

COMOROS ISLANDS HISTORY AND ETHNIC RELATIONS (ІСТОРІЯ ТА ЕТНІЧНІ ВЗАЄМИНИ КОМОРСЬКИХ ОСТРОВІВ)

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The islands were colonized by Africans in the eighth century. The presence of Islam is recorded as early as the eleventh century. With the arrival of Muslim Arabs, chiefdoms evolved into sultanates in the fifteenth century. The ear of «battling sultans» saw the flourishing of commerce and the slave trade as well as numerous Madagascan raids. At the end of the nineteenth century, colonial occupation imposed unity and peace in the archipelago. That unity ended in 1975 with the removal of Maore (Mayotte), which remained French it was threatened again in 1997 by the secession of Ndzwani.

Comorians, whose ancient African origins can be seen in their matrilineal social organization, have been influenced culturally by Arabian Islam and the west. Islam is considered synonymous with civilization, but Comorians also have appropriated many aspects of French culture. The official languages – French, Arabic, and Comorian – reflect that culture diversity.

Family ties have made the islands a single cultural and social group. The secession of Ndzwani, which the majority of the population disavows, resulted from poor political, social and economic management rather than ethnic conflicts.

Comorians live in village and cities, some of which are fortified. Mosques, Palaces, public squares, stone and coral archways called the doors of peace, and tombs decorated with domes and pillars are examples of stone-built monuments. Sculpted wood and coral decorate niches, ceilings, and doors, featuring geometric or floral patterns and koranic calligraphy. Houses are made of dark basalt plastered with coral lime, cob (mud mixed with straw from rice plants), and braided coconut fronds. Cement is slowly replacing stone, while sheet metal replaces braided coconut fronds. A typical house has two rooms, one private and one for to receiving visitors, and sometimes a living room. The courtyard is used for domestic activities. Boys sleep in bachelor quarters.

Women dominate in house, indoor courtyards, and alleys. Men's territory includes mosques and public squares.