

CERAM PANTHEON

The native people of Ceram worshipped a whole range of gods, spirits, and divine creatures. Their belief system is also known as animism, which means that spirits are present in animals, plants, rocks, but also in artifacts made by people. Spirits were such a common part of life that they could be seen and encountered by people. There is no heaven or underworld in the native religion of Ceram. Instead, people shared their earthly surroundings with gods, spirits and the dead. That is why spirits could be present at a ritual, be seen in the forest, or appear in a dream.

AMETA was the god who 'fathered' Hainuwele, the Ceram fertility goddess, by planting the coconut tree from which she grew.

BULANE was the moon goddess who regulated the lunar cycles as well as the menstruation of women.

BUTULALE were goblin spirits, responsible for most diseases. They lived in three different places: on earth, in the sky, and underground. These spirits could almost never be spotted with the naked eye because they were very tiny and moved with the speed of the wind.

HALITA were evil spirits and a plague to humankind. They were feared and hated by the Ceram. The Halite were always out to harass people; they were very unpredictable and harmful. Among other mean tricks, they were known to kidnap children and eat them.

IOLA were the guardian spirits of social traditions and rules. They could be evil when people ignored their presence and their rules. The Iola were invisible but had human personalities.

LANITE was the sky god, also known as Upu Lanite. He was worshipped by the Ceram as the main divinity as well as the guardian of the island of Ambon. His wife was Tapele, the earth goddess. Their union produced all life on earth.

LIA MATAI was the sun god and husband of Bulane, the moon goddess.

MULUA SATENE was the goddess of death who became invisible after people killed the fertility goddess Hainuwele. After they die people can see her again.

TAPELE was the earth goddess, wife of Lanite the sky god. Life on earth comes from the union of Lanite and Tapele.

WAITETE were pesky spirits that could temporarily take on human form. They would often become a husband or wife, and fool their spouse with trickery. They could make people sick but luckily they were also great cowards. As soon as their presence was recognized, one only had to show them weapons and they would flee.

WEDDU were spirits that looked and lived like people. They often took the shape of powerful and evil people. The Weddu would change into an owl and fly during the night.

