

Chronology of Events - The History of Comoros

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Abstract

IXth century. Archaeology attests to an ancient human occupation of the Comoros. It is likely that the first inhabitants of the Comoros were originally from East Africa. And that "Proto-Malagasy", on their way to Madagascar, stayed in the archipelago. In any case, a certain number of Comorian cultural traits (the use of the outrigger canoe, certain tropical crops, such as banana, mango, sugar cane, etc.) have their origin in Southeast Asia.

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10th century. According to tradition, Mohamed ben Othman introduced circumcision and Islam.

12th century. Arab geographers (such as Edrisi) mention a "Qumr region" and a "Qumr canal" near the sources of the Nile. It can be assumed that these terms referred to the Mozambique Channel area. They eventually came to be applied specifically to the Comoros archipelago.

The Comoros is undoubtedly one of the stages of the Arab trade of the eastern coast of Africa (gold, ivory, feathers, slaves). An echo of this can be found in the tales of "Sindbad the sailor". Like Zanzibar, the Comoros seem to have become dependent on Kilwa (on the African coast, south of Dar-es-Salaam), where princes from Shiraz reigned.

16th century. Portuguese women settled in Grande Comore in the early years of the century.

1506. Arrival of a fleet, led by "Chirazians" (who may simply have come from Kilwa), under the authority of Mohamed ben Haïssa.

Henceforth, manuscripts, noting - in Arabic characters - Arabic, Comorian or

Swahili, make it possible to reconstitute the genealogies of the clans and the sultanates, which are particularly complex.

The Chirazian aristocracy, which intended to control power, was reinforced by the arrival of other princes from Zanzibar, Yemen, Oman and Muscat. Conflicts between these new arrivals and the old populations will be long-lasting, to the point of earning the Comoros the nickname of "archipelago with fighting sultans".

Moreover, Malagasy (Sakalava), led by Diva Mame, came to settle in Mayotte.

Late 16th-17th centuries. Comorian sailors traded in the Indian Ocean, between Africa and Madagascar, and as far as the Red Sea.

XVIIIth century. In the second half of the century, Malagasy fleets (composed mainly of Betsimisaraka and numbering up to 18,000 men) came to ravage the Comorian coast. Domoni (in Anjouan) was destroyed in 1780; Iconi (in Grande Comore) was taken in 1805, after legendary battles that lasted several days.

These raids, which were very damaging, prompted the sultans to seek the protection of the European powers. 1803. Le Premier Consul Napoléon Bonaparte fait déporter à Mutsamudu (Anjouan) le général Rossignol et ses compagnons accusés d'avoir préparé un attentat.

1816. Le sultan Abdallah Ier, qui a construit la forteresse de Mutsamudu (Anjouan), pour se défendre contre les incursions malgaches, se rend à Bourbon pour solliciter la protection de Louis XVIII. 1828. Ramanateka, un Hova, vient, après la mort de Radama Ier se réfugier à Anjouan, avec une centaine de compagnons. Le sultan lui permet de s'installer à Moheli. Ramanateka, y prend le pouvoir et, converti à l'Islam, en devient le sultan, sous le nom d'Abderahmane.

1841. A treaty signed by Andriantsuli, a Malagasy prince who had taken refuge in the Comoros and who had been recognized by the Sultan of Anjouan as governor of Mayotte, ceded the island to France. In 1843, in the name of Louis Philippe, Commander Passot took possession of Mayotte. Slavery was abolished in 1846, but the working conditions imposed by the Creole planters caused an insurrection to break out in 1856. The various French commanders of Mayotte did not cease to intervene in the affairs of the neighboring islands and to prepare their annexation, in order to remove the archipelago from English or German colonial lusts.

In **1848**, an English consul settled on the island of Anjouan and tried to establish British influence. However, when Great Britain tried to obtain the abolition of slavery in the island in 1882, the Sultan turned to France, whose intervention he requested.

1865. The traitor Lambert, coming from Madagascar, where he had been made "Duke of Imerina" by King Radama II, obtained from the Queen of Moheli an exorbitant concession "to develop the island". Supported by the French Navy, he stayed there until his death in 1878. The island then experienced a period of anarchy, fanned by the competing maneuvers of France and England.

1883 Léon Humblot, sent by the Natural History Museum of Paris to study the flora and fauna of the islands of the Indian Ocean, substituted himself for the French State to sign a contract with the Sultan of Bambao, Saïd Ali, in Grande Comore, which granted him land and workers at his convenience, in return for a royalty of 10% of the profits. This was the beginning of a systematic takeover of the island, which until then had been torn apart by the countless rivalries of small local sultans (Bambao, Itsandra, Badjini, etc.).

1886. The French government imposed protectorate treaties on Anjouan, Moheli and Grande Comore, recognizing its right to control Comorian affairs.

1889. Humblot was appointed "resident" in Grande Comore. He set up a colonial company, which gradually branched out into all the islands of the archipelago and constituted a network of farms (coconut trees, perfume plants) and vertically integrated enterprises (agricultural production, processing factories, wholesale and retail companies, various services) which controlled all Comorian economic activity: the Humblot system, favored by the smallness of the territory and the complicit passivity of the administration, perfectly realized the caricature of colonization.

1892 The Kabars (local governments) were abolished and the annexation of Anjouan, Moheli and Grande Comore became a reality, legally ratified in 1904.

1908. Mayotte and its dependencies (i.e. the three other islands) are attached by decree to the colony of Madagascar.

1912 The law of July 25 confirms this annexation. The Comorian colony was thus successively (and more or less theoretically) attached to Reunion Island (in 1816), to Nosy Be (between 1843 and 1877), to Reunion Island again (in 1896), to become from then on a dependency of Madagascar. As Tananarive is far away and budgets are reduced, the Comoros will henceforth subsist, accumulating economic and social delays.

1914. death of Léon Humblot.

Other large companies are formed. The Société Coloniale Bambao (which began by taking over the lands of the Sultan of Anjouan) even bought out Humblot in 1938. It is these companies that shape the evolution of the Comoros. As they monopolized most of the land, the slow increase in population began to pose the problem of access to agricultural land. Moreover, as these companies favored speculative export crops, the islands

did not produce enough to feed their population.

During the colonial period, the Comoros supplied soldiers and sailors to France, exported civil servants and imams to Zanzibar, but under this colonial system, the old society persisted, with its complex hierarchies, its particular law, and its maintained religious observances. Traditional notables, religious leaders, administrative officials, and company employees lived side by side, ignoring each other or supporting each other in secret connivances.

1946. After having been occupied (in 1943) by the British, who wished to remove them from the authority of the "Vichy" Governor of Madagascar, the Comoros were legally reintegrated into the French Union, with the status of "French overseas territory", which established their separation from Madagascar. From then on, they benefited from an evolving status, including a General Council, gradually endowed with deliberative powers on non-political matters. A cautious agrarian reform was undertaken in the early 1950s.

1956. The "Defferre" framework law introduced greater autonomy by unifying the electoral college and organizing a Council of Government. The latter is installed in Dzaoudzi (Mayotte), the traditional place of residence of the supervisory authority, but the Assembly sits in Moroni (Grande Comore).

1958. The Comorians voted in a referendum on 28 September to keep the archipelago within the French Republic.

1961. The law of 22 December organizes the internal autonomy of the Comoros, whose National Assembly now has jurisdiction over all matters except foreign affairs, defense and justice.

Local political life was initially divided between two vague groupings: the "Whites", which brought together large businessmen and their clients around Saïd Ibrahim, and the "Greens", which were mainly civil servants, around the strong personality of Saïd Mohamed Cheikh, who was a deputy in the National Assembly in Paris from 1946 to 1961, and later President of the Government Council. These two groups agreed to share political responsibilities. But island rivalries interfered with this political system. In 1957, the notables of Mayotte founded the Mouvement mahorais, whose audience was multiplied when, in 1966, the government of Saïd Mohamed Cheikh decided to transfer the capital of the territory to Moroni.

1963. A Movement for the Liberation of the Comoros, based in Dar-es-Salaam, launches the call for independence for the archipelago. The demand was taken up by various political movements. The repression of a strike of high school students in Moroni in 1968 strengthened the protest.

1971. Saïd Ali, who succeeded Saïd Mohamed Cheikh as President of the Council of Government, tried to reconcile with the Mahorais, but the political situation deteriorated.

1973. Ahmed Abdallah is elected president of the Council of Government with the mandate to obtain the independence of the archipelago.

1974. The agreement of November 14, 1974 provides for the organization of a referendum, which takes place on December 22 and has a high voter turnout. 95% of voters voted for independence ..., except in Mayotte where 65% of them prefer to remain in the French Republic. The situation is delicate, and the French authorities temporize.

1975. On July 6, President Ahmed Abdallah unilaterally proclaims independence, which leads to the de facto secession of Mayotte.

August 3. A coup d'état brought Ali Soilih, an opposition leader, an agronomist by training, with openly socialist and secular convictions, to power. The revolutionary regime he set up was non-aligned in foreign policy and radical at home: dissolution of the administration and the civil service, replaced by a decentralized system; struggle against paralyzing traditions, such as the ostentatious custom of the "Grand Mariage" or the wearing of veils by women... The new power quickly turned into an inconsistent and brutal dictatorship. The 1977 referendum underlined the loss of prestige of Ali Soilih.

1978 (May 12-13). Mercenaries under the command of Bob Denard secretly landed, arrested Ali Soilih, and shot him during an attempted escape. A junta recalled the deposed former president, Ahmed Abdallah.

Ahmed Abdallah, who had built his personal fortune on the rice trade, the essential food of the Comoros, and controlled the import monopoly, remained the man who was obliged to Bob Denard and his mercenaries. He established important commercial relations with South Africa in the hope of finding solid support there, and imposed an authoritarian and paternalistic regime on the country, which gave rise to a muted protest.

1979. The law of 22 December extended the special status of territorial collectivity defined for Mayotte in 1976.

1989 (November 26). President Ahmed Abdallah was assassinated inside the presidential palace. All indications are that Bob Denard and his mercenaries were directly involved in this murder.

March 11, **1990:** Said Mohamed Djohar was elected President of the Republic. He became the third Head of State of the Comoros.

September **1995:** Coup d'état by mercenaries. Djohar was deported to Reunion Island.

October **1995:** Djohar regained the presidential chair.

March **1996:** Mohamed Taki Abdoukarim was elected President of the Republic with more than 64% of the votes cast.

July **1997:** Anjouan and Moheli waved the secessionist flag. The two islands wanted to break away from the Republic, accusing Grande Comore of having monopolized the entire state apparatus.

November **1998**: Death of President Taki in circumstances that remain obscure to this day. He had just returned from an official trip to Turkey. Tadjidine Ben said Massonde, president of the High Constitutional Court, took over as interim president and appointed Abbas Djoussouf, an opposition figure, as Prime Minister.

April 23, **1999**: Antananarivo Agreements under the initiative of the OAU (Organization of African Unity), the Anjouanese delegation did not sign the document and asked for time to consult its population.

April 30, **1999**: Colonel Azali Assoumani, chief of staff of the army, took power. He later suspended the constitution.

May 6, **1999**: A Constitutional Charter will be drawn up and will serve as the fundamental law of the Republic. The islands will be placed under the authority of a governor.

February 17, **2001**: The Fomboni Reconciliation Agreement was signed in the presence of the international community.

December 19, **2001**: Mercenaries, posing as FBI agents, landed on the island of Moheli with the dark intention of destabilizing the power of Colonel Azali Assoumani. Some of them were shot by the National Development Army (AND).

December 23, **2001**: Constitutional referendum of the Union of the Comoros, putting an end to the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros and establishing the Union of the Comoros.

January 21, **2002**: Colonel Azali Assoumani resigned in order to run in the presidential election as stipulated in the constitution. Prime Minister Hamada Madi Bolero will lead the transition.

7 April **2002**: Election of the presidents of the autonomous islands of Anjouan and Moheli, Mohamed Bacar and Mohamed Said Fazul respectively.

April 14, **2002**: Azali Assoumani was elected the first President of the Union of the Comoros

19 May **2002**: Mzé Soulé Elbak was elected President of the island of Ngazidja (Grande Comore).

May 26, **2006**: Ahmed Abdallah Sambie was elected President of the Union of the Comoros

March **2008**: Joint military operation with the African Union to remove Mohammed Bacar, who had refused to leave the presidency of the island of Anjouan for nearly two years

May 17, **2009**: Referendum on constitutional reform to simplify the country's political structure. The presidents of the islands become governors.

2010: Ikililou Dhoinine, a native of Moheli, was elected president. He succeeds President Sambie, a native of Anjouan. In 2016, it is expected that a Great Comorian will become president.

2011: Mayotte becomes the 101st French department by referendum

(consultation of the Mahorais on March 31, 2011).

Movement between the Comoros and Mayotte, subject to French controls, has become more complicated. The Balladur visa is still in force, residence permits are very difficult to obtain.

April 19, **2013**: attempted coup against President Dhoinine.

June **2013**: signing of the "Paris Declaration", between the presidents of the French Republic and the Comoros, on friendship and cooperation between France and the Comoros.

Despite the historical tensions between the two countries, they pledge to "rebuild bilateral relations, create conditions for a more harmonious development and put an end to drownings at sea, especially between the islands of Anjouan and Mayotte."

October 29, **2014**: "dead island" day on Grande Comore to denounce the persistent shortage of water and electricity, at the call of several civil society associations and employers.

2015 February: the elected authorities of the autonomous islands and the federal government began a dialogue that fostered a calm and peaceful political climate for the holding of legislative, municipal and island council elections.

March 7: The Constitutional Court announced that President Ikililou Dhoinine's party had won the February legislative elections by a narrow margin over the populist party of former head of state Ahmed Abdallah Sambi.

2016

April 10: Presidential election

April 15: The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared Azali Assoumani the winner of the presidential election with 40.98% of the vote.

April 30: The Constitutional Court ordered the re-run of the presidential election in 13 polling stations due to "irregularities" found in the April 10 vote.

May 15: The Constitutional Court declared Azali Assoumani president of the Union of the Comoros. Investiture on May 26.

September 12, **2017**: held the 5th High Joint Council co-chaired by Mr. Le Drian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of France and his counterpart Mr. Mohamed Souef. The French authorities announced their willingness, while exercising normal controls, to make visas between the Comoros and Mayotte free of charge.

Feb 13, **2018** - The closing ceremony of the national assembly organized by the current president and contested by the opposition, which suspects a change in the constitution in order to stop the rotation and to stay in power.

May 19, 2020 - In **2018**, former Comoros president Ahmad Abdallah Sambi, a native of the island of Anjouen, was indicted on corruption charges.

Oct 27, **2018** - Some of the armed civilians (why?) who had entrenched themselves in the medina of Mutsamudu in Anjouan are now on the island of Mayotte and the island's governor ABDOU SALAMI is put in jail.

July 30, **2018**

A constitutional referendum is held in the Comoros, boycotted by the opposition, it is approved by 92.74%

March 25, **2019** - Confusion is high in the Comoros, where the opposition chose to denounce the "widespread fraud" that seems to have characterized the election

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