

ZULU PANTHEON

The creator of human beings in traditional Zulu mythology was Unkulunkulu, though in some stories it was Umvelinqangi who created the first man and woman. Especially important in traditional mythology were the ancestors who watched over the people today, as well as creatures that were part human and part lizard. Spirits were also thought to exist in animals, in the forest and in caves.

AMADLOZI were the Zulu ancestors. People can appeal to the spirit world by invoking these ancestors.

INKOSAZANA was a female spirit that makes the maize (corn) grow, the goddess of agriculture. She is worshipped in the spring.

INTULO was a lizard-like creature with human characteristics.

MAMLAMBO was the goddess of the rivers.

MBABA MWANA WARESA was the goddess of rainbows, rain, crops, and cultivation. She is also beloved because she gave the gift of beer.

TIKDOSHE is an evil dwarf. It resembles the Chiruwi and the Hai-uri (one arm, one leg, one side), and likes to fight humans. Losing against Tikdoshe can mean death for the humans, but victory can give a man great magical powers.

UHLAKANYANA was a mythical dwarf and trickster.

UMVELINQANGI was the sky god who descended from heaven and married Uthlanga. In some versions of the creation story, he created the reeds that Unkulunkulu came from. He shows himself to people as thunder and earthquakes.

UNKULUNKULU (sometimes spelled Nkulunkulu) was the creator of all things. He grew out of a reed and when he became too heavy he fell to earth. This word also means "ancestor" in the Zulu language.

UNWABA was a mythical chameleon. He was sent by the Sky God to tell the people and creatures of the earth that they had immortal life. Because he was too slow the people and creatures of earth did not become immortal after all. Chameleons turn from green to brown because they are sad that Unwaba was too slow.

UTHLANGA (sometimes spelled Uhlanga) was a large mythical marsh with reeds in the North, from which the creation came into existence.

