

Islam: Truth or Myth?

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Interestingly, not many Muslims want to accept that Allah was already being worshipped at the Ka'ba in Mecca by Arab pagans before Muhammad came. Some Muslims become angry when they are confronted with this fact. But history is not on their side. Pre-Islamic literature has proved this." (Who Is This Allah?, G. J. O. Moshay, 1994, p 138)



"But history establishes beyond the shadow of doubt that even the pagan Arabs, before Muhammad's time, knew their chief god by the name of Allah and even, in a sense, proclaimed his unity...Among the pagan Arabs this term denoted the chief god of their pantheon, the Kaaba, with its three hundred and sixty idols." (The Moslem Doctrine of God, Samuel M. Zwemer 1905, p 24-25)

In fact, he did not at first intend to establish a new religion, but rather to reform the belief in Allah which already existed, and to show what this belief truly signified and rightfully demanded. (Mohammed: The man and his faith, **Tor Andrae, 1936, Translated by Theophil Menzel, 1960, p13-30**)

The pre-Islamic origin of "Allah"

1. There is absolutely no question that Allah was worshipped by the pagan Arabs as one of many polytheistic gods.
2. Allah was worshipped in the Kabah at Mecca before Muhammad was born. Muhammad merely proclaimed a god the Meccans were already familiar with. The pagan Arabs never accused Muhammad of preaching a different Allah than the one they already worshipped.
3. Many scholars say "Allah" is derived from a compound Arabic word, AL + ILAH = Allah. "Ilah" in Arabic is "God" and "Al" in Arabic is a definite article like our word "the". So from an English equivalent "Allah" comes from "The + God". Others, like Arthur Jeffery say, "The common theory is that it is formed from ilah, the common word for a god, and the article al-; thus al-ilah, the god," becomes Allah, "God." This theory, however, is untenable. In fact, the name is one of the words borrowed into the language in pre-Islamic times from Aramaic." (Islam: Muhammad and His Religion, Arthur Jeffery, 1958, p 85)
4. Although "Allah" has become known as the proper name for the Muslim god, Allah is not a name, but a descriptor that means literally, "the god". All pagan cultures have these generic terms that refer to their "top god" as "the god". In comparison to the perfect monotheism of Judaism and Christianity, "Allah" was originally no more a proper name for the Muslim God, than the word Hebrew "elohim" (god) or Greek "theos" (god) are proper names of the one true God of the Bible. "Jehovah" is the only revealed proper name for the "Elohim" of the Old

* I do not agree with many of the views displayed on www.bible.ca. However, I still chose to present this article because it offers some valid points to consider.

Testament (Ex 3:13; 6:3) and "Jesus" is the only revealed proper name of "Theos" in the New Testament. (Acts 4:12) Islam has no proper name for their god, but merely transformed, by universal use and confusion, the generic Allah into a proper name. So although today, Muslims use "Allah" as a proper name, it was never used this way originally. Allah, therefore is equivalent to "elohim" and "ho theos" but not "Jehovah" or "Jesus". Allah is not the name of the nameless Muslim God. However Muslims will claim that Allah is the name of God that corresponds to Jehovah. Both the Father and the Son are called "ho theos" (The God). Jesus is called "The God" many times in the New Testament: John 20:28; Heb 1:8. An important conclusion from this, is that the mere fact that "Allah" is equivalent to "elohim" and "ho theos" does not mean they are directly corresponded. It certainly doesn't prove Allah is the same as the God of the Old or New Testament. It does not prove that Muslim's worship the same God as Christians. If this correspondence proved the Muslim god was the same as the Christian God, then because pagan religions also have generics that correspond to "the god" (Allah), this correspondence would also prove that Allah is the same god as the Buddhist god, for Buddhists also refer to their god as "the god".

What scholars say about the origin of the word "Allah":

1. It is not related that the Black Stone was connected with any special god. In the Ka'ba was the statue of the god Hubal who might be called the god of Mecca and of the Ka'ba. Caetani gives great prominence to the connection between the Ka'ba and Hubal. Besides him, however, al-Lat, al-`Uzza, and al-Manat were worshipped and are mentioned in the Kur'an; Hubal is never mentioned there. What position Allah held beside these is not exactly known. The Islamic tradition has certainly elevated him at the expense of other deities. It may be considered certain that the Black Stone was not the only idol in or at the Ka'ba. The Makam Ibrahim was of course a sacred stone from very early times. Its name has not been handed down. Beside it several idols are mentioned, among them the 360 statues. (First Encyclopedia of Islam, E.J. Brill, 1987, Islam, p. 587-591)
2. "The verses of the Qur'an make it clear that the very name Allah existed in the Jahiliyya or pre-Islamic Arabia. Certain pagan tribes believed in a god whom they called 'Allah' and whom they believed to be the creator of heaven and earth and holder of the highest rank in the hierarchy of the gods. It is well known that the Quraish as well as other tribes believed in Allah, whom they designated as the 'Lord of the House' (i.e., of the Ka'ba)...It is therefore clear that the Qur'anic conception of Allah is not entirely new." (A Guide to the Contents of the Qur'an, Faruq Sherif, (Reading, 1995), pgs. 21-22., Muslim)
3. According to al-Masudi (Murudj, iv. 47), certain people have regarded the Ka'ba as a temple devoted to the sun, the moon and the five planets. The 360 idols placed round the Ka'ba also point in this direction. It can therefore hardly be denied that traces exist of an astral symbolism. At the same time one can safely say that there can be no question of any general conception on these lines. The

- cult at the Ka'ba was in the heathen period syncretic as is usual in heathenism. (First Encyclopedia of Islam, E.J. Brill, 1987, Islam, p. 587-591)
4. The name Allah, as the Qur'an itself is witness, was well known in pre-Islamic Arabia. Indeed, both it and its feminine form, Allat, are found not infrequently among the theophorous names in inscriptions from North Arabia. The common theory is that it is formed from ilah, the common word for a god, and the article al-; thus al-ilah, the god," becomes Allah, "God." This theory, however, is untenable. In fact, the name is one of the words borrowed into the language in pre-Islamic times from Aramaic. (Islam: Muhammad and His Religion, Arthur Jeffery, 1958, p 85)
 5. "If a Muslim says, "Your God and our God is the same," either he does not understand who Allah and Christ really are, or he intentionally glosses over the deep-rooted differences." (Who Is Allah In Islam?, Abd-Al Masih, Light of Life, 1985, p. 36.)
 6. Now there dwelt in Mecca a god called Allah. He was the provider, the most powerful of all the local deities, the one to whom every Meccan turned in time of need. But, for all his power, Allah was a remote god. At the time of Muhammad, however, he was on the ascendancy. He had replaced the moon god as lord of the Kaaba although still relegated to an inferior position below various tribal idols and three powerful goddesses: al-Manat, goddess of fate, al-Lat, mother of the gods, and al-Uzza, the planet Venus. (Islam and the Arabs, Rom Landau, 1958 p 11-21)
 7. Muhammad no more invented Allah than he did al-Lat, al-Uzza, and Manat. The Cult of the deity termed simply "the god" (al-ilah) was known throughout southern Syria and northern Arabia," and it was obviously of central importance in Mecca, where the building called the Ka'ba was indisputably his house. Indeed, the Muslim profession of faith, "there is no ilah except al-ilah," attests to precisely that point: the Quraysh are being called upon to repudiate the very existence of all the other gods save this one. It seems equally certain that Allah was not merely a god in Mecca but was widely regarded as the "high god," the chief and head of the Meccan pantheon, perhaps the result, as has been argued, of a natural progression toward henotheism or of the growing influence of Jews and Christians in the peninsula." The most convincing piece of evidence that the latter was at work is the fact that of all the gods of Mecca, Allah alone was not represented by an idol. (The Hajj, F. E. Peters, p 3-41, 1994)
 8. Allah, we can be sure, was neither an unknown nor an unimportant deity to the Quraysh when Muhammad began preaching his worship at Mecca. What is equally certain is that Allah had what the Quran disdainfully calls "associates": other gods and goddesses who shared both his cult and his shrine. The processional chant of the pagans of the Age of Barbarism was, we are told, "Here I am, O Allah, here I am; You have no partner except such a partner as You have; You possess him and all that is his." 103 The last clause may reflect what we have already seen was an emerging tendency toward henotheism, the recognition of Allah as the "high god" of Mecca. But it was not sufficient for Muslims, who put in its place their own manifestly monotheistic hymn: "Here I am, O Allah, here I

- am; You have no partner; the praise and the grace are Yours, and the empire; You have no partner." (The Hajj, F. E. Peters, p 3-41, 1994)
9. While Allah is best known as the principal god of Mecca, he was also worshiped in other places throughout Arabia as is shown by the occurrence of the name in Sabeian, Minean and particularly Libyanite inscriptions." The Qur'an (xxix, 61) refers to the belief of the pagans in Allah as the creator of the heavens and the earth; and Muhammad's own father bore the name of `Abd Allah or `Abdullah, meaning the slave or worshiper of this god. In Mecca, Allah was worshiped in the Ka'bah and possibly represented by the famous Black Stone in that place. (The Archeology Of World Religions, Jack Finegan, 1952, p482-485, 492)
 10. In Mecca, Allah was worshiped in the Ka'bah and possibly represented by the famous Black Stone in that place. (The Archeology Of World Religions, Jack Finegan, 1952, p482-485, 492)
 11. Prior to the rise of Islam, these three goddesses were associated with Allah as his daughters and all were worshiped at Mecca and other places in the vicinity. (The Archeology Of World Religions, Jack Finegan, 1952, p482-485, 492)
 12. Allah (allah, al-ilah, the god) was the principal, though not the only, deity of Makkah. The name is an ancient one. It occurs in two South Arabic inscriptions, one a Minaean found at al-'Ula and the other a Sabaeian, but abounds in the form HLH in the Lihyanite inscriptions of the fifth century- B.C. Lihyan, which evidently got the god from Syria, was the first Centre of the worship of this deity in Arabia. The name occurs as Hallah in the Safa inscriptions five centuries before Islam and also in a pre-Islamic Christian Arabic inscription found in umm-al-Jimal, Syria, and ascribed to the sixth century . The name of Muhammad's father was 'Abd-Allah ('Abdullah, the slave or worshiper of Allah). The esteem in which Allah was held by the pre-Islamic Makkans as the creator and supreme provider and the one to be invoked in time of special peril may be inferred from such koranic passages as 31 : 24, 31; 6 : 137, 109; to : 23. Evidently he was the tribal deity of the Quraysh. (History Of The Arabs, Philip K. Hitti, 1937, p 96-101)
 13. When Mohammed proclaimed his creed: 'There is no God but Allah,' he was not trying to introduce a new God. His pagan countrymen knew and acknowledged this divinity. His name, Allah, occurs already in pre-Mohammedan times, both in inscriptions and in compound personal names like Abd Allah, 'servant of Allah.' The effective note in Mohammed's evangelistic preaching is that he is able to accuse the pagans of acknowledging Allah as the creator of heaven and earth, and yet failing to draw the only possible conclusion from their belief; which is, to worship Allah and none else besides Him. 'If thou ask them who hath created the Heavens and the Earth, and hath imposed laws upon the sun and the moon, they will certainly say, "Allah". . . If thou ask them who sendeth rain from Heaven, and by it quickeneth the earth after it hath been dead, they will certainly answer "Allah"' (Sura 29, 6 1 and 63). When in extreme danger, especially on the sea, the pagans call upon Allah (29, 65; 31, 31; 17, 69), but when they are on land again, and feel safe, they share His divine honour with other beings. Allah is supposed to have given certain commandments and taboos to men (Sura 6, 139 ff.), and the most sacred oaths are sworn in His name (Sura 3,r, 40; 16, 40). Thus, even though

- Allah was not worshipped as He deserved, the cult of Allah was not entirely neglected. A species of tithing, or offering of the first-fruits of grain and cattle, was offered to Allah as well as to the other gods (6, 137). But, above all, Allah was apparently regarded as 'the Lord of the Ka'ba,' the God to whom the cult of the highest sanctuary of Central Arabia was dedicated. In one of the oldest Suras (io6) Mohammed urges his tribesmen, the Quraish, to worship 'the Lord of this house, who allows the two annual trade caravans to be equipped, and who cares for them, and permits them to dwell in security. Concerning himself he says that he has received the commandment to worship 'the Lord of the house,' i.e. the Ka'ba. Apparently, then, the Prophet and his countrymen fully agree that the God who is worshipped through the ritual of the Ka'ba is Allah. (Mohammed: The man and his faith, Tor Andrae, 1936, Translated by Theophil Menzel, 1960, p13-30)
14. "The religion of the Arabs, as well as their political life, was on a thoroughly primitive level...In particular the Semites regarded trees, caves, springs, and large stones as being inhabited by spirits; like the Black Stone of Islam in a corner of the Ka'bah at Mecca, in Petra and other places in Arabia stones were venerated also...Every tribe worshipped its own god, but also recognized the power of other tribal gods in their own sphere...Three goddesses in particular had elevated themselves above the circle of the inferior demons. The goddess of fate, al-Manat, corresponding to the Tyche Soteira of the Greeks, though known in Mecca, was worshipped chiefly among the neighboring Bedouin tribes of the Hudhayl. Allat—"the Goddess," who is Taif was called ar-Rabbah, "the Lady," and whom Herodotus equates with Urania—corresponded to the great mother of the gods, Astarte of the northern Semites; al-'Uzza, "the Mightiest," worshipped in the planet Venus, was merely a variant form... In addition to all these gods and goddesses the Arabs, like many other primitive peoples, believed in a God who was creator of the world, Allah, whom the Arabs did not, as has often been thought, owe to the Jews and Christians...The more the significance of the cult declined, the greater became the value of a general religious temper associated with Allah. Among the Meccans he was already coming to take the place of the old moon-god Hubal as the lord of the Ka'bah...Allah was actually the guardian of contracts, though at first these were still settled at a special ritual locality and so subordinate to the supervision of an idol. In particular he was regarded as the guardian of the alien guest, though consideration for him still lagged behind duty to one's kinsmen." (History of the Islamic Peoples, Carl Brockelmann, p 8-10)
 15. The god Il or Ilah was originally a phase of the Moon God, but early in Arabian history the name became a general term for god, and it was this name that the Hebrews used prominently in their personal names, such as Emanuel, Israel, etc., rather than the Bapal of the northern semites proper, which was the Sun. Similarly, under Mohammed's tutelage, the relatively anonymous Ilah became Al-Ilah, The God, or Allâh, the Supreme Being. (Southern Arabia, Carleton S. Coon, Washington, D.C. Smithsonian, 1944, p.399)
 16. "Allah, the moon god was married to the sun goddess. Together they produce the three goddess (the daughters of Allah), Al-Lat, Al-Uzza and Manat. All of these 'gods' were viewed as being the top of the pantheon of Arab deities." (The Facts

- on File Encyclopedia of World Mythology and Legend, Anthony S. Mercatante, I. 61)
17. "...a people of Arabia, of the race of the Joktanites...the Alilai living near the Red Sea in a district where gold is found; their name, children of the moon, so called from the worship of the moon, or Alilat." (Gesenius Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures, translated by Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, 1979, p. 367)
 18. Al-Kindi, one of the early Christian apologists against Islam, pointed out that Islam and its god Allah did not come from the Bible but from the paganism of the Sabeans. They did not worship the God of the Bible but the moon-god and his daughters al-Uzza, al-Lat, and Manat (Three Early Christian-Muslim Debates, ed. by N. A. Newman, Hatfield, PA, IBRI, 1994, pp.357, 413, 426).
 19. "The cult of a deity termed simply "the god" (al-ilah) was known throughout southern Syria and northern Arabia in the days before Islam—Muhammad's father was named 'Abd Allah ("Servant of Allah")--and was obviously of central importance in Mecca, where the building called the Ka'bah was indisputably his house. Indeed, the Muslims shahadah attests to precisely that point: the Quraysh, the paramount tribe of Mecca, were being called on by Muhammad to repudiate the very existence of all the other gods save this one. It seems equally certain that Allah was not merely a god in Mecca but was widely regarded as the "high god," the chief and head of the Meccan pantheon, whether this was the result, as has been argued, of a natural progression toward henotheism or of the growing influence of Jews and Christians in the Arabian Peninsula...Thus Allah was neither an unknown nor an unimportant deity to the Quraysh when Muhammad began preaching his worship at Mecca." (The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World, ed. John L. Esposito, 1995, p 76-77)
 20. "That Islam was conceived in idolatry is shown by the fact that many rituals performed in the name of Allah were connected with the pagan worship that existed before Islam. ... Before Islam Allah was reported to be known as: the supreme of a pantheon of gods; the name of a god whom the Arabs worshipped; the chief god of the pantheon; Ali-ilah; the god; the supreme; the all-powerful; all-knowing; and totally unknowable; the predeterminer of everyone's life destiny; chief of the gods; the special deity of the Quraish; having three daughters: Al Uzzah (Venus), Manah (Destiny), and Alat; having the idol temple at Mecca under his name (House of Allah).; the mate of Alat, the goddess of fate. Because of other Arabian history which points to heathen worship of the sun, moon, and the stars, as well as other gods, of which I believe Allah was in some way connected to. This then would prove to us that Allah is not the same as the true God of the Bible whom we worship, because God never changes." (Is Allah The Same God As The God Of The Bible?, M. J. Afshari, p 6, 8-9)
 21. "In pre-Islamic days, called the Days of Ignorance, the religious background of the Arabs was pagan, and basically animistic. Through wells, trees, stones, caves, springs, and other natural objects man could make contact with the deity... At Mecca, Allah was the chief of the gods and the special deity of the Quraish, the prophet's tribe. Allah had three daughters: Al Uzzah (Venus) most revered of all and pleased with human sacrifice; Manah, the goddess of destiny, and Al Lat, the

- goddess of vegetable life. Hubal and more than 300 others made up the pantheon. The central shrine at Mekka was the Kaaba, a cube like stone structure which still stands though many times rebuilt. Imbedded in one corner is the black stone, probably a meteorite, the kissing of which is now an essential part of the pilgrimage." (Meet the Arab, John Van Ess, 1943, p. 29.)
22. "Muslims are notoriously loathe to preserve traditions of earlier paganism and like to garble what pre-Islamic history they permit to survive in anachronistic terms" (Southern Arabia, Carleton S. Coon, Washington DC, Smithsonian, 1944, p 398)
 23. "But history establishes beyond the shadow of doubt that even the pagan Arabs, before Muhammad's time, knew their chief god by the name of Allah and even, in a sense, proclaimed his unity...Among the pagan Arabs this term denoted the chief god of their pantheon, the Kaaba, with its three hundred and sixty idols." (The Moslem Doctrine of God, Samuel M. Zwemer 1905, p 24-25)
 24. "Historians like Vaqqidi have said Allah was actually the chief of the 360 gods [one for each day of the year] being worshipped in Arabia at the time Muhammad rose to prominence. Ibn Al-Kalbi gave 27 names of pre-Islamic deities... Interestingly, not many Muslims want to accept that Allah was already being worshipped at the Ka'ba in Mecca by Arab pagans before Muhammad came. Some Muslims become angry when they are confronted with this fact. But history is not on their side. Pre-Islamic literature has proved this." (Who Is This Allah?, G. J. O. Moshay, 1994, p 138)
 25. "Islam also owes the term "Allah" to the heathen Arabs. We have evidence that it entered into numerous personal names in Northern Arabia and among the Nabatians. It occurred among the Arabs of later times, in theophorous names and on its own." (Why I Am Not A Muslim, Ibn Warraq, 1995, p. 42)
 26. "Arabia in Muhammad's time was polytheistic in its conception of the cosmos and tribal in its social structure. Each tribe had its own god(s) and goddess(es), which were manifest in the forms of idols, stones, trees, or stars in the sky." (Islamic Studies, A History of Religions Approach, Richard C. Martin, 2nd Ed., p 96)
 27. "Before Islam, the religions of the Arabic world involved the worship of many spirits, called jinn. Allah was but one of many gods worshiped in Mecca. But then Muhammad taught the worship of Allah as the only God, whom he identified as the same God worshiped by Christians and Jews." (A Short History of Philosophy, Robert C. Solomon, p. 130)
 28. "Allah: Originally applied to the moon; he seems to be preceded by Ilmaqah, the moon god... Allat: the female counterpart to Allah." (A Dictionary of Non-Classical Mythology, Marian Edwardes, Lewis Spence, Allah, p. 7)
 29. There were hundreds of such deities in pagan Arabia; the Ka'bah alone at one time housed three hundred and sixty-seven of them. Of all those mentioned in the Qur'an, four appeared to be most popularly revered on the eve of Islam, al'-Uzzah (power), al-Lat (the goddess), and Manah (fate); all three female deities, popularly worshiped by the tribes of the Hijaz, were regarded as the daughters of Allah (the god) who headed the Arabian pantheon when Muhammad began to preach. Allah, the paramount deity of pagan Arabia, was the target of worship in varying degrees of intensity from the southernmost tip of Arabia to the Mediterranean. To the

- Babylonians he was "Il" (god); to the Canaanites, and later the Israelites, he was "El"., the South Arabians worshipped him as "Ilah," and the Bedouins as "al-Ilah" (the deity). With Muhammad he becomes Allah, God of the Worlds, of all believers, the one and only who admits of no associates or consorts in the worship of Him. Judaic and Christian concepts of God abetted the transformation of Allah from a pagan deity to the God of all monotheists. There is no reason, therefore, to accept the idea that "Allah" passed to the Muslims from Christians and Jews. (Islam, Beliefs And Observances, Caesar E. Farah, p2-7, 26-35)
30. Before the name [Allah] came into Islam, it had already long been part of the pre-Islamic system, and a considerably important part, too...the pagan concept of Allah, which is purely Arabian—the case in which we see the pre-Islamic Arabs themselves talking about "Allah" as they understand the word in their own peculiar way." (God and Man in The Koran, Toshihiko Izutsu, Chapter 4: Allah, p96-119, 1980)
 31. Let us begin by remarking that the name itself of Allah is common to Jahiliyyah and Islam. When, in other words, the Koranic Revelation began to use this word, it was not introducing a new name of God, a name strange and alien to the ears of the contemporary Arabs. The first problem, then, that we must answer is: Was the Koranic concept of Allah a continuation of the pre-Islamic one, or did the former represent a complete break with the latter? Were there some essential-not accidental-ties between the two concepts signified by one and the same name? Or was it a simple matter of a common word used for two different objects? ." (God and Man in The Koran, Toshihiko Izutsu, Chapter 4: Allah, p96-119, 1980)
 32. What does this mean from the semantical point of view? What are the implications of the fact that the name of Allah was not only known to both parties but was actually used by both parties in their discussion with each other? The very fact that the name of Allah was common to both the pagan Arabs and the Muslims, particularly the fact that it gave rise to much heated discussion about the concept of God, would seem to suggest conclusively that there was some common ground of understanding between the two. parties. Otherwise there, could have been neither debate nor discussion at all. And when the Prophet addressed his adversaries in the name of Allah all, he did so simply and solely because he knew that this name meant something and something important to their minds too. If this were not, so, his activity would have been quite pointless in this respect. " (God and Man in The Koran, Toshihiko Izutsu, Chapter 4: Allah, p96-119, 1980)
 33. As regards the 'basic' meaning of Allah, we may remark that many Western scholars have compared rightly -to my mind- the word in its formal aspect with the Greek "Ho Theos" which means quite simply 'the God'. On such an abstract level the name was common to all Arab tribes. In pre-Islamic times each tribe, as a rule, had its own local god or divinity known by a proper name. So, at first, each tribe may have meant its own local divinity, when it used an expression equivalent to "the God"; this is quite probable. But the very fact that people began to designate their own local divinity by the abstract form of "the God" must have paved, the way for the growth of an abstract notion of God without any localizing qualification and then, following this, for a belief in the supreme God common to all the tribes. We meet with similar instances all over the world. Besides, we must

- remember, there were the Jews and the Christians with whom the Arabs had constant opportunities of a close cultural contact. And naturally these Jews and Christians both used the same word Allah to denote their own Biblical God. This must have exerted a great influence on the development of the pre-Islamic concept of Allah among the Arabs towards a higher concept than that of a mere tribal divinity, not only among the town-dwellers but also among the pure Bedouins of the desert. However this may be, it is certain from the Koran alone, that by the time Muhammad began to preach, the pagan Arabs had come to cherish at least a vague idea, and perhaps also a vague belief, in Allah as the highest God standing above the level of local idols. This much we may reasonably assume as the 'basic' meaning, of the word Allah in Jahiliyah. And this much meaning, at least, must the word have carried into the Islamic system when the Koran began to use it as the name of the God of Islamic Revelation. For otherwise, as I have said, even a polemic discussion on this Islamic God could not have been possible between the Muslims and the Meccan pagans. " (God and Man in The Koran, Toshihiko Izutsu, Chapter 4: Allah, p96-119, 1980)
34. However, this is not the whole picture. We would commit a grave mistake if we imagined that this 'basic' meaning was the sole point of contact between the two conceptions of God. The thing did not occur in such a way that the pure concept of Allah with its simple 'basic' meaning or which is suggested by its formal structure -Allah = ho theos - came straight into the Islamic conceptual system falling down, so to speak, from some metaphysical world of pure concepts. But actually, i.e. historically, it came into the Islamic system through another system, namely, the pre-Islamic system of religious concepts, however crude the latter might have been. Before the name came into Islam, it had already long been part of the pre-Islamic system, and a considerably important part, too. (God and Man in The Koran, Toshihiko Izutsu, Chapter 4: Allah, p96-119, 1980)
35. To put it in another way, when the Islamic Revelation began, the pagan Arabs of Mecca could possibly have no other way of understanding the word Allah than by associating with it all the semantic elements that were already present in their minds. This was the first big semantic problem which faced the Prophet Muhammad when he started his prophetic career. ... The chief of those objectionable elements was the idea that Allah, although admittedly the supreme God, allowed of the existence of so-called "associates" shuraka' besides Him. But apart from this polytheistic element and some other less important points, the Koran acknowledges that the general concept of Allah entertained by the contemporary Arabs was surprisingly close to the Islamic concept of God. (God and Man in The Koran, Toshihiko Izutsu, Chapter 4: Allah, p96-119, 1980)
36. The first is the pagan concept of Allah, which is purely Arabian-the case in which we see the pre-Islamic Arabs themselves talking about "Allah" as then, understand the word in their own peculiar way ... (II) The case in which we observe the Jews and the Christians of pre-Islamic times using the very word Allah in referring to their own God. In this case "Allah" means of course the God of the Bible, a typically monotheistic concept of God. Exceedingly interesting examples are found in this respect, for instance, in the work of 'Adi b. Zayd, a, well-known Arab Christian, the Court poet of al-Hirah. (III) Lastly, the case in

- which we see the pagan Arabs - non-Christian, non-Jewish pure Jahili Arabs - handling the Biblical concept of God under the name of "Allah".(God and Man in The Koran, Toshihiko Izutsu, Chapter 4: Allah, p96-119, 1980)
37. **II THE CONCEPT OF ALLAH IN ARABIAN PAGANISM** (1) Allah in this conception, is the Creator of the world. (2) He is the Giver of rain, i.e., more generally, the Giver of life to all living things on earth. (3) He is the One who presides over the most solemn oaths. (4) He is the object of what we might justly describe as "momentary?" or "temporary" monotheism, the existence of which is evidenced by the recurrent expression in the Koran "making (momentarily) their faith pure for Him alone" (5) Finally, Allah is the Lord of Ka'bah. (God and Man in The Koran, Toshihiko Izutsu, Chapter 4: Allah, p96-119, 1980)
 38. "The relation of this name, which in Babylonia and Assyria became a generic term simply meaning 'god', to the Arabian Ilah familiar to us in the form Allah, which is compounded of al, the definite article, and Ilah by eliding the vowel 'i', is not clear. Some scholars trace the name to the South Arabian Ilah, a title of the Moon god, but this is a matter of antiquarian interest...it is clear from Nabataean and other inscriptions that Allah meant 'the god.' The other gods mentioned in the Quran are all female deities: Al-Lat, al-Uzza, and Manat, which represented the Sun, the planet Venus, and Fortune, respectively; at Mecca they were regarded as the daughters of Allah... As Allah meant 'the god', so Al-Lat means 'the goddess'." (Islam, Alfred Guillaume, 1956, p 6-7)
 39. Apparently, then, Allah was, already in the conception of the pre-Islamic Arabs the Creator of the world and the Giver of rain, i.e., the Giver of life to all that exists on earth. The only serious complaint brought against them by the Qur'an in this respect was that the pagans failed to draw the only reasonable conclusion from the acknowledgment of Allah's being the Creator of the heaven and the earth: that they should serve Allah alone and none else. (God and Man in The Koran, Toshihiko Izutsu, Chapter 4: Allah, p96-119, 1980)
 40. It is indeed remarkable that this expression implies that in an emergency when they really felt that their own life was in mortal danger, the pagan Arabs used to have recourse to 'temporary monotheism' apparently without any reflection on the grave implication of such an act. That the phrase "making one's religion pure for Allah" in contexts of this kind means what we might call 'momentary -or temporary- monotheism', and not simply "sincerity" or "earnestness" in one's prayer is clearly shown by the fact that in the majority of the verses in which this expression is used the Koran adds the remark that these pagans, as soon as they reach the shore and feel sure of absolute safety, forget about all that has passed and begin again "to ascribe partners to Allah", i.e., fall back into their original polytheism. (God and Man in The Koran, Toshihiko Izutsu, Chapter 4: Allah, p96-119, 1980)
 41. "The enemies tried hard against me", he says, "without desisting from doing anything that could harm me, by the Lord of Mecca and the 'Crucified'. ... In this verse 'Adi b. Zayd claims his complete innocence and says that the misunderstanding on the part of the king has been produced only by the machination of the slanderers envious of his good fortune, and in order to give special weight to this declaration he swears by the Lord of Mecca and Christ

- putting together the two "Lords" into a single oath. What is important to remember regarding this verse is that the poet 'Adi b. Zayd was an Arab Christian, but he was neither a simple Arab nor an ordinary Christian. He was a man of the highest culture of his age. ... The fact that this man of highest culture and education put in one of his solemn oaths the Lord of Mecca and Christ together is significant, in My view, in two different ways: it is of importance, first of all, in connection with the problem of the relational meaning of the word Allah in its purely Arabian aspect. That a highly educated Christian, not a pagan Arab, living in Hirah, away from Mecca, did use this concept of the Lord of Ka'bah in this way shows better than anything else how wide-spread and influential was this particular connotation of Allah. ... The example of 'Adi b. Zayd's verse would seem to suggest, at least to my mind, that there was in the Christian psychology an unconscious tendency or inclination towards identifying -their Christian concept of Allah with the purely pagan Arabian concept of Allah as the Lord of the Meccan shrine. (God and Man in The Koran, Toshihiko Izutsu, Chapter 4: Allah, p96-119, 1980)
42. Both the Jews and the Christians in Arabia used Arabic as their vernacular, and, as I have pointed out earlier, referred to their Biblical God by the very word Allah, which was something quite natural seeing that the 'basic' meaning conveyed by this word was a very abstract one that would correspond roughly to the Greek ho theos. (God and Man in The Koran, Toshihiko Izutsu, Chapter 4: Allah, p96-119, 1980)
 43. It is clear from the negative form of the Muslim creed, "There is no god except God," that the existence and lordship of Allah were known and recognized in pre-Islamic Arabia. The Prophet's mission was not to proclaim God's existence but to deny the existence of all lesser deities. The fact that Muhammad's own father bore the name 'Abd-Allah, slave of God, demonstrates that God was known by that name prior to Islam. The Qur'an in many passages refers to Muhammad's adversaries in Mecca, swearing by God, invoking Him, and recognizing His sovereignty as Creator. The name Allah is also evident in archaeological and literary remains of pre-Islamic Arabic. But the people of Mecca did not understand or allow that God alone should be worshipped. Indeed they contended against Muhammad that if God had willed it they would have refrained from believing in other deities (Surah vi. 148), clearly implying that God approved of their concurrent idolatry. (The Call of The Minaret, Kenneth Cragg, 1956, 35-41)
 44. There can be no doubt then that the Prophet's contemporaries knew of a Supreme Being, but He did not dominate their minds. Rather they thought more directly and frequently of the lesser gods, the daughters, perhaps even the sons, of Allah who were far more intimately related to their daily lives, their wars, their harvests, and their fertility. (The Call of The Minaret, Kenneth Cragg, 1956, 35-41)
 45. Certain trees and stones (especially meteorites and those shaped to resemble human forms) housed spirits and divinities. (Mohammed, Maxime Rodinson, 1961, translated by Anne Carter, 1971, p 16-17)
 46. This was especially true of Allah, 'the God, the Divinity', the personification of the divine world in its highest form, creator of the universe and keeper of sworn oaths. In the Hejaz three goddesses had pride of place as the 'daughters of Allah'.

- The first of these was Allat, mentioned by Herodotus under the name of Alilat. Her name means simply 'the goddess', and she may have stood for one aspect of Venus, the morning star, although hellenized Arabs identified her with Athene. Next came Uzza, 'the all-powerful', whom other sources identify with Venus. The third was Manat, the goddess of fate, who held the shears which cut the thread of life and who was worshipped in a shrine on the sea-shore. The great god of Mecca was Hubal, an idol made of red cornelian. (Mohammed, Maxime Rodinson, 1961, translated by Anne Carter, 1971, p 16-17)
47. In recent years I have become increasingly convinced that for an adequate understanding of the career of Muhammad and the origins of Islam great importance must be attached to the existence in Mecca of belief in Allah as a 'high god'. In a sense this is a form of paganism, but it is so different from paganism as commonly understood that it deserves separate treatment. Moreover there is much about it in the Qur'an. The first point to note is that the pagans are prepared to admit that Allah is the creator of the heavens and the earth. (Muhammad's Mecca, W. Montgomery Watt, Chapter 3: Religion In Pre-Islamic Arabia, p26-45)
48. The Arabic word for 'God', Allah, is a contraction of al-ilah, which like the Greek ho theos simply means 'the god' but was commonly understood as 'the supreme god' or 'God'. It is possible that before the time of Muhammad the Meccan pagans used to indicate the principal deity of the Ka'bah, in the same way in which the deity worshipped at at-Ta'if was known simply as al-Lat, the goddess. If the word Allah was also used for God as acknowledged by Jews and Christians, the opportunities for confusion would be great. The probability therefore is that while some Meccans acknowledged God, they did not see that their old polytheistic beliefs were incompatible with belief in God and reject them. These premonitions of monotheism among the Arabs must have been due mainly to Christian and Jewish influences. The Arabs had many opportunities of contact with Christians and Jews. The Byzantine empire, whose power and higher civilization they greatly admired, was Christian, and so was Abyssinia. Even in the Persian empire Christianity was strong, and al-Hirah, the Persian vassal-state with which the Arabs were much in contact, was an outpost of the East Syrian or Nestorian Church. This combination of monotheism with military and political strength and a higher level of material civilization must have impressed the Arabs greatly. (Muhammad at Mecca, W. Montgomery Watt, 1953, p 23-29)
49. All this material goes to show that among the pagans in Mecca and presumably also in the region round there was widespread recognition of Allah as high god. Such people may even have been more numerous than those who gave no special place to Allah, and they may have differed among themselves about the powers of a high god. This conclusion has been reached from a study of the Qur'an, and refers to a relatively small region during a restricted period. The study of inscriptions, however, has shown that belief in a high or supreme god was common throughout the Semitic Near East in the Greco-Roman period. It is worth quoting the conclusions of one who has made a thorough study of the inscriptions. It is worth quoting the conclusions of one who has made a thorough study of the inscriptions: "The epigraphical material reveals that the worship of a supreme god

- coexisted with that of other minor gods. The belief that one god is able to control all the other gods, or is supreme in that he has created and looks after the world, does not constitute monotheism. But the increasing emphasis on such beliefs is evidence of a trend towards monotheism, namely towards the exclusion of other gods' existence." [Javier Teixidor, *The Pagan God: Popular Religion in the Greco-Roman Near East*, Princeton 1977, 17.] " The authors of the inscriptions worshipped a supreme god who was alone in possessing a power that excelled any other divine power. He was believed to be a Weather god; heaven belonged to him. Lesser gods were his messengers and ministers. As stated in the first chapter, the cult of the angels became a significant feature of the religious life of the Near East during the Persian and Hellenistic times. It gave the angels their role of messengers, but also stressed the fact that the Lord of Heaven ranked at the top of a hierarchy of divine beings. On the other hand, the religious life of the various groups whose inscriptions have been studied in the preceding pages was rooted in the traditions of the ancestors." [Javier Teixidor, *The Pagan God: Popular Religion in the Greco-Roman Near East*, Princeton 1977, 161f.] In the light of this further evidence it becomes highly probable that when Muhammad began preaching the dominant view among thinking people in Mecca was the belief in Allah as high god. Pure paganism was in decline. (Muhammad's Mecca, W. Montgomery Watt, Chapter 3: Religion In Pre-Islamic Arabia, p26-45)
50. North Arabian deities. Among the peoples around the northern perimeter of Arabia, "god," in the most generic sense, was El, or in a longer form of the same name, Ilah. (Britannica, Arabian Religions, p1057, 1979)
 51. "Allah: Before the birth of Muhammad, Allah was known as a supreme, but not sole, God." (Oxford Dictionary of World Religions, 1997, p. 48)
 52. "Origin- Nabataean and Arabic: Derived from the western Semitic god Il. ... Known period of worship: circa 300 BC until present. ... The creator god of Islam. Perceived in pre-Islamic times as the creator of the earth and water" (Encyclopedia of Gods, Michael Jordan, Allah, p 12)
 53. "Despite the prominence of the name elsewhere among Semitic peoples, the god Il (EI) appears to play a comparatively minor role in the South Arabian inscriptions. Some modern scholars have sought to explain this circumstance by equating Il with the moon god, but this opinion has not prevailed." ... "Among the peoples around the northern perimeter of Arabia, "god," in the most generic sense, was El, or in a longer form of the same name, Ilah. (Britannica, Arabian Religions, p1057, 1979)
 54. Allah was known to the pre-Islamic Arabs; he was one of the Meccan deities, possibly the supreme deity and certainly a creator-god (cf. Kur'an, xiii, 16; xxix, 61, 63; xxxi, 25; xxxix, 38; xliii, 87). He was already known, by antonomasia, as the God, al-Ilah (the most likely etymology; another suggestion is the Aramaic Alaha). For Allah before Islam, as shown by archaeological sources and the Kur'an, see ILAH. (The Encyclopaedia Of Islam, New Edition, Edited By B. Lewis, V. L. Menage, Ch. Pellat And J. Schacht, 1971, ALLAH, page 406)
 55. But the vague notion of supreme (not sole) divinity, which Allah seems to have connoted in Meccan religion, was to become both universal and transcendental; it was to be turned, by the Kur'anic preaching, into the affirmation of the Living

- God, the Exalted One. (The Encyclopaedia Of Islam, New Edition, Edited By B. Lewis, V. L. Menage, Ch. Pellat And J. Schacht, 1971, ALLAH, page 406)
56. ALLAH is the proper name of God among Muslims, corresponding in usage to Jehovah (Jahweh) among the Hebrews. Thus it is not to be regarded as a common noun meaning 'God' (or 'god'), and the Muslim must use another word or form if he wishes to indicate any other than his own peculiar deity. Similarly, no plural can be formed from it, and though the liberal Muslim may admit that Christians or Jews call upon Allah, he could never s Peak of the Allah of the Christians or the Allah of tire Jews. (Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, James Hastings, Allah p 326)
 57. "The origin of this goes back to pre-Muslim times, as Prof. Noldeke has shown" (Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, James Hastings, Allah p 326)
 58. Muhammad found the Meccans believing in a supreme God whom they called Allah, thus already contracted. With Allah, however, they associated other minor deities, some evidently tribal, others called daughters of Allah. Muhammad's reform was to assert the solitary existence of Allah. The first article of the Muslim creed, therefore, La ilaha illa-llahu means only, as addressed by him to the Meccans, ' There exists no God except the one whom you already call Allah.' Naturally, this precise historical origin is not clear to the Muslim exegetes and theologians. But that Allah is a proper name, applicable only to their peculiar God, they are certain, and they mostly recognize that its force as a proper name has arisen rough contraction in form and limitation in usage. (Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, James Hastings, Allah p 326)
 59. The preferable view is that Allah is a proper name of God and has no derivation; this he defends with arguments based on the undoubted usage of the Qur'an and the impossibility of making a common noun apply to an individual only. (Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, James Hastings, Allah p 326)
 60. Broadly, Allah is used of the true God only, as also, in the first instance, al-ilah ; but the latter can by extension be applied to any god, as Allah Himself applies it in the Qur'an. (Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, James Hastings, Allah p 326) [This, of course, is a complete reversal of the historical fact.]
 61. "In any case it is extremely important fact that Muhammad did not find it necessary to introduce an altogether novel deity, but contented himself with ridding the heathen Allah of his companions subjecting him to a kind of dogmatic purification." (Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, I:664.)
 62. Comment: Allah is a term Muslims use to distinguish their moon god. The term was in existence before Muhammad was born. However it has no history of use outside the Arabic world, as Muslims claim. For example, it is not found in the Bible or in any Jewish or Christian writings. The moon god, however, does have a long history that dates back to the time of Abraham.
 63. The final divinity to be considered is Allah who was recognized before Islam as god, and if not as the only god at least as a supreme god. The Quran makes it quite clear that he was recognized at Mecca, though belief in him was certainly more widespread .78 How is this to be explained? Earlier scholars attributed the diffusion of this belief solely to Christian and Judaic influences. But now a growing number of authors maintain that this idea had older roots in Arabia.

- Wellhausen's view that Allah (al-ilah, "the god") is a sort of abstraction which (originating in the local gods) gave rise first to a common word, then a common concept that merged the various gods into one single god has rightly been judged inadequate. One must rather see in this pre-Islamic Allah one of those great supreme gods who created the world but who plays a minor role in the actual cult.
- 79 If, therefore, Allah is indigenous to Arabia, one must ask further: Are there indications of a nomadic origin? I think there are, based on a comparison of the beliefs of the nomads in central and northern Asia with those of northeastern Africa. Like the supreme being of many other nomads, Allah is a god of the sky and dispenser of rain. 80 These indications might not seem sufficiently peculiar to Bedouin, for the notion of such a god might just as well have been formed by settled farming people. But one must not forget that rain is even more important for nomads. (Studies on Islam, edited by Merlin L. Swartz, Pre-Islamic Bedouin Religion, by Joseph Henninger, 1981, p 3-22)
64. "...the Ka'aba was dedicated to al-Ilah, the High God of the pagan Arabs, despite the presiding effigy of Hubal. By the beginning of the seventh century, al-Ilah had become more important than before in the religious life many of the Arabs. Many primitive religions develop a belief in a High God, who is sometimes called the Sky God...But they also carried on worshipping the other gods, who remained deeply important to them." (Karen Armstrong, Muhammad, (New York: San Francisco, 1992) p. 69.)
65. From the Koran itself it is clear that monotheistic ideas were familiar in Western Arabia. The existence of a supreme God, Allah, is assumed as an axiom common to Mohammed and his opponents. The Koran never argues the point; what it does argue is that He is the one and only God. *La ilaha illa'llah*, 'there is no god but Allah.' Mohammedanism, An Historical Survey H.A.R. Gibb, 1950, The Koran, p 36-47
66. "Allah, the Supreme Being of the Mussulmans: Before Islam. That the Arabs, before the time of Muhammed, accepted and worshipped, after a fashion, a supreme god called Allah,—"the Ilah, or the god, if the form is of genuine Arabic source; if of Aramaic, from Alaha, "the god"—seems absolutely certain. Whether he was an abstraction or a development from some individual god, such as Hubal, need not here be considered...But they also recognized and tended to worship more fervently and directly other strictly subordinate gods...It is certain that they regarded particular deities (mentioned in liii. 19-20 are al-'Uzza, Manat or Manah, al-Lat'; some have interpreted vii, 179 as a reference to a perversion of Allah to Allat as daughters of Allah (vi. 100; xvi, 59; xxxvii, 149; liii, 21); they also asserted that he had sons (vi. 100)..."There was no god save Allah". This meant, for Muhammed and the Meccans, that of all the gods whom they worshipped, Allah was the only real deity. It took no account of the nature of God in the abstract, only of the personal position of Allah. ...ilah, the common noun from which Allah is probably derived..." (First Encyclopedia of Islam, E.J. Brill, 1987, Islam, p. 302)
67. "The name Allah goes back before Muhammad" (The Facts on File Encyclopedia of World Mythology and Legend, Anthony S. Mercatante, I:41, 1983)