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History

GENESIS OF TEMPLES - A STUDY

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Dr. M. JOTHI

Lecturer Department of History Government college for women Pudukottai, Tamil Nadu

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to highlight the origin of temples. Hypaethral form of temple often called a temenos, is generally dedicated to a nature deity, and thought to remote the fertility of soil, of animals and of men. This being a common idea in primitive religious thought, the geographical and chronological spread of open air temple is very wide. Their architectural form is very vague and insignificant. A wall or hedge fenced in the holy place; an altar was built for the offerings, and a grove of holy trees of a spring was the seat of the deity. During the Bronze Age in Crete and Greece this form of temple was a common feature to judge from the many representations of related cult senses found on ring stones and seals. The best known examples are in Cyprus, Idalium (4th - 3rd century. B.C) Tamassus (6th - 5th century B.C) and Aija Irini (10th - 7th century B.C). The druid temples in Gaul and Great Britain were of same time. The nomadic sages testified to their existence in the Scandinavian countries in the pre-Christian times. Mount peaks and hill tops were chosen for hypaethral temples. They are found in Greece and in Asia Minor. The Hittite temples of yazilikaya, with a famous rock relief's and Qareh, Dagh serve as early examples ; while Phrygian sites like Midas City, south of modern Eskisehir, belong to a later period and Nimrud Dagh in eastern Antolia. Such temple seem to have been dedicated mostly to rain producing weather Gods or Astral deities, divine incarnation of the celestial bodies.

Introduction :

Among savages and primitive minds most of rites of worships are carried in the open – air, because there are no images of divinities. Sacrifices are, simply laid on sacred stones, cast in the water, offered into the fire, to offer to hang upon trees. Worship in the open air takes place in the lowest tribes of Vedas, Australians, Mindas and Dravidian tribes, Melanesians, Sakai and Jakun as well as in higher level tribes of some American Indians, lappa Buriats etc., This is often the result of a nomadic life. Nomads carry sacred images with them and have a tent for these or for other sacred things. Such open places for worship tend to become sacred and to be preserved for cult purposes and there images are set up. Examples of this are found among the Jakun, Saki Mundas Fort, and Indians of California.

McDougall defines, that a sacred tree or a stone stanel in open place is necessary for worship. These types of sacred places are associated with the traditional appearances of spirits, Gods, or ancestors, and must therefore be holy for altar. The more fact that a religious gathering takes place in a certain spot once is enough to give it sanctity. Such sacred places will usually be marked by images or symbols and boundary stones form an enclosure. The grove is a primitive holy place, which may have a necessary small structure for the image. It later becomes a more elaborate temple. This worship in groves, which might become the seat of a temple, is also found among the lower races.

THE VILLAGE SHRINE

Under a sacred tree or grove stands a heap of stones or a mound; this may be replaced by a mud platform or a mud hut with a thatched roof ; or by a small building of masonry with a doomed roof and platform. These form an abode for the deity and are thus a primitive kind of temple, open – air worship is found among the Chinese also for example, in the cult of the Altar of Heaven, which dates back to early times when the Genuisloci was worshipped at an altar under a tree. Open – air worship is also found in the primitive cult of the Indo- European races.

The sacred stone, the sacred tree or grove and the sacred spring were places of cult and usually possessed an altar. In early Indian worship, there were no temples or indeed permanent sacred places for cult probably a result of their nomadic conditions. After the people had become settled and to some extent this is the case even now when temples have existed for centuries. In Rome there were holy places but no temples,. In ancient Persian religion there were neither images nor temples. The Latin names used to identify holy places are "casula" and " templum". The word fanum defines the mere hut in which the sacred images are installed. The casula and templum represents the more elaborate buildings, whether of wood or stone. The early Semitic sanctuary was a

sacred place associated with a theophany or with the continued presence of a spirit or a divinity. This might be at a true, a stone or hill or a cave.

SHRINES AND GRAVES

The grave as a sacred place may be another point of departure for the temple, when it is associated with a structure – though it be no more than an enclosing wooden fence with shrubs as among the Tamil of New Guilnea, where a cult is carried on. Sometimes an altar is placed over a grave as with the Mayans and possibly the Nicaragua's and by the Chinese for the half-yearly sacrifice to the spirits of the dead. Sometimes a series of memorial stones were erected. Over a grave like the menhires and dolmen like structures of the Khasis, the stone circles with a rectangular niche in their circumference found in Algeria, the rectangular elliptical or circular groups of stones found in Syria and the stone circles in Britain, varying in size and elaboration up to the stone hinge.

The circular fence regarded without evidence as "Druidical Temples" were probably connected with a cult of the dead in the pre celtic so were a kind of temples like the Fijian nanga presently to be referred. Some have regarded such a circle as that of stone henge as a temple dedicated to the sun or other heavenly bodies. Large number of tombs can be seen throughout the world and they have been used for worship either at the time of burial or at stated intervals thereafter.

To this extent they form temples and installed a conventional image of the dead, on like the human figured roughly sculptured, "The structures constructed in the grave may be no more than large huts, of logs and thatch, like those built over the graves of Kings and Chiefs among the Benyoro and Bangada but these are regarded as temples, with priests and attendants, where the spirits of the dead are consulted". In Fiji Islands, certain temples are associated with graves. The cults of Kalouyalo or ancestor gods were seen.

In Egypt the huts of grass were built over the graves of Chiefs in prehistoric period, initially they were in mud houses and these again turned to structure of stones. Later they introduced chambers for statue of the deceased and a tablet for offerings.

CAVES AS TEMPLES

Caves served as shrines in India especially the Ajantha and Ellora. The shape and enclosed space may have suggested the structural temples. Cave dwellers used part of the cave as the shrine for an image. it might easily be regarded as the dwelling of the good, when men no longer used it for a dwelling. It might become a temple or be associated with temple built above it. Caves used for burial purpose acquire a sacred character and they are used for

commemorative rites. Some canonite "high places" are associated with caves. The abodes of the living or burial places used for oracular purposes are regarded as sanctuaries of a 'God'.

Rock temples are known in early Egypt and in Arabia but they are most elaborate in India and Ceylon, where they are both hewn out of solid and sculptured in caverns. Some originated in Buddhist times and many still exist are examples of striking architectural skill of Elephanta and Ellora. Their prototypes are caves used as shrines and for the cult for Hindu Gods in North India. Among the Caribs, two caves were the places where sun and moon emerged and fertilized the earth. A staunch belief prevailed among the people of Peru and America that men first came out of caves from their subterranean home is also a reason for caves becoming associated with worship. Caves may also be the safety lockers of sacred objects or of images of Gods, and thus serve a purpose to which temples are also put.

HOUSES AS TEMPLES

Some religions do not have separate temples. The men's house, council house, village house are the 'Kiva' to some extent serves the purpose of a temple among its many other uses, and corresponds to the prytaneum of the Greeks and the Curia of the Romans. Religious dances or sacred dramatic plays are held in the village house or assembly home among the Alents, of California Tribes. Almost these are circular dome – shaped structure or a mere brushwood enclosure. Among many American Indian tribes, especially in the South West, religious rites, are associated with a 'Sacred House' as with the Hupa. This does not differ in construction from other houses in the village. Here sacred dances take place, and traditions are connected with it.

With the Pueblo Tribes, the Kivas serve at once as sacred council house, medicine lodge, and temples of the members of a mystery society. At one end of the kiva over an altar the symbolic object of the society is placed, and before it, is a dry sand painting, representing Gods and forces of nature. Corresponding to these are the sacred lodges and club houses of Malaysia and Papua, which are generally the nearest approach to temples in those regions,. Examples are found in the sacred houses of Solomon Islands.

Most Buddhist houses have their shelf with an image of Gautama, Shintoist's treasure objects of private cult were kept in a house altar. In ancient Egypt, each house had its domestic shrine, usually in a recess or a cup-board with figure of a house-hold God. In certain region, the temple seems to have arisen out of the private sanctuary of the king.

In many savage religions, actual temples are unknown. But "many approaches to temples exist". "Yet even savages are not devoid of temples of a primitive kind, for it, was natural to suppose that, as the worshipper had a house, the God or the spirit should have one, either as the permanent shelter, or his image or as the place whether he might resort and be approached by men in worship. The most primitive temple found in Africa, both negro and Banti frequently 'the place of praying is a mere clearing under the tree in the village courtyard, thus confirming to what was found in early Indo – European worship, sometimes an achial hut is provided for a God, not differing much from the ordinary hut".

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