

Understanding
Islam

FOLK ISLAM



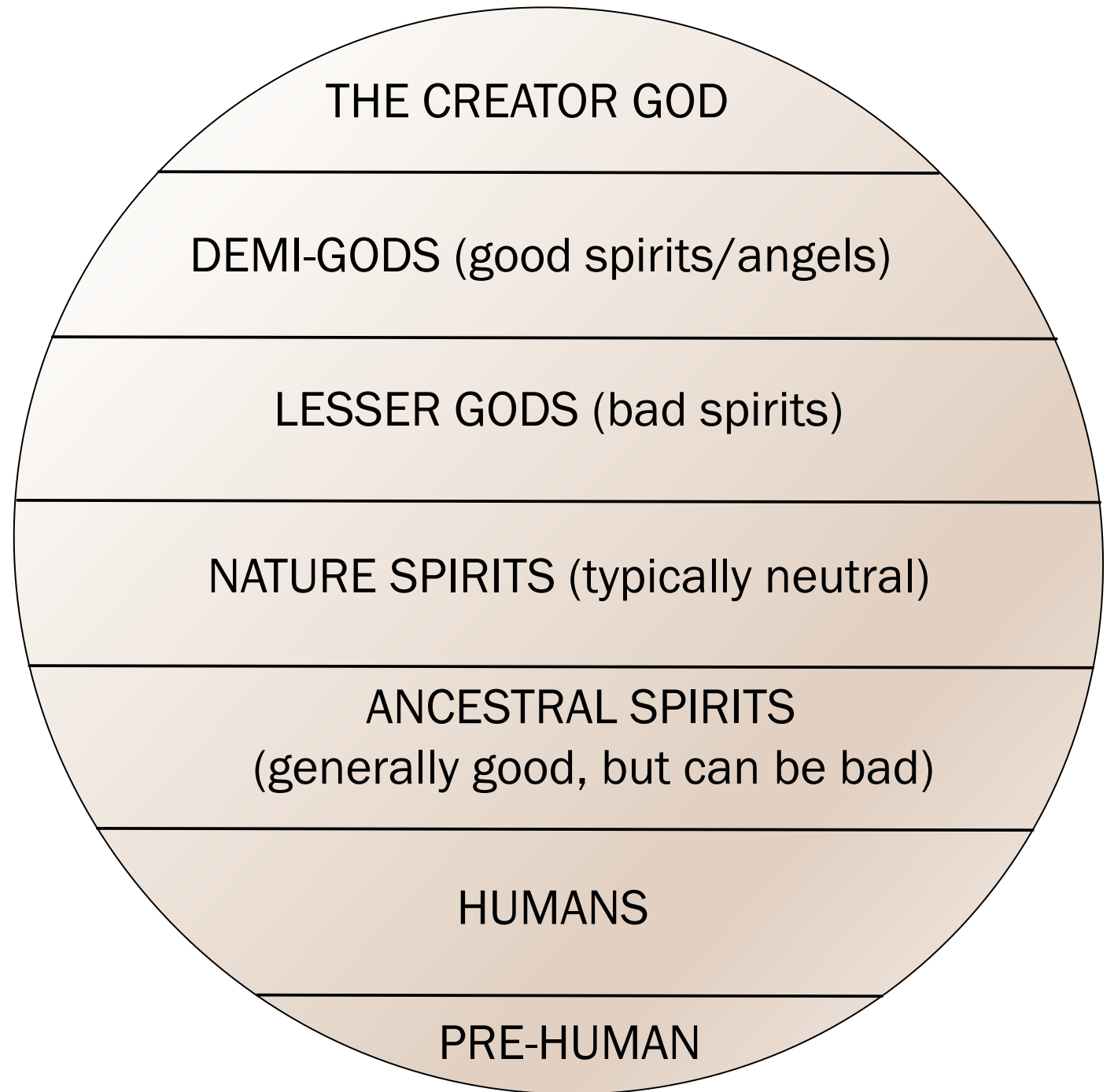
Animism

Animism takes its name from the concept that the physical world is inhabited, or animated, by spirits. Rocks, trees, rivers, lakes, mountains, valleys and so forth, as well as animals, possess spirits that control all that takes place in a particular region. In order to procure favorable experiences in life, animists seek to interact with the spirits by either satisfying them or manipulating them.

Mark Vowels, "Animism," in *World Religions and Cults: Moralistic, Mystical and Mysticism Religions*, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Green Forrest, AR: Master Books, 2016), 223-239.



An
Animist
Cosmology



Deuteronomy 32:17

They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded.

Psalms 106:36-38 They served their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons; they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood.

1 Corinthians 10:20

I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.

Biblical Perspective on Spirits

Some concepts to consider

- **Syncretism** – the blending of two disparate worldviews or forms of religious belief
- **Folk Religion** – the combination of the formal teachings and practices of a religion with animistic teachings and practices
- **Spiritism** – generally synonymous with animism; the belief that spirit beings control the world around us
- **Cause and Effect** – every effect has some cause which can be manipulated
- **Fear/Power Culture** – general categorization of animist worldview

Objects Associated with Power

Charms – any item, naturally occurring or specially created, which is thought to have power to ward off evil or draw good fortune

Talismans – a type of charm which has been prepared specifically for the purpose of providing good luck or protection from harm

Amulets – any form of wearable charm

Fetishes – an object specially prepared by a religious specialist (shaman, medicine man, etc.) that is thought to create a special relationship between the possessor and a particular spirit

Totems – physical representations of spirit beings, often associated with certain animals.

Sacred Objects or Places – items or places where a specific spirit or spirits is thought to abide and therefore to exercise special power. Examples could include things like sacred trees, rocks, streams or hills.

Evil Eye Amulet





Muslim Prayer
(or worry)
Beads

Comparison of Formal and Folk Islam

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Formal Islam	Folk Islam
Cognitive, truth-oriented	Heart-felt emotional
Legalistic	Mystical
Ultimate issues of life, origins, heaven hell, purpose.	Everyday concerns of health, guidance success, prosperity.
The Al .Qu'ran and sacred traditions	Supernatural power spiritual revelation
Institutional	Inspirational
Supplicative	Manipulative

Life-cycle rituals - rites of passage, transition rituals which mark the important stages of life such as birth, circumcision, marriage and death

Calendar rituals - related to to points on the calendar such as Muhammad's birth or Ramadan

Crisis rituals - precipitated by unforeseen events (sickness, accidents, curses, droughts, unexpected death) and are carried out in order to ameliorate problems, restore health, harmony and/or balance in life

Animist Rituals

Scriptures for Animists / Folk Muslims

John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

Romans 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Ephesians 1:20-22 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Hebrews 2:14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

1 Peter 3:20-21 through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.