqalab*) or the sky (*as-Sama'*) itself, where they would enjoy the company of the gods and angels and would have power over human affairs in the *Dunyā* (the material world).

Thu'ban is an Arabian snake god, who was also known variously as **Hanash**, **Hayya** and **Hubab**. The pre-Islamic Arabs thought that the jinn often took the form of serpents, and they were a sacred totem to the Minaeans of Yemen. It was reported that Muhammad forced a Meccan man who was called Hubab to change his name as it was "the name of a devil". Snakes were also representative of *murūwwa*, the Bedouin concept of masculinity; and longevity. The god Hubab was the giant serpent who guarded the treasures in the well of the Ka'aba of Mecca.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, killing an animal that was sacred to the jinn, especially snakes, was believed to incur their wrath in the form of a lasting illness. To placate the jinn and to gain their forgiveness, the Arabs made clay statues of camels which they would fill with barley, wheat and dates and leave the object in a crevice on a mountain which they would visit the next day. If the food that was offered was found eaten, it was seen as a good omen that the jinn have accepted the offering and will leave the

affected person alone. In opposite terms, it was seen that the jinn have not accepted the offering and was regarded as being insignificant.

Al-Malik is a north Arabian underworld god who the tribes of the Syrian desert worshiped as a means of securing victory in battle. This god may even be a later Arabian development of the god Molok who was worshiped by the Ammonite tribes of northern Jordan. In later Islamic mythology, he became an angel called Maalik who guarded Hell.

Hawran is a north Arabian underworld god who presided over the spirits of disease which he could protect from or send at will and protected people from the venom of snakes. This deity is adopted from the earlier Canaanite god *Horon* who was called upon to shatter the skulls of the enemies of the gods and was represented by a hawk grasping a snake. The god is associated with caves and the bottoms of wells, representing doorways to the realm of the dead in the earth.

Sakiyya ("Moisture") is an ancient Arabian rain goddess who was worshiped by the tribes of Thamud and 'Ād, where she is named in religious graffiti as the ruler of the angels of the clouds.

In pre-Islamic Meccan mythology, **Abu Thumamah** was a jinni who was consulted as an oracle in regards to an important and dangerous expedition to Jeddah by the famous chieftain and high priest of the tribe of Banu Khuza'a, 'Amr ibn Luhayy.

Buraqil in Arabian mythology is an angel associated with lightning and the chief of the guardian angels. Both the pagan and Christian tribes of Arabia worshiped this angel to intercede on behalf of the creator god Allah.

Al-Qass ibn Sa'idah al-Iyadi was a pre-Islamic Arabian sage who belonged to tribe of Iyad and gained fame from his sermons at the market fair (*suq*) of 'Ukaz in western Arabia, which involved early concepts of resurrection and the 'certainty of death' (*Dahr*). Ibn Sa'idah was praised highly by Muhammad, who was reported to attend the sages sermons at the 'Ukaz fair before he himself became a Muslim.

In the pagan beliefs of the pre-Islamic Mahra tribe of Oman and eastern Yemen, the **Ke'i (Ke'yoy)** are a class of nature spirit, the ghosts of ancient giants and heroes which were believed to be benevolent but were often avoided and appeased through animal sacrifice and

offerings of food and milk. A Mehri phrase referring to the *ke'yoy* spirits: "*hewakak h-ake'yoy*" meaning "*I put out a little food for the spirits*", shows an example of the animistic beliefs of the pre-Islamic Mehri. The females of this class of spirits were called *Ke'yot*.

The **Dalhan** in Arabian mythology is a demon in the form of a man mounted on an ostrich, believed to inhabit the islands and coasts of the sea. This jinn used sorcery, known in Arabic as *sihir*, to conjure up storms and tempests in order to sink ships and cause shipwrecks: the Dalhan would then devour the bodies of the drowned sailors washed up on the shore and hunt any who survived.

In Arabian mythology, **Maymun Abu Nuh** is a chieftain of the jinn who rules over Saturday; the day of Saturn - the offspring of the goddess Zuhā, his actions are monitored by the angel Rufayā'il, the Biblical Hebrew *Raphael*. This jinn controls the growth of gold in the earth and rules over material wealth: the name *Maymun* being cognate to the Aramaic *Mammon*, a divinity associated with money. Maymun takes the form of a mighty winged titan with feathers of gold and crimson and a terrible face with a pointed beard; green eyes; sharp tusks; goat ears, and the horns of a bull: surrounded by dark clouds and red fire,

he was also named *Maymun as-Sahab* ("Maymun of the Clouds"). This jinni was believed to kidnap humans in their sleep.

Abu Muhriz (also named as **Malik al-Ahmar**) is a chieftain of the jinn, the ruler of Tuesday and the son of al-Muharriq/Merrikh, the god of the planet Mars. The behavior and actions of this powerful and dangerous jinni are monitored by the angel Samsama'il. Abu Muhriz appears a giant muscular warrior of the underworld with an exhausted lion as his steed, a sword in one hand and a severed head in the other. His skin is a dark brown, his ears are pointed and he has eyes that spit sparks of fire. His other name, Malik al-Ahmar, translates as *The Red King* and he is associated with violent warfare, copper and the colour red.

Al-Tayyar is a chieftain (*rabb*) of the jinn in Arabian mythology who rules over the day of Thursday; the offspring of al-Mushtari, lord of the planet Jupiter, and watched over by the angel Sadiq'il (the Hebrew *Tzadkiel*). The daughter of this jinn teaches women the arts of *sihr* (sorcery) and he dwells in the caves of the mountains. Al-Tayyar, who is also called Shamhurish, appears as giant creature with blue skin and is easily prone to anger, rarely appearing to humans although when they attempt

contact with al-Tayyar, he blinds them by showering them with stones.

Al-Mudhib Abu Said is, in Arabian folklore, a chieftain of the jinn who rules over the day of Sunday, the color black, and the metal lead and his actions are monitored by the angel Ruqya'il. The jinn appears a giant fiery creature with blue skin, devouring a snake; his head surrounded by a halo of golden fire and wearing large orange trousers. Al-Mudhib is the offspring of the sun goddess Shams, and possesses all secrets of occult knowledge such as the transmutation of gold and the workings of the sun. This jinn is associated with the incense *sandarus* (Arabian sandarac).

Abu Hasan Zawba'a is the ruling jinn of Friday in the magical beliefs of the Arabs and is the offspring of the goddess al-'Uzza in her epithet of al-Zahra, the planet Venus. He controls the growth of iron in the earth, appearing as an ocher skinned creature with four heads and is assisted by two other spirits. This jinn rules over dust-storms and dangerous weather.

In pre-Islamic Arabian belief, a **Zarur** was a certain type of small stunted thorny tree around the height of a man that was surrounded by a stone cairn and strips of cloth

were hung on its branches. The *zarur* tree was known to the Arabs as 'the altar of the desert' and was worshiped by the Bedouin to bring rain, fertility and the health of herds and tribes. The Semitic belief in sacred trees and vegetation was present in numerous terms across the Arabian peninsula: popular gods and goddesses such as Ta'lab, al-'Uzza, Dhat-Anwat and Aranyada being associated with trees or having them present at their shrines.

The **Banu 'Ad** is an ancient Arabian tribe that was prominent in pre-Islamic and classical Arabic folklore. They were the founders of the magnificent pillared city of Iram and they lived in the areas of modern day eastern Yemen and western Oman; lands which are currently inhabited by their alleged descendants: the Mahra and Shahra tribes who speak non-Arabic South Semitic languages closely related to Amharic and Himyaritic. The 'Ad were first lead by 'Ad ibn Kin'ad and lastly by Shaddad bin 'Ad who resided at Iram of the Pillars and was thought to be responsible for the Canaanite migrations and the invasion of Egypt by Palestinian warlords. In Islamic mythology, the 'Ad are mentioned as a people that was destroyed by Allah for worshiping idols.

In Arabian mythology, **Bahamut** is a giant fish with the head of a hippopotamus/elephant that supports the physical universe. The beast is said to be eternally afloat in the cosmic ocean and is so immense that a human would be unable to bear the sight of him. Beneath the creature is the void (*tihamat*), a suffocating mist of darkness which is inhabited only by the most ancient and powerful of jinn. As an archetypal chaos monster, this creature was etymologically and mythically related to the Biblical Hebrew *behemoth*.

Azazil ("Strong One of Allah/Il") is a lord of the jinn in Arabian and Hebrew mythology to whom goats were sacrificed in order to atone for a major sin committed by a member of the tribe. Azazil was believed to rule over mountainous and rugged desert areas that were inhospitable and were believed to be inhabited by satyr-like jinn known to the Hebrews as the *se'irim*, of which he was their chief.

In pre-Islamic Arabian religion, the **Ākhirah** or *Hereafter* is the abode of the deceased which was located deep underneath in the earth (*al-'Ardh*) and was believed to be a peaceful, yet dark and gloomy plane of existence where the souls of the dead would experience no pain or pleasure. Ancestral spirits led an existence as spirits

(*arwah*) and as shades (*shabiha*), beings that were mostly devoid of any true power and were bound to the will of the gods, but still could be appealed to through sacrifices and ceremonies. The spirits of heroes, famous ancestors, poets and priests would ascend to heaven (called *al-Munqalab* or literally *as-Sama'a*) where they would enjoy the company of the gods and angels and be granted supernatural powers.

The pagan Arabs were respectful of the spirits of the dead and would not fear ghosts, instead they would set up an altar and offer a sacrifice at locations where ghosts were sighted. A particular funerary rite among the pagan Arabians involved drinking the dust from the grave of the deceased mixed with water in order to relieve grief. Dust was symbolic of the pre-Abrahamic Semitic afterlife and was considered to be the food of the dead. The pre-Islamic Arabian concept of the *Ākhirah* is equal to the Hebrew *Sheol*; both were portrayed as places of darkness, stillness and resting that lay far underneath the earth.

In pre-Islamic Bedouin religion, a saint or **Wālī** is a cult figure such as an ancestor or a hero (*muruwwi*) who was worshiped for tribal well-being, continuation of lineages and wealth. They are believed to have power over the skies in terms of giving rain and the shrines of Bedouin

saints were usually located on hilltops and often included an idol made of wood, stone or metal or a sacred tree/stone.

In Arabian mythology, **Jabal Qaf** is a legendary mountain made of green peridot that is located at the farthest point of the physical universe and is inhabited by the jinn and other supernatural beings. The mountain is ruled by Jān ibn Jān who was the most ancient of the jinn and from whom all jinn are descended.

The **Ghawwas** is a demon of the ocean in the mythology of the coastal regions of Arabia who is believed to rise from the depths and come to land to torment the human population. Its appearance was said to be cross between a human and a shark and had fins protruding from its limbs.

In pre-Islamic Arabian mythology, **Tihāmat** is a primordial deification of chaos and the abyss who represented extreme heat and lack of wind. The world of Tihāmat was said to be eternal and have existed before the god Allāh created the Universe. The Arabic *tihāmat* is cognate to the Hebrew *tehom* and Babylonian *tamtu* with all these words referring to deep water or extreme conditions.

In the deserts of pre-Islamic northern Arabia, there existed a stone called **Hajar al-Kidr** that was revered by the Bedouin tribes living in that area. The Bedouin would throw a stick at it to bring nourishing rain.

In the mythology of South Arabia, the '**Udhrut** was a jinn that assumed the form of a wolf and would appear at locations where a violent death had occurred. These jinn were harmless towards humans but would often materialize before people and then suddenly vanish.

In classical Arabian mythology, the **Jabbirun** (sin. **Jabbar**) are giants; the offspring of the angels (*mala'ikah*): supernatural creatures believed to possess tremendous strength and size and represent the most powerful and mighty forces of nature. The Jabbirun were believed to have ruled over the earth before the creation of humanity and were considered to be a brave and valiant race, '*men of renown*'. The various prehistoric menhirs and dolmens (*qayaf*) found across Arabia were believed to have been built by giants. Giants are common in Semitic mythology with the Arabian *jabbirun* being a cognate of the Hebrew *gibborim*.

Baetyls are sacred objects in pre-Islamic Arabian religion; occurring usually as an oddly shaped stone, uncut block, rock formation or meteorite which the Arabs and other Semitic peoples believed was inhabited by a jinn or a deity. This form of animism has even survived in modern Islam with the Black Stone of Mecca although the mythology of the stone has become Islamized. To the pagan Arabians, these objects were known interchangeably as *nusub* (pl. *ansab*), simply meaning "stone" or *Baytu-Ilah*, meaning "House of the Deity". Contrary to later Islamic belief, worship was not directed to the physical object itself, but to the god or spirit believed to inhabit it. The Semites of Palestine and Syria knew these objects as *Beth-El*, introducing them to the Greeks and Romans as *Baetylus*.

According to Abu al-Mundhir, every household in the city of Mecca had their own household deity that was usually represented by a baetyl, and before they set out on a journey for example, the last act a family member would perform was to touch the baetyl in order to insure a safe and auspicious journey: when the family member returned from their journey, the first thing they would do was kiss or touch the baetyl in gratitude for a propitious return. It was not uncommon for the richer Meccan families to own an idol in the form of a statue made of

wood or metal (*sanam*); or an image made of stone (*wathan*), but this was not always the case. In pre-Islamic Mecca, a group of women called the *sayyida* were responsible for weaving and renewing the cloths that adorned the idols and baetyls of the Ka'aba.

The concept of household and tribal deities was a common theme in Semitic religious thought, found in Arabia as *nusub*, *wathan* and *sanam* and in Palestine as *teraphim*. There is also evidence of Hebrews making *teraphim* in the image of their chief god Yahweh as evidenced by Micah's Idol. These idols were consulted for oracular purposes through divining with objects.

The **Mu'akkibat** are angels in Arabian myth that keep people from death until their decreed times, assigned to protect individual souls.

In Arabian mythology, the **Waswas** is a jinn who inhabits the air and assumes the form of a winged serpent. These spirits were known as "whisperers" as their voices were believed to be the whispering wind.

In pre-Islamic central Arabian mythology, the **Sa'ir** was a jinn that appeared as a "very old man with a beard to its knees, one eye, very long teeth with iron on them and

toe-nails made of iron" that haunted desolate and forgotten places and was prominent in the folklore of the Tayy tribe of the Najd desert and that of their descendants, the Shammar clan of Ha'il. The Arabian belief in this spirit is parallel to the *se'irim* or "hairy beings" of Hebrew mythology who were the satyr-like spirits who ruled the woods and the wilderness and to whom the Arabs and Hebrews offered sacrifices.

In pre-Islamic Arabian religion, the **Ālihah** are the pantheon of gods and goddesses who were the offspring and agents of the supreme creator god Allāh: all-powerful supernatural beings above the rank of the *jinn* (lesser deities), the *mala'ikah* (angels), the *shayatin* (unclean spirits) and the *arwah* (spirits); created by the High God to administer the universe and intercede (*shafa'a*) on his behalf after he had finished creating it. The Allāh of the pre-Islamic Arabians was then believed to retire into the position of a silent spectator in the remote heaven of 'Aliyyin (the Hebraic *Elyon*) and only intervene for human worshipers in times of extreme danger and despair. One of the gods' most prominent and identifying features was a terrible brightness that surrounded them and inspired awe and reverence in mortals. In the Arabian peninsula, there was no universal pantheon of deities; instead, many small scale tribal and regional pantheons were worshiped

by the various Arab tribes and the names of deities differed from region to region.

The gods were thought to have a well-disposed and beneficent attitude towards humans, rewarding them with their protection and granting them well-being if they (the gods) were worshiped and if sacrifices were paid to them. Deities in pre-Islamic Arabian religion also had the capacity to be angered and offended by certain human actions, such as violating their taboos and shrines; by ceasing their worship, and wickedness among their subjects. In ancient Semitic religions, the gods were often not viewed mystically, but were instead thought to be the masters over mortals, who were completely subject to their will and mercy. In cases such as that of the god al-Muharriq of eastern Arabia and the goddess Ruda of the Najd desert, deities were believed to actively punish the wicked for their sins by sending disease and calamity.

The gods were believed to be all-powerful, unfathomable and immortal, and often made their presence known through the natural forces which they embodied: the pagan Arabs would make heavy use of divination (*istiqsam*), dream (*ru'y*) interpretation and oracles to ascertain their will. In pre-Islamic Arabian religion, the gods were approached through idols or *baetyl* stones in

which they were believed to, at the least, inhabit temporarily. The image or representation of the deity was consecrated and then the god was invited to inhabit it; the deity would then either accept or deny the invitation by sending a sign (*ayat*). The idol of the god would then be clothed in fine cloths and beads and the area surrounding the god's shrine would become *hima* (inviolable); animal sacrifices, offerings of food, libations of milk and blood and incense being offered before it. The gods, the *ālihah* of the Arabian pantheon, had a mythology that was nearly identical, but not without regional cultural differences, to that of the *elohim* of the Phoenicians and Hebrews; the *elahin* of the Arameans of Syria and the *ilanu* of the Babylonians.

In Arabian mythology, a **Si'lah** was a female jinn that haunted mountainous regions and would take the form of a shadowy creature. There existed in the Najd, a clan called the Banu al-Si'lah; who claimed to be descended from a union between this jinniya and a male human.

In the religion of the pre-Islamic Arabians, the **Hawtah**, **Haram** or **Hima** is a consecrated area of land or an enclosure where the shrine of a god, goddess or spirit was located. The area was often used a sanctuary by both humans and animals as all hunting and fighting was

forbidden in the presence of the god and ritual purity was emphasized when a pilgrim visited the *hawtah*. The *hawtah* was usually situated in a pleasant and green location such as a sacred grove (*masha'ir*) that had a feature of natural beauty such as a tree, stone or fountain which was located near to the idol of the god or spirit who ruled the area. Even in the Islamic era, Arabs living in the rural areas and the nomadic Bedouin would visit sacred groves and leave offerings of flour, dates and bread for the spirits.

A **Ghul** is a demon in Arabian mythology who is believed to devour corpses, and eat children and lone travelers. They were known to inhabit cemeteries and a sacrifice of a lamb at their altars was performed to pacify them. The Bedouin urged their children not to stray too far from their tents as they risked being taken by demons. The star Algol was named after the *ghul* as it was considered to have an evil and bloody influence and was associated with extreme violence; the Arabs would never go into battle if the light of Algol was weak.

In pre-Islamic eastern Arabian folklore, the outskirts of towns and villages were believed to be haunted by a flesh-eating ogress called **ad-Dāmi** ("*The Bloody*") who would only appear at night. The early Semitic kingdom of

Ebla in ancient Syria had a deity called Damu, also meaning '*the bloody*'.

In the folklore of the Yemen and the Tihamah areas of south Arabia, the **Ghaddar** is a demon believed to haunt remote areas. They were believed to entice people to their lairs, then capture and torture them or they would simply terrify them and leave them.

In Arab mythology, a **Hatif** is a benevolent jinn that is heard but never seen, communicating with those in potential danger by issuing a warning.

A **Shayatan** is a demon in Arabian mythology responsible for placing evil thoughts and deeds in the hearts and minds of men. They were said to be formed from the blood of a murdered person and the only way to stop their formation was to drive an unused silver nail into the blood. Possession by *shayatin* was a common theme in pre-Islamic lore and the pagan Bedouin would attempt to expel spirits of disease by wailing, shouting and drumming. Another known practise among the Semitic peoples to counter the actions of unclean spirits and *shayatin* was to fashion bowls out of clay and inscribe it with incantations in Arabic, Hebrew or Aramaic and put

them in the corners of houses. These bowls were believed to catch and trap malevolent spirits.

The graves of evil people were where the *shayatin* would hold their *maljis* (meeting place) and were regarded as areas of ill fortunes. Along with these beliefs and practices, it is reported that the Arabs would name their children after animals (*Asad*, *Ikrimah*, *Mu'awiya*, *Bakr*, *Dubayyah*, *al-Harith* etc) in order to frighten evil spirits as well as making use of talismans and amulets. In Arabian polytheistic tradition, neglecting the worship of the gods was believed to leave a person open to attacks from evil spirits and disease; worshiping the gods however and offering at their altars, protected the worshiper from curses and demons. The word *shayatan* in Arabic is translated into '*adversary*' and is cognate to the Hebrew noun *satan* ("Accuser/Opponent"), which is the general designation for any unclean and evil spirit in Semitic mythology.

A **Marid** is an Arabian spirit, a giant species of aquatic jinn associated with lakes, pools, rivers, oceans and other bodies of water, in which they were believed to inhabit. They are the most arrogant, proud and dangerous of the jinn however they could be compelled through ritual, battle or extreme flattery.

In Arabian mythology, **Laylah** (p.l. **Laylin**) is a spirit of the night who manifested herself as an owl (*al-boumat*) with the face of a woman and was thought to rest in abandoned, remote and desolate places, only appearing at night: these spirits were believed to haunt battlefields in the night, unearthing and devouring the remains of recently slain soldiers. When interacting with mortals, they were hostile and dismissive although they could be placated with sacrificial offerings which would gain temporary protection from them. Night-spirits or *laylin* were considered to be less powerful than gods (*alihah*) but were still able to influence the lives of mortals and take over where they once thrived; the ruins of Tayma, Thamud and Dumah were their most well known haunts. These spirits are the Arabian equivalent of the Babylonian *lillittu* and Hebrew *lilin* and it was likely that belief in these spirits was influenced by the interaction the pagan tribes with the Jewish clans of Arabia.

An **Ifrit** (p.l. **Afarit**) is an Arabian jinn ruling over the element of fire. These spirits are considered wrathful and prone to anger, appearing as winged titans composed of flame and were rumored to live deep underground. The attitude of the afarit towards humans was often hostile; however, they did have the capacity to reward human

worshipers if they were paid with a sacrifice or an offering. These spirits are believed to be among the most powerful of all jinn, with the giant *marid* of the seas and waters being the most powerful.

In the Arabian Nights literature, the *afarit* are said to have "*two wings and four arms; two of them like those of the sons of Adam, and two like the fore-legs of lions with claws. He had a hair upon his head like the tails of horses, and two eyes like two burning coals, and he had a third eye in his forehead, like the eye of the lynx, from which there appeared sparks of fire*".

In later Islamic legend an evil ifrit called Dahish was believed to live in the red-carnelian idol of Hubal of pre-Islamic Mecca and was also believed to be the one leading the banu-Quraysh tribe astray.

In Arabian mythology, **Umm as-Subyan** is a demoness, a female *shayatan* that causes infants to die and women to miscarry. Amulets were often carried by the Bedouin in pre-Islamic and post-Islamic times to ward off her presence. The Bedouin would perform *taxwaf* around their tents with a newborn seven times in order to consecrate it to the gods and protect it from unclean spirits.

A **Kāhin** (fem. **Kāhinah**) is a pagan Arabian soothsayer and specialist in divination and oracles. The word kahin means "priest" in Arabic and their function was to procure oracles from the gods, acting as an intermediate between humanity and the gods by means of ritual, divination, dream interpretation and mediumship. The Kāhin would usually give their oracles by falling into a trance and then spewing forth the message in the form of short verses (much like the oracle of Delphi) which would then later have to be interpreted. Also, the Kahin would conduct oracular duties in the temple by means of cleromancy (*istiqsām*). Before giving oracles, the Kāhin would take an oath before the gods, assuring the recipient that he was genuine.

The pagan Arabian concept of the Kahin was in many ways similar to the ancient Hebrew Kohen, though the Kahin adhered to polytheism instead of Judaism and professed in divination instead of Israelite ritual. This is unsurprising as Arabs and Hebrews were believed to share a common ancestor, Ibrahim. As Islam spread across the Arabian peninsula, it abolished the role of the priest (the kahin) as Muhammad was known for his criticism of the magic and ritual of priestcraft even when it was brought into a monotheistic context. In parts of Arabia the terms for priests, *afkal*, *kahin*, *sadin*, were all

interchangeable. The Sabaeans and Himyarites called their priests '*rashaw*' and their high priest '*kabir*', the latter of whom was chiefly responsible for conducting the rain-making rituals (*istiqa*) in times of drought.

In the south of Arabia, the **Mukkarib** or "priest-king" functioned as both high-priest and as monarch in the wealthy and developed kingdoms of Yemen. Such positions of power did not really exist in the Bedouin tribal regions of Najd and the comparatively smaller merchant towns of the Hijaz where the only priestly figures were the kahin ("soothsayer", "diviner") and the sadin ("custodian"). These were both respected as advisers, oracles, poets, soothsayers and caretakers of shrines but rarely, if ever, had ruling authority over cities or tribes.

Al-Ka'aba is a cubic building which served as a temple (*haykal*) for the 360 idols and sacred stones representing the deities of pagan Mecca and Arabia as a whole in pre-Islamic times. This site was previously controlled by the tribe of Banu Quraysh before the advent of Muhammad. The stars and celestial bodies as well as baetyls and idols were worshiped from the Ka'aba. The pagan Meccans performed circumrotation (*tawaf*) around the temple seven times (representing the seven planets of

antiquity) and they would perform it naked because they did not want to approach their gods in the clothes they had sinned in.

Almost all of the polytheist Arab tribes in the Arabian peninsula would make a pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to al-Ka'bah much like how Muslims perform the hajj in post-Islamic times. Originally, Muhammad ordered that Islamic prayer should be directed towards the city of Jerusalem, but after Muhammad's conflict with the Jewish clans of Yathrib (Medina), he decided that prayer should be directed to al-Ka'bah, the former-pagan temple in Mecca. It was not uncommon for the pagan tribes of Mecca and Yathrib to name their children *Abd ad-Dar* ("Servant of the Abode") and *Abd al-Ka'bah* ("Servant of the Ka'aba") in honour of the sacred house.

The Ka'aba before and during the time of Muhammad was described as a "squat, roofless edifice made of unmortared stones and sunk into a valley of sand"; the low walls were covered with swathes of consecrated cloth and the inner walls were decorated with paintings of divinities, angels and trees. It was commonplace for the temples of the pre-Islamic western and central Arabia to be simple structures compared to the buildings of the kingdoms of Yemen. One of the earliest legends

surrounding the Ka'aba is that in ancient times it used to contain a well called *al-Akhsaf*, but the well soon ran dry and became a pit, which contained treasures called *al-Abraq*; votive offerings that included statues of golden gazelles among others, and were said to be guarded by a giant serpent.

In Arabian mythology, the **Sakinah** is considered to be the feminine presence and spirit of the creator god Allah in the physical world - a "sweet breeze whose face is like the face of a human". It was believed to dwell in Sulayman's Temple and was known to Hebrews as *shekhinah*, with both the Arabic and Hebrew words meaning "tranquility". It was considered to be the motherly and feminine aspect of the high god.

Maryam and **Isa** (also known as Mary and Jesus) were worshiped at the Ka'aba as pagan gods by the tribes of Mecca; the merchants of the Banu Quraysh deciding to include the statues of Maryam and Isa to attract nearby Christian tribes, who would bring trade and contribute to the economy of Mecca; increasing its status as an important and protected city. In pre-Islamic Arabia, there existed a sect of Christian Arab women known as the Collyridians who worshiped Maryam as a mother goddess and offered cakes at her shrine: often visiting her

idol at the Ka'aba in Mecca to give worship. According to Islamic legend, the prophet Muhammad did not destroy the statues of Maryam and Isa, but instead buried them as a sign of respect to Islamic prophet/messiah and his mother.

Ibrahim (also known as Abraham) was, like Maryam and Isa, worshiped as a god by the polytheists of pre-Islamic Mecca. The ruling tribe of Banu Quraysh installed an idol of Ibrahim in the Ka'aba, of which they were the custodians, to attract the attention of the Jewish clans of nearby Yathrib who would bring with them their trade and friendship. As with the idols of Maryam and Isa, Muhammad did not smash the statue of Ibrahim, but instead buried it to show respect to the Islamic patriarch and prophet. In the religious beliefs of the pre-Islamic Meccans, the status of Ibrahim as a biblical patriarch and legendary ancestor was syncretized with that of the local pagan gods, and thus he was represented at the Ka'aba as an ancestral deity whose idol carried divining rods. Cults surrounding legendary ancestors were common to pre-Islamic Arabia as society was mainly built around tribal groups.

In the mythology of the pre-Islamic Arabian tribes of southern Mesopotamia and eastern Arabia, **al-Layth** was

a giant cosmic lion who was created by the creator god Allah to be the guardian of the Milky Way and also appeared in the sky as a comet or shooting star. The mythology of al-Layth originated with the earlier Babylonian *labbu*, a giant lion-dragon who was created by the god Enlil and slain by the god Tishpak, the body of the beast forming the Milky Way. In the theology of the Semitic polytheists, the creator god (*El, Ilu, Allah, Eloah, Elaha*) was thought of as a distant and remote deity whose power was so immense that human affairs and welfare would often be of no interest or importance to him and thus the Semites would turn to angels, jinn and the gods for intercession on his behalf.

Makkah (also known as **Mecca**) is a town in the Hijaz region of Arabia and was a notable location in the pre-Islamic Arabian religion and Islam. The town was located on a grand trade route and was a place of pilgrimage, as the temple of the Ka'aba was located there which housed all of the idols of the gods and goddesses of Arabia. The original inhabitants of vicinity were known as *al-Amaliqah* or Amalekites, who were later conquered by Himyarite tribes and then later on by the Quraysh, who ruled it in Muhammads day. In Islamic belief it was founded by Isma'il and Ibrahim with the Ka'ba being the first house (*bayt*) in which to worship Allah. In the Bible

there is mentioned a "*Valley of Baca*" possibly referring to *Bakkah*, the immediate vicinity around the Ka'ba itself and was noted in psalms as a place of pilgrimage.

Mecca was a mixing place of religions, cultures and ethnic groups. Merchants from all over Arabia and beyond traveled to trade there and perform their pilgrimage; whether Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian or native polytheist, all contributed immensely to pre-Islamic Arab mythology and Islamic mythology itself. Mecca was also a sanctuary where all fighting was forbidden to encourage trade and pilgrimage, the Ka'aba and the idols held therein and around it being of tribal ancestors, jinn or nature deities.

These idols and baetyls were nearly all destroyed on Muhammads orders with the exception of the Black Stone (*al-Hajar al-Aswad*), an ancient stone of alleged celestial origin that was the baetyl of the high god Allah in pre-Islamic belief, although in Islamic mythology it is where Allah marked the place for Adam and Eve to build his first altar. Islamic legend also tells us that the stone was originally white but became blackened over time because of the sins of those who touched it.

In Arabian mythology, **Hawwa** is a legendary ancestor; the grandmother of all humanity and 'the mother of all living things': the same mythical figure as the Biblical first-woman, Eve. Hawwa was associated with snakes who had many names in the Arabic language but name that particularly demonstrated the connection was *hayya* which is from the root *hayy* (life), referring to association serpents had with longevity. The tomb of Eve (*Hawwa*) at the coastal town of Jeddah in the Hijaz region of western Arabia received offerings and devotions by pilgrims since the pre-Islamic era although it was concreted over by the Saudi government during the 20th century as its pagan history was considered unfavorable and in order to prevent pilgrims praying at it. The locals of Jeddah referred to Hawwa as "Our Mother" and the name of the city of Jeddah itself is widely considered to be derived from the Arabic word for 'grandmother', *jaddah*.

'**Uj ibn Anaq** is a giant or *jabbar* in Arabian mythology who was descended from relations between the jinn and humanity; said to be of such immense size, he was able to fish up and catch whales whilst being knee-deep in the ocean. The mythology of 'Uj ibn Anaq likely had its origins with the *anakim* of Hebrew paganism, a race of giants whose ancestors were the offspring of fallen angels and the daughters of men that was known to the Semitic

peoples of Palestine as the *nephilim*. In Hebrew tradition, the prophet Joshua eventually expelled the nephilim from the land although some of them that fled managed to find refuge with Philistine tribes in Ashdod, Gaza and Gath where their descendants became the infamous giants in the Philistine armies.

'Antarah ibn Shaddad al-'Absi is a pre-Islamic Arabian knight who belonged to the tribe of Banu 'Abs and lived in the al-Qassim region of Najd in central Arabia during the fifth century AD. 'Antarah was one of the poets of the *Mu'allaqat*, the Seven Hanged Poems; which were known as such because they were written in gold on coptic linen and suspended from the ceiling inside the Ka'aba of Mecca. His father was Shaddad al-'Absi, respected by the Banu 'Abs tribe as skilled warrior, and his mother was an Abyssinian slave called Zabuba, who was captured by Shaddad during a raid against Axum. The status of 'Antarah as a son of a slave prevented him from marrying his love, a beautiful noblewoman called 'Ablah: however, his valor in battle against the Tayy; his chivalry, and his intelligence soon earned 'Antarah freedom to marry the woman he truly loved.

Luqman al-Hakim was in pre-Islamic literature a legendary sage of the tribe of 'Ad in southern Arabia,

present in both Islamic and pagan Arabian mythology. To the pre-Islamic Arabs he was said to be the pious and wise brother of Shaddad ibn 'Ad who built the pillared city of Iram. His wisdom was said to have come from his perception of the natural world and him acting as a caretaker of plants and animals, especially vultures. In later Islamic mythology he was said to be of Abyssinian origin and not of the tribe of 'Ad.

It is said that whilst Luqman was sleeping under a sacred *manhal* tree, he was visited by an angel who revealed that the god Allah wanted to bestow upon him a gift. The gift was a choice between wisdom and kingship and Luqman chose the former, attaining union with nature and the ability to appreciate things that were beyond physical reality.

In pre-Islamic Arabian mythology, **Zarqa al-Yamama** was a seeress (*kahinah*) from the ancient tribe of Tassim who was noted for her dazzling blue eyes, her exceptional intuition and her ability to predict events that had not yet taken place. Zarqa was valued highly by the Tassim as she was reported to be able to see enemy riders from from a three-days distance. Zarqa's people, however, one day refused to heed her warnings and thought her to be mad; causing them to be tragically overrun by enemy warriors

from the Yemen who killed every man of the Tassim and the soothsayer herself. In other versions of the myth, Zarqa al-Yamama is not killed by Tubba Abu-Kariba Asad, the king of the Himyarites, but instead is captured by him and later released after she impresses him with her sharpness and insight.

In pre-Islamic Hijazi mythology, **Imliq** is a legendary ancestor and giant; an ancient tribal chieftain whose descendants were known to the Hebrews as Amalekites and to the Arabians as *al-Amaliqah*. This tribe was called "*the first of nations*" and was believed to inhabit the Desert of Paran which later became known as the vicinity of Mecca. The Amalekite rule of ancient Mecca was eventually ended by the Himyarite tribe of Banu Jurhum who migrated from Yemen and eventually supplanted and absorbed them. To the Hebrews, Amalek was a despised Edomite clan who mounted numerous opportunistic attacks on the Jews in their flight across the Sinai desert and were notorious for their barbarism and savagery.

The descendants of Imliq were a warlike and predatory people who dwelt in the caves and valleys, ate raw flesh and worshiped the jinn: the tribe of Imliq itself eventually becoming extinct due to subjugation and conquest by the

neighboring Hebrew, Qedarite and Himyarite tribes. The biblical *Desert of Paran*, named after Faran ibn Imliq, was in ancient times a harsh and dangerous wilderness until it was conquered and resettled by the Himyarite tribe of Banu Jurhum who displaced and then absorbed the remaining Amalekite inhabitants. According to the Persian polymath al-Tabari, Imliq ibn Lud in Arabian tradition was considered the ancestor of the Berbers. It was conjectured by Muslim historians in Medieval period that the tribe of Imliq were the ones responsible for introducing corruption and polytheism to the children of Ishmael, claiming the latter had previously followed the authentic monotheism of Abraham.

Hufaydh is a legendary island in the mythology of the Marsh Arabs of southern Mesopotamia that was believed to be a haunted otherworld with strange palaces and gardens of palm trees and pomegranates; however, it was under the rule of the jinn and other divinities who concealed it from mortal eyes. If a human was to actually see the island, they would be struck with an enchantment that would both cause them to go blind and prevent anyone from understanding their words.

In pre-Islamic Arabian society, the **Sha'ir** was a poet that was considered to be in touch with supernatural powers

and was proficient in sorcery; serving in nomadic Bedouin societies where tribal chieftains would consult them on the outcomes of war, wealth and pastoral ventures. The sha'ir was believed to be in league with both the gods and the jinn and was also consulted for the exorcism of evil spirits (*al-Shayatin*).

The poems of the sha'ir inspired the warriors of the tribe during battle and lampooned enemy tribes, playing a more aggressive role in pagan Arab society than the soothsayers and priests. The use of magic (known in Arabic as *ruqat* or *sihr*) by the pagan Arabs largely consisted of talismanic magic: warding off disease, the evil eye (*Ayn al-Hasud*) and evil spirits with herbs, beads, bones, written incantations, sacred stones and figurines; which were also used to gain favour from spirits and act as good luck charms. In addition to crafting talismans and fetishes, the *sha'ir* would also invoke and attempt to compel the jinn and other divinities in to carrying out their bidding.

The *sha'ir* functioned as a sorcerer and medicine man; using poetry and animistic magic as a means of evoking and supplicating the jinn as well as working as an adviser to tribal elders. The *sha'ir* often performed black magic and were known to be able to curse people by means of

partially tying a knot, uttering a curse and then pulling the knot tight, then inflicting an enemy with an illness or an evil fate. These types of curses could only be undone if the knot was found and untied. The pagan sha'ir could also reverse this form of magic by using it to cast blessings and auspicious fortunes. In Islam, practicing sorcery is associated with the sin of *shirk* and is punishable by death. As a religious functionary who specialized in working with spirits, specifically the *jinn* (unseen beings), the *sha'ir* would reverse the concept of exorcism and replace it with *adoricism*; that is, rituals, supplications, sacrifice, poetry and music performed to gain the favor and protection of the *jinn* instead of driving it away.

The **Sādin** (fem. *Sādinah*) is a pre-Islamic Arabian priest who acted as the guardian and custodian of a shrine or holy place. Their role differed from that of the *kāhin*; whose main function was divination, oracles and mystical dealings with the gods: whereas the role of the *sādin* was as the caretaker of a sacred enclosure (*haram/hawtah*) or a sacred grove (*masha'ir*), and the object in which the deity dwelt that was located therein. The position of *sādin* to the polytheists of Mecca was a coveted and honored one: a notable custodian priest being 'Amr ibn Luhayy from the Banu Khuza'a tribe of Yemen, who supplanted

the Banu Jurhum as the ruling tribe of Mecca and subsequently gained control the Ka'aba and the trade it attracted.

The *sādin* would sing hymns to the gods and burn incense at their shrine, which was usually their place of residence as well as their place of function. The role of the *sādin* differed to that of the *kāhin* as they were more focused on guarding and maintaining the shrine instead of the ritual element of priesthood. At most they would light incense, offer sacrifice and libations, and appeal to the enshrined divinity on behalf of the worshiper. The temples of the Arabian religions were known interchangeably as a *haykal* (temple) *mikrab* (in south Arabia), *dar* (Abode) or *bayt* ('house'); their purpose was to house an altar (*'itr*), with an idol, tree or baetyl being the object of worship.

The **Shaykh** (fem. **Shaykhah**) is an Arabian tribal chieftain, who in pre-Islamic times would lead the tribe in battle along with the *sha'ir* (sorcerer) and were held in special reverence by the rest of the tribe. After their death, the shaykh of the tribe was believed to join the ancestors and was therefore regarded as being capable of influencing human matters. At the grave of the shaykh, tribesmen would often tie a camel to a post near the grave and leave it to starve to appease the spirit of the

shaykh as the camel would serve him in the afterlife. The pre-Islamic Arabians also considered their living *shuyukh* to be holy: a folk treatment of rabies from dog bites involving rubbing a small amount blood from the chief of the tribe on the wound to be evidence of this.

Animal sacrifices to appease the spirits of deceased *shuyukh* were performed as it was believed that the shaykh could aid the tribe in affairs even after their death if their memory was honored. As the elder of the tribe, the pagan Arabs would have continued the worship of a memorable shaykh by establishing a baetyl in which their spirit was believed to inhabit. This practice of ancestor worship in Semitic societies was notable in ancient Canaan and Babylon with pillars of stone and idols being set up at temples to honor deceased ancestors and prevent them from haunting the living. The pre-Islamic Arabs differed slightly to their cousins in Canaan on views regarding ancestors, in that they considered most spirits of the dead to be vulnerable, stripped of most of their power and in need of charity in the form of ritual offerings.

The **Black Stone** or **al-Hajar al-Aswad** is a black meteorite encased in silver on a corner of Ka'aba of Mecca. This stone has been at Mecca since ancient times,

and the pagan tribes of Mecca venerated it as the *baetyl* of the creator god Allāh. Even at present times, it is revered by Muslims not as an idol, but rather as a stone sent down from the heavens to mark the place where Abraham (Ibrahim) built the Ka'aba. Arabians and other Semitic peoples held meteorites (*shihab*) in special reverence over all other stones, as their celestial origins cemented the belief that they were gifts from the gods and thus especially holy. This is one of the only baetyls of the Ka'aba to survive to the present day.

Dahr or **Zaman** is the deification of Time in pre-Islamic Arabian mythology: the concept of Time and Fate are ruled by many different gods, whose attitudes towards humans were often ambiguous and could be either benevolent or malevolent towards humans. In relation to Dahr, for example; the widely venerated goddess Manat was responsible for all different outcomes of destiny, whereas the purpose of Dahr was only to make people lose their purpose and suffer. Dahr was viewed as a stagnant entity, and thus in a negative light by the fatalist pagan Arabs and was not worshiped but rather seen as a force to be feared. It is possible that the Arabian belief in Dahr may have originated as the similar Persian concept of *Zurvan* although fate and time deities have always held a presence in the pantheons of the Semitic peoples.

In pagan Arabian (and later Islamic) cosmology, the **Falak** is a dragon or great lizard that resides in the Realm of Fire, deep under the earth. According to Arabian folklore, the only thing preventing this primordial spirit of flame from resurfacing and wreaking havoc on the earth was its fear of the creator god Allah. The Falak is ruler of volcanoes, lava and the magma beneath the earth.

In Arabian mythology, the **Qarin** are a subspecies of the jinn; unseen beings who were the constant spiritual companions of humans. The *qarin* had an equal chance of being either good or evil. For example, malevolent qarin whispered in to a person's ear and encourage them to commit wicked deeds; whereas benevolent *qarin* inspired poets and encouraged acts of heroism.

The **Mala'ikah** (sin. **Malak**) are angels in Arabian mythology who were worshiped by the Arabs of the pre-Islamic era as the children, agents and messengers of the gods; with the famous angel Jibril (Gabriel) being represented at the pre-Islamic Ka'aba of Mecca in the form of an idol, and its interior being decorated with paintings of angels and trees. The angels differed from jinn in the sense that they were entirely benevolent towards humanity, whereas the jinn were often neutral in

their outlook. In the ancient animistic religion of the nomadic Bedouin, angels were often seen as ancestral spirits, who were believed inhabit and descend upon certain sacred trees (*manahil*) that were worshiped in order to heal the sick or to guide them to water. The pre-Islamic Bedouin would also sleep beneath trees said to be inhabited by angels in order to receive a cure for an ailment, or a prescription for one in their dreams.

Angels in Arabian mythology are beings created from light (*nur*) who were believed to dwell in the sky and the air: a class of spirit above the rank of the jinn but below the rank of the gods (*alihah*). The belief in angels that originated with ancient Semitic polytheism carried on into Islam; although, in the strict monotheism of Islamic mythology, the pagan practice of worshiping angels is forbidden and is associated with the sin of *shirk* (polytheism).

The **Kurabin** are a class of fearsome fiery angels in Arabian mythology who were the warriors of the gods and attendants to the throne of the high god Allah; guarding the Tree of Immortality (*Shajarat al-Hayat*) in Heaven. They are a subgroup of the *mala'ikah* (angels), a term used to refer to benevolent and protective spirits that are less powerful than the gods. Their equivalent in

other Semitic mythologies are the Hebrew *cherubim* and they were considered to be the highest ranking angels. A related angel called a *muzakkil* was called upon by Bedouin *sha'ir* to drive *ash-Shayatin* (evil spirits) out of the bodies of the possessed.

The **Mandhat** are south Arabian guardian spirits who were thought to protect irrigation systems and were worshiped by the Sabaean Arabs in ancient Yemen where they are named in inscriptions as *mdht*.

The **Shabah** (pl. *Ashbah*) is a spirit of the dead, a ghost or shade that dwelt deep under the earth (*al-Ardh*) in Arabian mythology. The pagan Arabs both pitied and respected the *ashbah* and they did not fear them, but would often instead set up baetyls in the area the *ashbah* were witnessed and they would appeal to the spirits for supernatural guidance. They were, however, in comparison to the gods; the jinn and the angels, the spirits of the dead were considerably powerless as they were considered the sole property of the gods and thus could not act without their sanction.

The *ashbah* of murdered tribe members were believed to manifest themselves as owls (*al-Hāma*) above their graves and cry "*isquni!*" ("Give me to drink!") until their deaths

were avenged. The counterpart of the Arabian *shabh* is the Hebrew *rephaim* and the Ugaritic *rapi'uma*, both thought of as spirits of dead ancestors. The pagan Arabians also used to make sacrifices and offerings to the spirits of dead ancestors and this practice was believed to prevent the spirits from becoming restless and sending misfortune and disease upon the living.

Social context and spiritual belief in pagan Arabia

In pre-Islamic times, most of the pagan Arabian peoples fell into either two categories:

Sedentary Arabs – sedentary life was not common in Arabia, as the arid landscape of central and northern Arabia provided no stable living conditions. However, towns were established at oases in northern and central Arabia, such as Mecca, Yathrib, Dumat al-Jandal, Jeddah and a few trading posts in the Najd desert. Sedentary life was built mainly around trade or agriculture (especially for the kingdoms in the south of the peninsula), and the spiritual views of the sedentary Arabs were mainly concerned with this. For example, a Meccan merchant may ask the god Hubal for a glimpse into the future of his trade, or a farmer in Yemen may make an offering to

Amm'anas to preserve his crops. The sedentary Arabs, specifically the farmers and citizens of the kingdoms of Yemen and Oman would also be concerned with sun worship. The sun, who they called *Shams* was a goddess who heavily influenced the lives of farmers and tradesman and they would revere her due to the belief she facilitated the growth of crops and Frankincense trees (Frankincense was a major export of southern Arabia). However, Shams had a volatile side: she would dry up crops and her extreme heat agitated people and animals, therefore offerings were made to appease her in order to prevent her from becoming angry with the people and taking it out on their agricultural ventures.

Nomadic Arabs – since Arabia is mostly desert, most of the tribes had no choice but to constantly be on the move to find new grazing areas for their flocks, and new and reliable sources of water. Hence, the spirituality of the nomadic Bedouin tribesman would be primarily concerned with survival and health over trade and wealth. Oases and vegetation were in extreme importance to the Bedouins, as it provided food and water for them and their flocks. Some tribes who would have been previously nomadic even established towns around large oases and settled their permanently. The beliefs of the nomadic Arabian tribes would have been

mainly animistic and totemistic, with a moon god being of importance; spirits were believed to inhabit everything - interesting rocks, trees, cemeteries, springs. All of nature was alive and important to the Bedouins. Also, nomadic Arabs were more concerned with the moon god, who they saw as a god providing relief and dew from the intense heat of the sun goddess, which is why they let their flocks graze at night. Jinn (spirits) were very real beings to the Bedouins, acting as guardians of sacred sites and spirits of localities, similar to the Roman genii and animistic beings of the Celts and Africans. The Jinn were sometimes even worshipped exclusively by Bedouin clans such as the banu-Mulayh, who did not feel the need for any other deities except for Jinn.

Pagan Arabian beliefs and customs - the gods of the ancient Arabs were mainly represented by baetyls, idols and natural phenomena. A sacrifice (*Qurba*) would be made at an altar (*Itr*) before the god, serving either as food or as a means of pacifying or persuading it to carry out the supplicants wishes. When a child was born, a lamb would be sacrificed on behalf of the child, in order to procure the gods favour for that child for the rest of his/her life - this is still practiced today under the name of *aqiqah*, though it has become Islamized. The pagan Arabians believed that the human soul was an ethereal

substance distinct from the human body. At the time of death, breath along with life itself escaped through its natural passage, the mouth or the nostrils. When a person passed away on his death-bed, his soul was said to escape through his nostrils (*mata hatfa anfihi*), and in the case of a violent death, such as on a battle-field, through a large wound.

'When a person was murdered, he was supposed to long for vengeance and to thirst for the blood of the murderer. If the vengeance was not taken, the soul of the murdered man was believed to appear above his grave in the shape of an owl crying out, "Give me to drink" (*isquni*), until the murder was avenged. The restless soul in the form of a screeching owl was supposed to escape from the skull, the skull being the most characteristic part of the dead body. The poets of ancient Arabia (who were held in utmost importance) often said that they wished that the graves of those whom they love may be refreshed with abundant rain.'

Idols in pagan Arabia were of great importance, as they were in other old Semitic countries such as Babylon and Palestine. The idol (*wathan, nusub*) was seen by the pagan Arabians as the house of the deity (baetyl), where the god or goddess would temporarily instill his or her essence

and hear the pleas of the worshippers. As such, the Arabians did not actually worship the material idol, but instead they worshipped the spirit that was believed to temporarily inhabit it. Meteorites (*Bayt Ilah*) were objects of extreme veneration for the pre-Islamic Arabians as they were seen as a gift from the high god Allah himself, housing immense celestial energy. Also among the variation of idols, outcrops of simple stone were believed to be the houses of Jinn or deities, as were trees and springs. In battle, the Arabs would bring their idol with them on a leather canopy called a *qubba* that was fixed onto the back of a camel in order to bring victory.



Above is a bas relief of the Meccan mother goddess Allat from the city of Ta'if in the Hijaz province of Saudi Arabia, dating from the 4th century AD. It is remarkable how it managed to survive the destroying and desecrating the shrines of the pagan gods in Arabia, upon the orders of Muhammad and his successors. Here the goddess Allat is represented with a sheaf of wheat or a flail - exemplifying her traits as a goddess of agriculture and vegetation, typical of the Earth Mother archetype that

once dominated the spiritual lives of the ancient Arabs and other Semitic peoples.



Above are idols in the typical style of *wathan* (image) and *sanam* (statue) from ancient Qataban in the Yemen. The simplistic style these idols were crafted in were common throughout pagan Arabia with notably defined eyes and the hands open in a gesture of protection, benevolence and divinity. As in Babylon and Palestine, the idols and baetyls of the pagan Arabs were often swathed in strips of fine cloth and adorned with precious stones and jewellery. The statue below is from south Arabia and is made of limestone. It depicts an unnamed south Arabian goddess, perhaps Shams, in the same style as the ones shown above.



Ritual and practices in pagan Arabia

A few of the rituals of modern Islam are traceable to pagan roots, here are some practised before and after the emergence of Muhammad:

The **tawaf** ritual was performed both during the pilgrimage to a shrine (Hajj) or in home worship. In the home, the household would set up a baetyl and circumambulate it seven times whilst uttering the talbiyah invocation: seven being a mystical number to the pagan Arabs as it was significant of the seven planets. Reportedly, the pagan Arabs would perform the tawaf naked as they refused to approach their gods in the clothes they had sinned in although from an Islamic point of view, this practice was seen as blasphemous and disrespectful and as a prime example of pre-Islamic ignorance or *jahiliyyah*.

The **Hajj** is a pilgrimage to the Ka'aba in Mecca, the holiest site in the Islamic world. This ritual however is truly pre-Islamic, when tribes all across the Arabian peninsula would forget their tribal feuding and converge upon the city for worship and trade. This practice originated amongst the pagan Arabs but was not exclusive to them, as Christian and Jewish tribes would

also join the pagans in festivities, trading of goods and worship. The pagans of Mecca even included images of Mary, Jesus and Abraham in the Ka'aba to attract the attention of the other faiths, displaying that Christianity and Judaism in pre-Islamic Arabia often enjoyed a syncretic relationship with the native polytheistic animism of the region. It is noted too, that the pagan Arabs would shave their heads whilst on the hajj to the various shrines near Mecca and Yathrib.

Janazah is the Arabic term for burial practices, or 'funeral'. In pre-Islamic Arabia, rites associated with mourning were called *al-Niyaha* ('the Lamentations') which Arab women performed by shaving their heads, scratching their faces and tearing their clothes whilst wailing and shrieking loudly; the latter being said to drive away evil spirits from the corpse of the deceased. An Arab man who was a member of the deceased's family would perform *niyaha* by wearing sackcloth or some other coarse material and spreading sand on their heads: what this symbolized is unclear but it is important to note that this ritual is identical to that of the Hebrews and also the people of Ugarit. Grave goods were often buried with the deceased and in the case of pagan sheikhs, a camel would be tethered at the grave and left to starve so that it would accompany the sheikh to the afterlife (*akhirah*).

Poets often expressed that they wished for the graves of their loved ones to be "refreshed with abundant rain".

In pre-Islamic Arabian religion, the **talbiyah** was a prayer: a chant that was loudly acclaimed by worshipers as they completed a processional circuit around an idol, temple or sacred stone which was the abode of a divinity during a pilgrimage. The purpose of the *talbiyah* was to show gratitude to the deity or deities for assisting and supporting their devotees; in addition to placing emphasis on the benevolence and power of the deity. The main *talbiyah* in the pre-Islamic period differed from its incarnation post-Muhammad in that it proclaimed that there were other gods besides Allah although it asserted the fact that Allah was supreme even among the polytheists.

"Labbayka Allāhumma! Labbayka! Labbayka lā sharika laka, illa sharikun huwa laka, Tamlikuhu wa-mā malaka."

This pre-Islamic *talbiyah* translates as:

*"At thy service O Deity! At thy service! At thy service!
Thou hast no associate save the one who is thine,
Thou hast dominion over him and over what he possesseth."*

The point of this was to proclaim Allah's glory even over the other pagan gods who were powerless to intercede on behalf of the worshiper without the high god Allah's sanction. The word '*Allāhumma*' was used as an invocation to any divine being during the pre-Islamic *hajj* and was not specific to Allāh alone. There was also another *talbiyah* of the Quraysh in specific veneration of the warrior god Hubal which goes as:

"Labbayka Allāhuma! Labbayka, innana laqah. Haramtana 'ala assinati ar-rimah. Yahsuduna an-nasu 'ala an-najah."

Translated into English, this *talbiyah* reads as

"At thy service O Deity! At thy service, we are immune. Thou hast protected us from the edges of the lances. People envy us for our success."

The *talbiyah* ritual was carried through into Islam as part of the Muslim *hajj*, although any references to polytheism were removed. The god Allah was considered to be the benevolent creator by the pagan Arabs and was believed to be remote, distant and inaccessible to the everyday man and woman; so other deities were called upon to intercede for Him or bring the worshiper closer to Him.

The concept of *shafā'a*, that is, gods and goddesses interceding on behalf of Allah, is reflected especially in the myriad *talbiyah* that were chanted by the Quraysh and other Arab tribes as they circumambulated the Ka'aba, going as:

*'Wa'l-Lāt-a wa'l Uzzā, wa Manāt-a al-thalithāta al-'ukhrā,
Tilk al-gharāniq al-'ulā, wa inna shafā'ata-hunna
la-turtajā.'*

In English:

*'By al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā, and Manāt, the third goddess, the
other; Verily they are the most exalted cranes, and their
intercession is to be hoped for.'*

The *talbiyah* of the tribe of Banu Thaqif who lived in Ta'if, not far from Mecca, proclaimed Allah to be superior to their tribal goddesses al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā; the verse going as:

*'Uzzāhumu wa'l-Lātu fi yadayka, Dānat laka al-asnāmu
ta'ziman ilayka, Qad adh'anat bi silmihā ilayka.'*

Translated as:

'Al-'Uzzā and al-Lāt are in thy hands, Allāh; the idols submit to thee by glorifying thee; they approach thee submissively in devotion.'

The *talibiyah* of the worshipers of Jihār, the chief god of the tribe of Hawazin and the patron deity of the 'Ukaz fair, went as:

'Labbayka j'al dhunubanā jubār, wa-hdinā li-awdahi al-manār, wa-matti'nā wa-mallinā bi-ḡihār.'

This translates as:

'At thy service, let our trespasses be unpunished; lead us towards the clearest signpost; let us enjoy life for a long time and let us live long through ḡihār.'

The **Ifada** was a ritual feast celebrated in honor of the weather god Quzah by the tribes of Mecca and was performed by facing his sanctuary at Muzdalifah during the rites of *tahannuth*. This festival was usually celebrated after the autumnal equinox.

In pagan Arabia, the **sa'ibah** was an animal dedicated to a god that was left to pasture without attention. The mother of the *bahirah* (she-camel), after ten successful births the *sa'ibah* was not ridden or milked and was allowed to wander where she wished - becoming the sole property of the god whose shrine she wandered near. Muhammad ibn Abd-'Allah, prophet of Islam, vehemently condemned and outlawed the practice of *sa'ibah*, *wasilah*, *bahirah* and *hamiyah*.

Qurban ("Nearness", "Sacrifice") was performed by sacrificing the first of the flock or the first of the harvest. Essentially it is thanking the god by offering it the first cut of what the family gained thus placating the god and gaining its blessing. This was a ritual shared by the Hebrew tribes of Palestine, who called it *korban*; with both the Arabic and Hebrew words meaning "nearness", a reference to the nearness felt by the worshiper towards the divinity.

The pagan Arabians would offer *qurban* to a deity in a very simplistic manner, addressing their gods and invoking them with a short prayer and then by spilling the blood of the animal on the altar, allotting portions of the sacrificed animals meat among the tribe. The god

would be satisfied with the blood alone. Sacrificial offerings to the gods in pre-Islamic Arabia were not always of blood: the Arabs would often offer libations of milk, oil or wine; the first of the harvest (*farā'i*); incense; and expensive ornaments, to please the deity.

The altars of the pagan Najdi and Hijazi nomads were usually made of solid rock or built out of unhewn stone – the harshness of the desert steppe and the practical mindset of the Bedouin preventing the construction of more extravagant stone temples like those in Tayma and the kingdoms of the Yemen. This humble form of sacrifice was also the earliest among the Semitic peoples, originating with nomadic Hebrew and Arab tribes and continuing through with the Bedouin until the spread of Islam in the 6th century AD. In the sacred open air enclosure (*haram*) where sacrifices were offered, only the ritually clean and unarmed could enter to worship the baetyl or statue of the god installed there with worship being accompanied by music; clapping; dancing; whistling and prostrating before the enshrined god or goddess.

On a related matter, the practice of qurban was also shared by the cousins of the Arabs: the Midianites, Hebrews and Edomites to the north-west of the Arabian

peninsula who would offer a sacrifice of an animal (or very rarely a human) at the infamous High Places attested to in the Hebrew Bible. The sedentary peoples of Yemen, Mecca and the north Arabian oases practised qurban too, but on a more complicated scale with established temples and a priesthood (*kuhaniyyah*), though the original spiritual concepts of supplication and placation were still maintained.

Barakah in pre-Islamic Arabian thought is a term used to denote a blessing or a benevolent force that is generated from a god or goddess, which could be gained by various means including invocations; sacrifice; talismans; offerings of gifts to the deity, and by completing rituals such as the *hajj* pilgrimage. The Arabian *barakah* is equal in concept to the Hebrew *berakhah* and denoted any sanctifying power. In Islamic belief, however, Allah is the only source of *barakah*.

Tahannuth is the pre-Islamic Arabian term used to denote devotional religious practices that were performed by the pagan Quraysh either during the *hajj* pilgrimage or on the month of Ramadan. The rites included various acts of charity such as feeding the poor and freeing slaves, in addition to mystical rites (*manasik*): the main of which involved undertaking a sojourn (*'ukuf*)

to the shrines (*masajid*) and high places in the mountains of Mecca, where for one night they would dwell, and offer prayers (*du'a*), fast, and meditate in the presence of gods and spirits. The *tahannuth* concluded with the devotees returning back to Mecca from their retreat at the shrines and circumambulating the Ka'aba seven times in a week, in veneration of the seven planets of antiquity. The various retreats where the pagan Arabs would perform their rites included shrines located at Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifah.

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