

History of Maldives

1. What are the major sources of evidences about the pre-Islamic history Maldives?

Available information indicates that there was a matriarchal society, with myths and magicoreligious beliefs, a system of class distinctions instead of the caste system in existence in many other South Asian countries, a king who was a father figure and whose power was supreme, and a ruling system, which was guided by time honored customs and traditions.

2. Why do you think it is difficult to study the pre-Islamic history of Maldives?

Because no written documents available to study pre-Islamic history of Maldives.

3. What kind of information is given in the copper plates?

The copperplates record the names of the kings of the late pre-Islamic period. And also cast some light on system of government and lineage of the king who built the mosque, the circumstances in which the mosque was built, and other information regarding the locations and also, the names of the witnesses to the grant.

4. Give an account of Maldives embracing to Islam?

Arab interest in Maldives also was reflected in the residence there in the 1340s of the well-known North African traveler Ibn Battuta. There are historical evidences that, although the official conversion to Islam took place in 1153, some islands in the southernmost part of the country were embraced Islam even before that time.

5. What historical is evidence is available about the spread of Islam across Maldives?

It is worth noticing that compared to the other areas of South Asia, the conversion of the Maldives to Islam happened relatively late. Arab Traders had converted populations in the Malabar Coast since the 7th century, and the Arab invader Muhammad Bin Qasim had converted large swathes of Sindh to Islam at about the same time.

6. Make a list of the major dynasties of Maldives. Include the number of rulers, their time periods and significant events during those periods.

Maley Dynasty

Maley Dynasty was the first Dynasty in the recorded history after the country converted to Islam. King Dhovemi, the second king of the Theemuge Dynasty, was the most famous of this dynasty who converted to Islam in 1153.

Veeru Umar (Umar Veeru) Dynasty

This dynasty ruled for 81 years, from 1307 to 1388; a total of 10 ruled during this period.

Hilali Dynasty

Sultan Hassan 1 was the first king of Hilaly Dynasty. Sultan Nasiruddin was however, not officially included in this Dynasty.

Utheemu Dynasty

Sultan Muhammad Muhyiddin, who re-established the Islamic penal code, was the shortest lived king of this dynasty.

Isdhoo Dynasty

This is the smallest and the shortest lived of the major dynasties with only three kings in the line.

Dhiyamigili Dynasty

Four rulers came from this Dynasty which lasted for 55 years, from 1704 to 1759 with a total of 4 rulers. Sultan Muhammad Imaduddin II was the first king of this Dynasty.

Huraage Dynasty

Sultan Muhammad Shamsuddeen III was the last ruler of this dynasty. Although the king became elective from 1932, all the rulers that came afterwards until the establishment of the second republic in 1968 belong to this dynasty.

7. What is the role played by Kalhu Mohamed Rasgefaanu in the events that lead to the Portuguese invasion of Maldives? For how long did the Portuguese ruled Maldives?

According to some Maldivian beliefs, Andre was born in the Maldives and went to Goa as a young man, where he came to serve the Portuguese. And the Portuguese ruled Maldives from 1558 to 1753.

8. Describe the fight of Bodu Thakurufaanu against the Portuguese?

Bodu Thakurufaanu, with the help of his two brothers and some friends, started a series of guerrilla raids, culminating in an attack on Male, in which all the Portuguese were slaughtered. This victory is commemorated annually as National Day on the first day of Rabeedul Awwal.

9. How did Malabars establish themselves in the Maldives?

Not long after the independence from the Portuguese, the Dutch, who had replaced the Portuguese as the dominant power, entered into Maldivian affairs.

10. How did Malabars rule come to an end? Explain the role of Dhon Bandaarain in this.

They attacked three times, the last of which in 1761, but every time Dhon Bandarain and his company fought back and withdrew their forces. Dhon Bandarain became the first King of Huraage Dynasty after the death of Sultan Mukarram Mohamed Imaaduddin who was taken by the Malabars. He renovated the mosques in the capital and in the islands.

11. Give an account of the events that led Maldives becoming a protectorate of the British.

The Maldives was relatively unaffected by the British Raj and entered the twentieth century without hospitals, schools or harbors. The Maldivian government had paid a ritual annual tribute, first to the Portuguese, and later to the 'rulers of Ceylon' - the Dutch, then the British. A delegation from the British Empire came to Male, visited the Palace and asked Sultan Mohamed Mueenudheen III, the Prime Minister Sumuvvul Amir Mohamed Rannabandeyri Kilegefaan, and the Chief Justice Naibu Thuthu to write an agreement between the English and Maldivian governments which would provide protection to the Maldives. In the document, the Sultan was given a voice of abject humility, admitting weakness and an inability to stabilize the country. The delegation returned to their warships and the guns were aimed at Male, and the people ran to the edge of the reef.

12. Explain the events that led to the formulation of the first constitution of Maldives. Why was it abolished within a short period of time?

The first written Constitution of the Maldives was codified in the early twentieth century, on December 22, 1932 during the thirtieth year of the reign of Sultan Mohamed Shamsudeen Iskandar III. With the ratification of the first Constitution of the Maldives in 1932, the first semblance of representative government came into effect. The first constitution had 92 articles and a bill of rights guaranteeing equality before the law, freedom from arbitrary arrest and torture, protection of private property, freedom of expression, association and press, and a pension after 25 years of service to the state. The new legislation established fines, penalized theft and assault, created a state trading company and regulated foreign trade through a Foreign Investments Act and Freighters Act. The result of the ensuing food insecurity was a public revolt. The founders of the constitution were banished to Colombo and the constitution was amended to 84 articles in June 1934.

13. Describe the events that led to the first republic of Maldives. What were the failures of Amin Didi?

In 1950, the Peoples Majlis voted to abolish the monarchy and institute a republican government in the Maldives. The new democratic constitution comprising 30 articles established a president to be elected through a direct vote, a judiciary appointed by the president and a bicameral legislature an 18 member senate and a 47 member House of Representatives. People were not happy with some of the reforms of Amin Didi and eventually ousted his government, and during a riot over food shortages, Amin Didi was beaten by a mob and died.

14. Give an account of the contributions of Nasir and Gayoom as the presidents of the second republic.

In 1973 Nasir was elected to a second term under the constitution as amended in 1972, which extended the presidential term to five years and which also provided for the election of the prime minister by the Majlis. His foremost achievements included that of bringing the Maldives to the United Nations even with the opposition of some nations that felt awkward at including a nation of such a small size. He brought television and radio to the country with formation of Television Maldives and Radio Maldives for broadcasting radio signals nationwide. Nasir is considered as the independence hero of the Maldives. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom was elected to replace Nasir for a five-year presidential term in 1978. And in 1978 Maldives joined the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Tourism also gained in importance to the local economy, reaching more than 120,000 visitors in 1985. Gayoom has certainly done a good job of promoting awareness of environmental change and rising sea levels, which are likely to see the country totally submerged by the end of the 21st century. The political reform agenda and the review of the constitution were important events which lead to the first multi-party election in 2008.