

## 1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Mwali

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): wlc

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): -12.20, 40.50

1.4 Brief history: Until 1975, the Mwali people were under the control of the French. Mwali joined The Federal Republic of the Comoros. The people are extremely poor and illiterate.

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: There is work being done in Mwali by Christian missionaries. The Mwali are mostly an Islamic people.

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): Rocky coasts, beaches, tropical climate, humid

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: 38,000 people, about 25% of the population live in cities, 301 per sq km

## 2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Rice, potatoes, corn

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Fish, cattle and goats during certain festivals

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

2.4 Food storage: Ceramics

2.5 Sexual division of production: Males and females split agricultural work with men focusing on the money producing crops, and women focus on food producing work. Men will fish as well as women, however, women fish at low tide and use nets while men fish in boats.

2.6 Land tenure: Mostly passed down through the mother's side. When a woman marries, she is given land.

2.7 Ceramics: Ceramics are produced for food storage and decoration

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: Trade occurs quite often with France

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Men use canoes to fish

## 3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

## 4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Male is usually older than female

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: High. Most people have a second or third marriage

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Practiced, but only by a small portion

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Brides are presented with a house and land when married

4.9 Inheritance patterns: Matrilineal inheritance of land. Personal property can be given through declaration

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Children seen as a huge blessing and thus rarely scolded. Children trained for their later roles in life at early age

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: Seen as a sin

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): No pattern

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? Fathers are usually the husband but he will take care of a woman's children from previous marriage

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows"): Mother role is extremely respected as the giver of life

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? No

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: Rape is seen as sin, not common

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): Not related. Outside mother's family

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? No. Huge disgrace to be pregnant and not married. Some marital autonomy.

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: Not encouraged

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? Mother's family

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: ~1:1

4.22 Evidence for couvades: No

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): Be of good standing and be able to participate in a great wedding

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? All elders respected even if lower class. Care of kin is taken up by everyone.

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: Almost everything is matrilineal

4.26 Incest avoidance rules: Seen as sin. Harsh punishment.

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Yes

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?): Within. Great wedding can only take place within a community

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? No evidence of arranged marriages

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: No evidence, but most practice Islam, so desire for Islamic marriages

### **Warfare/homicide**

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: Unknown

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Civil wars. Mwali people have had to endure some political strife.

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): Trade. Good terms with outside and neighboring societies

4.18 Cannibalism? No evidence

### **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): None

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): President and representatives chosen by voting. However, most deal with their local leaders who are distinguished, successful men. Classes are present, with hierarchies within each.

5.4 Post marital residence: Close to bride's family

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Some villages are fortified with walls

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): Adults often work together while children are mostly kept apart. Teenage girls are watched closely to make sure no premarital pregnancy

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: Females form close bonds to stand up to men

5.8 Village and house organization: Men are in charge, however, women may have some say in village affairs. Men are discouraged from performing any house work, women are in charge of the home while men provide for the family

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): Mosques and public squares. Unmarried men sleep in bachelor quarters

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Off the ground

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: Three classes which include the rich, the farmers, and the fishermen.

5.12 Trade: Vanilla, cloves, and other materials. The Mwali are part of what is called the "Perfume Islands"

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Yes, but vary from village to village

### **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

6.0 Time allocation to RCR: Moderate

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Some Islamic "shamans" who have mystical experiences

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Boys are circumcised at age four and it a ritual.

6.4 Other rituals: Great wedding

6.5 Myths (Creation): The creation as taught through the Quran

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Music is very popular. All participate in music regularly.

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Men monopolize religious affairs.

6.8 Missionary effect: Christians are trying to gain a stronger following, but persecuted

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Those of the Islamic tradition

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? No

6.12 Is there teknonymy? Unknown

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): Connection with nature, but most are practicing Muslims

### **7. Adornment**

7.1 Body paint: Seen in the great wedding

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Women cover their hair

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Women cover their hair, men do not

7.8 Missionary effect: None

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

### **8. Kinship systems**

8.1 Sibling classification system: brother/sister

8.2 Sororate, levirate: No evidence of practice

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): Children sometimes referred to as “Mom” and “Dad” at early age, but mostly practice Omaha.

**9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):**

**Numbered references**

1. [http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/the\\_Comoros.aspx](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/the_Comoros.aspx)
2. [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=wlc](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=wlc)
3. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Comoros.html>
4. <http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=19402&rog3=CN>
5. <http://www.mapsofworld.com/comoros/society-and-culture/>