

“Maore Farantsa”:

The Self-Determination of Mayotte  
to Become a Département of France

Robert William Crabtree

Department of Politics and International Studies

School of Social Sciences

University of Adelaide

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## ABSTRACT

The small Indian Ocean island of Mayotte, a French colony since 1843, rejected independence as part of a four-island Comores in 1975. Instead, the island's people insisted upon a desire first voiced in 1958 to become a *département* of France, thus integrating into the erstwhile colonial power. This was considered by many, including the United Nations General Assembly, to be contrary to international law.

This thesis examines the causes, the circumstances and the relevant law, both international and French, and argues that the *départementalisation* of Mayotte was not, in all likelihood, illegal by the law of the time, and is now, correctly, not seen in these terms. The thesis argues that while previous discussion has centred upon the relations of France and the Republic (now Union) of Comores, an examination with Mayotte at its centre and with self-determination and small island theory as prime themes, will give a more nuanced view of the complex relationships and their standing in law.

The thesis emphasises the significance of the *Affaire Mayotte* to scholars and analysts of the Anglophone world, where it is largely unknown.

## **THESIS DECLARATION**

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Maore farantsa!** At first sight this title may seem obscure. (This may be the first thesis at this university with a title in Shimaore). Say it out loud and the meaning will become clear: “Mayotte the French!”, the slogan of the movement (and particularly of the women) in favour of a *départemental* status for Mayotte.

This thesis grew out of an abiding interest in self-determination — put simply, the attempts of populations to define their own circumstances, usually but not always in the form of independence. My MA thesis was on Abkhazia and its attempts to define itself as separate from Georgia without being overwhelmed by Russia.

This thesis, as originally proposed, was to be a comparison of four case-studies: Abkhazia, Mayotte, Somaliland and South Sudan. Each has practised self-determination in its own way. The Somalilanders have made a relatively successful simulacrum of a state, but have failed to gain recognition for themselves or for this feat. The South Sudanese have achieved independence and recognition, but lack of unity is threatening their dream. The Abkhazians run the risk of being overwhelmed by the support they have received from Russia. They have achieved de facto separation from Georgia and some (minimal) recognition, but remain embroiled in what is really the aftermath of the Cold War, with many false assumptions being made about them. The Mahorais have achieved the status they aspired to for fifty years, but many problems remain to be resolved. Of the four populations, the Mahorais are the one that never included independence in their aspirations.

As is so often the case with such projects, the material became overwhelming. It has been difficult enough to provide a meaningful discussion of the one small island of Mayotte within a reasonable (and expected) number of words.

I have thoroughly enjoyed this study and am appreciative of the valuable contributions made by so many. First and foremost, I want to thank my principal supervisor, Professor Lisa Hill for her support, innumerable insights, forensic feedback on drafts and technical knowledge concerning thesis-writing (a topic on which I knew little). I would also like to thank my second supervisor, Dr Czes Tubilewicz for his interest, support and valuable criticism, even when I strayed from his more rigorous theoretical path. Thanks also to Associate Professor Felix Patrikeeff, who supervised my Abkhazian efforts and maintained a very real and encouraging interest in this subsequent writing. I have special thanks for David Olney for our weekly discussions over coffee. I have become as informed and enthused by his study of Camus and Existentialism as he has by mine of small Indian Ocean islands. I have really appreciated these regular discussions leading from one week to the next as a way of maintaining impetus and building a friendship. Thanks also to Colin Leaker, Rhoderick Miller, Dr Stephen Jenkins, Martin and Judy Bailey, and Dr Kim Sorensen for valuable discussion. I owe a huge debt and very special thanks to Kim for detailed proofreading, formatting and editing.

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Robert Crabtree

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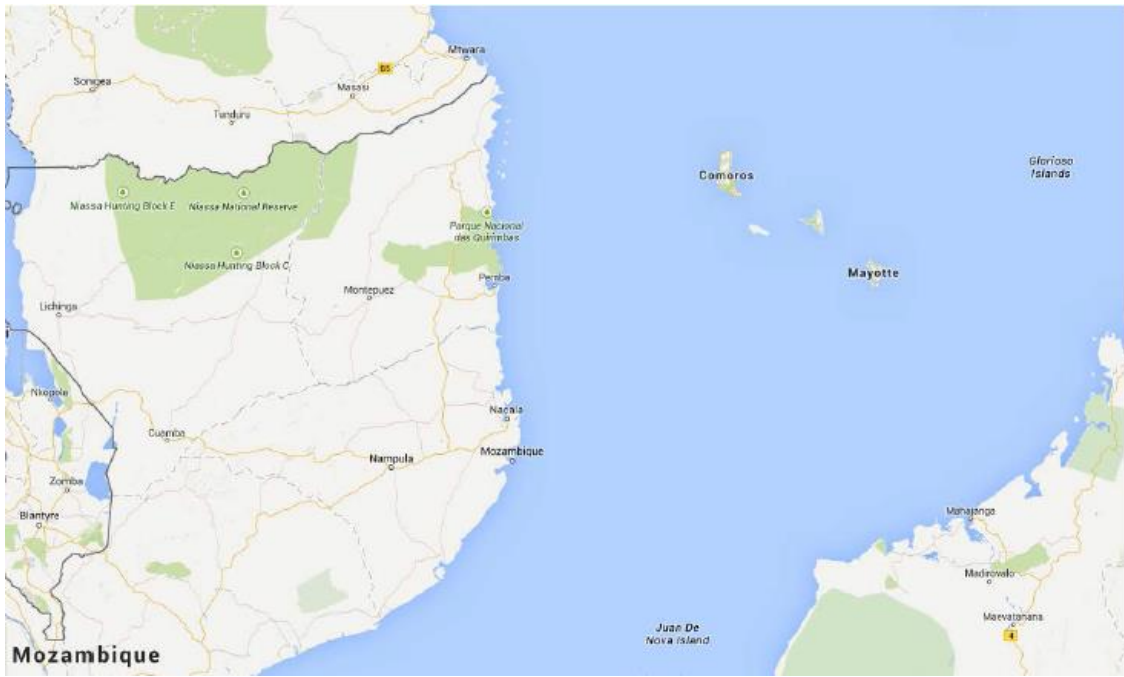
## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AJIL	American Journal of International Law
AMF	Association pour Mayotte française
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
AU	African Union
BVI	British Virgin Islands
CAF	Confédération Africain de Football
CFA	Colonies/Communauté Français d’Afrique (franc: currency)
CGS	Contribution Sociale Généralisée (social security portion of income tax)
CHM	Centre Hospitalier de Mayotte
CJUE	Court of Justice of the European Union
CMU	Couverture complémentaire médical universel
COM	Collectivité d’Outre-mer
CPI	Committee on Public Information (USA)
CRDS	Contribution pour la Remboursement de la Dette Sociale (France: tax)
CREC	Commission de Révision de l’Etat Civil (Mayotte)
DEGEOM	Délégation Générale à l’Outre-mer
DOM	Département d’Outre-mer
DROM	Département Régionale d’Outre-mer
EJIL	European Journal of International Law
EU	European Union
FCO	Foreign and Colonial Office (UK)
FED	Fonds Européen pour Développement
FEDER	Fonds Européen de Développement Régional
FIDOM	Fonds d’Investissement pour les Départements d’outre-mer

FLPH	Foreign Languages Publishing House (Moscow)
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICNT	Informal Composite Negotiating Text (Law of the Sea)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INSERM	Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale
INSEE	Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques
ISISA	International Small Islands Studies Association
LMS	London Missionary Society
MDM	Mouvement Départementale Mahorais
MIRAB	Migrant Remittance and Aid-Funded Bureaucracy
MPM	Mouvement Populaire Mahorais
NSGT	Non Self-Governing Territory
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OCT	Overseas Country or Territory (of the EU)
PACA	Provence Alpes Cote d'Azur
PCIJ	Permanent Court of International Justice
POSEIDOM	Programme d'Options Spécifiques a l'éloignement et a l'insularité des DOMs (EU); also, POSEICAN and POSEIMA (Canaries and Azores)
RESFIM	Réseau Education Sans Frontières Ile de Mayotte
RPR	Rassemblement pour la République
RSA	Revenu de Solidarité Actif
RUP	Region Ultrapériphérique (Outermost region)
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SMIAM	Syndicat mixte d'Investissement et d'Aménagement de Mayotte

SMIC	Salaire Minimum Interprofessionnel de Croissance
SMIG	Salaire Minimum Interprofessionnel Garanti
TOM	Territoire Outre-mer
TRNC	Turkish Republic of North Cyprus
TVA	Taxe sur la Valeur Ajoutée (VAT)
UAFA	Union of Arab Football Associations
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UMP	Union pour un Mouvement Populaire
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNPO	Unrecognized Nations and Peoples Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
VI	Vulnerability Index
ZEE	Zone Economique Exclusive (EEZ)

# MAPS



Mozambique Channel



Comoros



Mayotte