FactsDid you know

The coronation ritual of a new Zamorin of Calicut

By ancient tradition, a new Zamorin of Calicut had to go through a coronation ritual when he took the throne. That ritual formally placed him outside the orthodox caste.

When going to his capital, the ruler arrived at the banks of the Kallayi River. The rule barred him from the bridge, so he crossed the river in a boat. On reaching the Calicut bank, the ruler had to accept and chew betel leaf (pan and supari) that a Muslim Mappilla presented directly. Tradition describes this person as a man wearing a Mappilla woman's clothes, or as a Mappilla woman herself. By accepting and chewing the leaf, the sovereign solemnly declared that he took the title of Zamorin and ruled only until his uncle returned.

People saw eating food from a Muslim as ritual pollution that harmed his caste status, so the ceremony left the Zamorin defiled. He had to observe celibacy and to dine and live apart from the rest of his royal household. Historians recorded that this custom continued as a lasting memory of the departure of the last sovereign. Tradition names that sovereign as either Cheraman Perumal or an early Zamorin. This sovereign embraced Islam and set sail for Mecca. He left the administration of the realm in trust until his return.