

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
**AFRICAN
RELIGION**

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A SAGE Reference Publication

See also Ceremonies; Rituals

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MUTWA, CREDO VUSAMAZULU

Credo Vusamazulu Mutwa is one of the most powerful and respected traditional healers in South Africa. In this role, he has provided harmony between the living and the dead and serves as a vital source to help people achieve their full potential in a divinely governed, harmonious universe.

The word for water in Ki-Zulu is *amanze*. It means the fluid of creation or the thing that causes something to be. In a real way, Credo Vusamazulu Mutwa is the water (*amanze*) of African sacred traditions. His life's work represents the "fluid of creation" or, more precisely, the fluid of the preservation and continuation of the sacred in African culture and traditions.

Early Years

Credo Vusamazulu Mutwa was born in the Natal area of South Africa on July 21, 1921. The name given to him at his infancy was Vusamazulu. It is a Zulu honorific, meaning "awakener of the Zulus." It was an appropriate name, in that he would take on a greater responsibility of reminding the Zulu people of their heritage and rightful place in the world. Vusamazulu's mother, Numabunu, was the daughter of the shaman warrior Ziko Shezi, who had survived the great battle of Ulundi, which ended the Zulu Wars. His grandfather Shezi was a *Sangoma* and custodian of Zulu relics.

At the insistence of his father, Vusamazulu received his early education in mission schools, where he was taught English, Western history, and civilization; he was also confirmed as a Christian. There was conflict between his parents, one Christian and the other Sangoma. This battle between Christianity and the calling of his life's path tugged at Vusamazulu's heart because he loved his family and did not want to be at the core of disputes between them. He simply wanted to be a teacher of children, which he considered to be a respectable and invigorating profession. After some time, his mother's family removed him from his father so that he could begin his training as a Sangoma.

A *Sangoma* must receive a call from the spirits. It is believed that Sangomas are called to heal by initiation through illness. At around 22 years of age, Vusamazulu experienced a time of sickness and disorientation. This strange malaise, characterized by dreams and visions, would often come over him. His grandfather told Vusamazulu that his illness was a sacred sign for him to become a Sangoma. At the urging of his mother and grandfather, Vusamazulu underwent purification ceremonies, renounced formal Christianity, and began his life as "the water (*amanze*) of African sacred traditions." He received his initiation as a Sangoma from his Aunt Myrna, a young Sangoma, and, in so doing, took his place among a strong family of Sangomas.

His Calling

Sangomas serve many different social, psychological, spiritual, and political functions. They direct rituals, find lost cattle, protect warriors, narrate the people's history, recite the ancient myths, and guard and preserve the Umlando: tribal history and traditions. Sangomas are keepers of traditional stories and explain philosophical and cosmological beliefs. In addition, they fight illness and social pollution while maintaining immediate and constant contact with the ancestors.

A Sangoma is a healer who performs holistic (spiritual and physical) as well as symbolic forms of healing that are embedded in a profound and deep understanding that the ancestors from the spirit realm give instructions, guidance, and

advice for healing illness and the elimination of social disharmony and spiritual degradation. Credo Vusamazulu Mutwa is *Sangoma* and *High Sanusi*. He is one of only two Sanusi left in Africa. Sanusis are the highest level of African healer. They are held in high regard and deep respect as the ones who know all the ancient secrets of protection and healing. They serve their communities in all aspects of life. The *Sanusi* is respected and revered as the "Uplifter," the one who causes things to ascend. The highest of the *Sanusi* is known as the *High Sanusi*.

As a Sangoma and High Sanusi, Vusamazulu holds the keys to accessing the mystic state of communion with the Ancestors and the Divine, his followers believe. In so doing, Vusamazulu is able to cause the harmonization of the vibrating spirits of human beings with the same frequency as that of the Divine in the service of igniting or tapping into the healing powers of the Universe. As a Divine healer, Credo Vusamazulu Mutwa works simultaneously as historian, physician, psychologist, author, social worker, herbalist, artist, counselor, and adviser.

His Impact

In accepting his higher calling, Vusamazulu has come to affect the lives of untold numbers of people, not only the Zulu people. Many throughout the world can attest that their lives have been changed and "awakened" because of contact with Vusamazulu. In his lifetime, he has influenced

many people on an individual level, as well as in matters of worldly concern.

Credo Vusamazulu Mutwa is the best-known and respected Sangoma in Southern Africa. He is the author of *Indaba My Children* (1966); *Africa Is My Witness* (1966); *My People: The Incredible Writings of Credo Vusa'mazulu Mutwa* (1969); *Zulu Shaman: Dreams, Prophecies, and Mysteries* (2nd ed., 2003); *Songs of the Stars* (1st ed., 2000); and *uNosilimela*. He is, indeed, the "Amanze" of African sacred traditions.

Vera DeMoultrie Nobles and Wade W. Nobles

See also Congo Jack

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