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Lithuanian Pantheon

Summary

All previous researches into ancient Lithuanian pantheon meant by it some more or less exact number of gods to be identified, their functions established, and their names explained. And never was the very concept of pantheon inquired about. However, it is very instructive. The word *pantheon* derives from the Greek *πάνθειον* (*ἱερόν*), namely '(temple) of all gods', as the famous Pantheon at Rome. Compound adjective n. *πάνθειον*, m. *πάνθειος* refers to the collocation *πάντες θεοί* 'all gods' not rare in the Greek writings beginning with Homer. This collocation appears to be a term denoting a definite mythological and religious concept known also in other Indo-European and not only Indo-European lores. One of its most distinct feature is that the All gods can denote not only 'all gods' but, quite paradoxically, also some limited group of gods, even of secondary importance, among other groups. Especially well the concept of

All gods is attested in the Vedic and Hindu tradition as *viśve devāḥ* and compound *viśvadevāḥ* 'all gods'. As it were, it has its counterpart in Lithuanian *visi dievai* 'all gods', attested in Old Russian, German and Polish historical sources beginning from the 13th century and, as compound, in the toponyme *Visdievai* (the village near Obeliai in Rokiškis district). Moreover, the local oral tradition until recently relates about the temple consecrated to all gods by the village from which it has got its name. Some historical sources also report of such a temple in the pre-Christian Vilnius, capital of Lithuania. Anyhow, the term *visi dievai* or compound *visdievai* 'all gods', in connection with the temple *Visdievy* 'Of all gods', would be the real Lithuanian 'pantheon' – not the arbitrary list of names baselessly and unsuccessfully wanted by students of Lithuanian mythology for the last several centuries.

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