

COMORIAN CULTURE NAME AND COUNTRY-STUDY FACTS (ІСТОРІЯ ФОРМУВАННЯ НАЗВИ «КОМОРСЬКІ ОСТРОВИ» ТА КРАЇНОЗНАВЧІ ВІДОМОСТІ)

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Comorian residents call their country Masiwa, «the islands» or refer to the individual name of each island. Zisiwa za komor is a translation of the French words of the country, «Comoro» comes from the Arabic qumr, «the moon» or qamar «whiteness». Although Comorians practice Sunni Islam of the Chafeite rite, their social organization is matrilineal and residency is matrilineal. Social life is characterized by a widespread system of exchange, which, in turn, creates customary ceremonies and rituals (Aida, Shungu), particularly the Great Weddings (Ndola Nkuu, Arusi). Everyone participates as a member of a gender-specific association.

The federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros is a group of three volcanic islands totaling 719 square miles (1,862 square kilometers), lying between Africa and Madagascar.

The capital, Maroni, is on Ngazidja, which has an active volcano, no rivers, rocky coasts, and beaches. The climate is tropical and humid. Wildlife is rich in rare species, including Coelacanths, sea turtles, and lemurs.

The population of the three islands is estimated at 539,000 in 1999, a number that has doubled in twenty-five years. Forty-five percent of the population is under age fifteen, and only 6 percent over age sixty. Close to 20 percent of the population, essentially from Ngazidja, has migrated, mostly to France. Many farmers from the overpopulated island of Ndzواني have migrated to Mwali.

Comorian is Bantu language that looks like, but is not related to, Swahili; each island has its own way of speaking it. The language contains many words of Arabic and French origin. All Comorians receive a koranic education and learn to write their language in Arabic characters. Formal education is given in French.

The national emblem is a green flag (the color of Islam) with a crescent moon and four white stars that symbolize the four islands (including Mayotte). In 1996, the names of Allah and the Prophet Mohammed were added to the flag. The national anthem is Udzima WA Masiwa (island unity), and the motto is «Unity, Justice, and Progress».