end of the 18th century onwards when power shifted from the clan (babila) of Âl Madwa to the clan of Âl Masila (both names show their Hadramawt origin, cf. B. G. Martin, Migrations from the Hadramaوت to East Africa, in Centre of Arabic Documentation, Research Bulletin, Ibadan 1973). Continuous succession struggles in the first half of the 19th century were only ended by Sultan Sâlim (1842-55), whose son Sultan ʿAbd Allâh III (1855-1890) put his island under French protection. Neither was Mayotte spared from the dynastic rivalries within the Shïrâzi clan who ruled at Chingoni from the 16th century. In addition, the situation was complicated by the constant attempts of the sultans of Anjouan to bring Mayotte under their control. The last Shïrâzi sultan ceded his island in 1832 to the Malagasy nobleman of the Hova tribe Ramanetakaya who already ruled on Mohéli. In 1835 or 1836 Ramanetakaya was deposed by the Sakalava Día-Ntsolo (= Andrian-Tsouli), and the island became nominally a possession of the sultan of Anjouan. The same Día-Ntsolo, without the authorisation of the sultan of Anjouan, in 1841 presented the island to France. The smallest island Mohéli apparently was always dependent on Anjouan, until in 1830 the above-mentioned Ramanetakaya (d. 1841) after having become a Muslim, appointed himself sultan of the island. One of his descendants signed the treaty of protection with France in 1886.

(ii) There seems to have been a more or less peaceful influx of Malagasy people to the islands throughout the centuries, but around the turn of the 19th century the nearly annual invasions of the Betsimisaraka and Sakalava threatened the political and cultural integrity of the islands. The main reason for these invasions, which caused heavy losses among the population and the destruction of whole settlements, was the search for slaves, although some groups had already been summoned by the quarrelling sultans. In 1870, only the Anglo-Malagasy treaty of 1877 did the invasions gradually stop. In the following decade it was the political situation on Madagascar and the extension of the Hova state that drove large groups of Sakalava (under Día-Ntsolo) and Betsimisaraka (under Ramanetakaya) to the islands. They finally settled down on Mayotte and Mohéli.

(iii) The first contact with a European power was a short visit of the Portuguese on Grande Comore about 1505 which, however, left no permanent traces on the islands. In the first half of the 19th century when the British and the French disputed control of the Indian Ocean, the Comoro Is. also became involved. In taking possession of Mayotte in 1841, France tried to counterbalance the growing British influence on the other three islands (in 1833 the British had re-installed Sultan ʿAbd Allâh II on Anjouan by force). Only after the British slowly withdrew from the Malagasy region after 1880 could France bring the other islands under its protection in 1886 (a process intensively studied by B. Dubins, Political history).

From 1914 till 1946 the whole archipelago was placed under the Gouvernement General of Madagascar. On 6 July 1975 the Comoro Is. declared their independence, except for Mayotte, where on 11 April 1976 a referendum saw a large majority voting to become a département outre-mer of France.