

Pandyas

Pandya kingdom

- After the **Kalabhras**, the Pandyas established their dynastic rule in southern Tamil Nadu by the end of the sixth century CE.
- The first Pandyan king mentioned in the Sangam works recovered so far is **Nedunjelayan I**, who ruled from **Korkai**, a coastal town at the mouth of the **Tamraparni River**.
- Pandyas were Muvendars who ruled the southern part of India intermittently until the pre-modern period.
- **Muvendar** is a Tamil word that means "three chiefs," and it refers to the heads of three ruling families: **the Cholas, Cheras, and Pandyas**.
- The **Sangam period Pandya history**, from the third century BCE to the third century CE, has been reconstructed using various sources such as megalithic burials, inscriptions in Tamil Brahmi, and Tamil poems from the Sangam literature.
- Accounts of travellers such as **Marco Polo, Wassaff, and Ibn-Battuta** are useful for learning about the period's political and socio-cultural developments.
- Another important source of information about the Pandyas is the copper plates, which contain the essence of royal orders, a genealogical list of the kings, and their victory over enemies.
- **Madurai Thala Varalaru, Pandik Kovai, and Madurai Tiruvannamalai** provide information about Madurai's later Pandyas.
- The exact date of these Sangam-age Pandyas is difficult to determine. Unfortunately, the period covered by the Sangam's extant literature is difficult to determine with any degree of certainty.
- With the exception of the longer epics **Silappatikaram and Manimekalai**, which are thought to date from after the Sangam period, the poems have come down to us in the form of systematic anthologies.

Rising of Pandyas

- The **Chola king, Parantaka I**, defeated Pandya King Rajasimha II, leading to the decline of the Pandya empire.
- However, this was not the end of the dynasty.
- Following the demise of **Adhi Rajendra** in the last quarter of the 12th century, the **Chola viceroyalty** became weak in the **Pandya country**.
- Taking advantage of this situation, the Pandya chieftains began to govern their respective regions independently.
- Following the decline of the Cholas, the Pandya kingdom emerged as the dominant **Tamil dynasty** in the thirteenth century.
- **Sadaya Varman Sundarapandian** (1251-1268) was the illustrious ruler of the second Pandya kingdom, who not only ruled over all of Tamil Nadu but also extended his authority up to Nellore in Andhra Pradesh.
- Following **Sundarapandian**, **Maravarman Kulasekharan** ruled successfully for 40 years, bringing peace and prosperity to the country.
- Malik Kafur's invasion was ultimately responsible for the division and fall of the Pandya empire.

Important Pandya Rulers

Rulers	Significance
Nedunjelidan I (180 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He was a brilliant Pandya King. His name appears in Silappadikaram as well. • He lived at the same time as Chera king Senguttuvan.
Nedunjelidan II (210 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He defeated a Chola and Chera confederacy near Tiruvarur and conquered the majority of the Tamil region. • Maduraikkanci describes his actions in great detail.
Kadungon (590-620 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Pandyadhiraja' became his title. • He is best known for bringing an end to the Kalabhra rule, ushering in a new era in the Tamil-speaking region.

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Maravarman Avani Culamani (620-640 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He assumed the title of Maravarman. • A traditional Pandyan inscription praises Avani Sulamani, claiming that he became the sole owner of the earth and married the goddess of prosperity.
Jyantavarman (640-670 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seliyan Sendan is another name for him.
Arikesari Maravarman (670-710 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arikesari Parankusa is another name for him. • He carried out the Hiranyagarbha and Tulabhara rites.
Kochadaiyan Ranadhiran (710-735 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Mangalapuram, modern-day Mangalore, he asserted Pandya's superiority over the Cheras and Cholas.
Maravarman Rajasimha I (735-765 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He was Kochadaiyan Ranadhiran's son and heir.
Srimara Srivallabha (815-862 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He built numerous tanks, canals, and reservoirs (For example- Sri Vallabha Pereri- big lake).
Varagunavarman II (862-880 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He was a contemporary of Manickavasagar, the great Saivite saint and author who wrote the seminal book Thiruvvasagam.
Maravarman Rajasimha III (900-920 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He was the last Pandya emperor. • He fought against Thanjavur's Chola king at Kodumbalur and plundered the Chera capital of Vanchi in Kongu Nadu. • After the successive defeats, he fled to Ceylon but was denied asylum, so he went to Kerala, where he spent the rest of his days keeping a low profile, as he was descended in part from a Chera king.

Imperial Pandyas

- The **Pandya empire** encompassed vast territories, including large portions of south India and Sri Lanka at times.

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- The empire was ruled by several royals, with one having primacy over the others.
- Through the collateral family branches subject to Madurai, the Pandya king at **Madurai** thus controlled these vast regions.
- **Maravarman Sundara, I** laid the groundwork for **Pandya supremacy** in south India in the early 13th century.
- In 1216, he succeeded his older brother Jatavarman Kulasekhara.
- He invaded **Chola country**, sacked Uraiyur and Thanjavur, and exiled Chola king **Kulothunga III**.
- Following that, the Chola king made a formal submission to **Maravarman Sundara I** and acknowledged his overlordship.

Tenkasi Pandyas

- The **Pandya kings**, from **Sadaavarman Parakrama Pandya** to his successors, ruled from Tenkasi.
- With the invasion of the **Sultanates, Vijayanagaras, and Nayakars** beginning in the fourteenth century, the Pandyas lost their traditional capital of Madurai and were forced to relocate to cities such as Tenkasi and Tirunelveli.
- Tenkasi was the Pandyas' final capital.
- **Sadaavarman Parakrama Pandya** and his descendants were crowned in the **Adheenam Mutt in Kasi Viswanathar temple**.
- During the same time period, some Pandyas ruled from Tirunelveli.
- Their major cities include Kayathar, **Vadakkuvalliyur, and Ukkirankottai**.
- **Tenkasi's Kasi Viswanathar temple, Brahmadesam, Cheranmadevi, Ambasamudram, Kalakkad, and Pudukkottai** all have inscriptions on them.
- The last Pandyan king known in Pandya history was **Kolakonda**, who was also a Tenkasi Pandya.

Administration

- Except for the areas fed by rivers, the territory of the Pandyas is known as **Pandymandalam, Thenmandalam, or Pandianadu**, and it is located in rocky, hilly regions and mountain ranges. Tamiraparani and Vaigai
- The capital of the Pandya kings was Madurai.

- **Pandy Mandalam or Pandya Nadu** was divided into many valanadus, which were further subdivided into many nadus and kurrans (meaning group of villages)
- Kings and local chiefs established Brahmin settlements with irrigation facilities known as **Mangalam or Chaturvedi Mangalam**.
- These settlements were given royal names as well as deity names.
- Different titles were given to royal officials:
- **Uttaramantri** was the name of the Prime Minister.
- **Eluttu Mandapam** was the name of the royal secretariat.
- **Palli Velan, Parantakan Pallivelan, Maran Adittan, and Tennavan** Tamizhavel were the military commanders' titles.

Political aspect

- During the Pandya reign, royal palaces were named **Tirumaligai** and **Manaparanan Tirumaligai**, and the royal couches they used were named after local chiefs, attesting to the legitimacy of the kings' overlordship.
- The following was the political division of land:
 - **Salabogam** was the land allotted to Brahmins.
 - **Tattarkani** was the name given to the land assigned to ironsmiths.
 - **Taccu-maniyam** was the name given to the Carpenters' land.
 - **Bhattavriutti** was the name given to the land donated to the Brahmin group for educational purposes.
- According to Wassaff, horse trading was very common during this time period.
- **Spices, pearls, precious stones, elephants,** and birds were among the other items traded.
- **Kayalpattinam** was the busiest port town in the Pandyas (now in Thoothukudi district)
- **Literacy** was also promoted during this time period, and administrators used a variety of methods to accomplish this.

- To **promote literacy**, singers were appointed to recite Bhakti hymns in temples, and theatre plays based on similar issues were produced.

Economy and Trade

- The ancient Tamil country, present-day Southern India and Sri Lanka, was frequented by **Roman and Greek traders**.
- Securing trade with the seafaring Tamil states of the **Pandyan, Chola, and Chera** dynasties and establishing trading settlements that secured trade with South Asia by the **Greco-Roman** world since the time of the **Ptolemaic dynasty** a few decades before the start of the Common Era and remained long after the fall of the Western Roman Empire.
- According to Strabo, **Emperor Augustus** of Rome received an ambassador from a South Indian King named Pandyan at Antioch.
- They also outlasted **Byzantium's loss** of the ports of Egypt and the Red Sea due to **Muslim conquests (639-645)**.
- The **Christian kingdom** of Axum fell into a slow decline after the severing of communications between the **Axum and the Eastern Roman Empire** in the seventh century, fading into obscurity in western sources.
- Despite pressure from **Islamic forces**, it lasted until the eleventh century, when it was reconfigured in a dynastic feud.
- Another industry that thrived during the Sangam period was pearl fishing. The pearl trade was centred in the **Pandyan port city of Korkai**.
- The **Pandyan kingdom's** pearls were also in high demand in the kingdoms of north India.
- Several Vedic mantras mention the widespread use of pearls.

Coinage

- Early Tamilakam coins featured the Three Crowned Kings, a tiger, a fish, and a bow, which represented the **Cholas, Pandyas, and Cheras**.
- **Pandya** coins bear the legend of various **Pandya rulers** at various times.
- During the early period, the **Pandyas** issued silver punch-marked and die-stricken copper coins.

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- The **Pandya rulers** of this period were credited with a few gold coins. These coins featured the image of a fish, either alone or in pairs, as their emblem.
- Some of the coins bore the names Sundara, **Sundara Pandya**, or simply the letter '**Su.**' Some of the coins featured a boar and the legend '**Vira-Pandya.**'
- Pandya coins were essentially square. On one side of the coins, an elephant was etched, while the other side was left blank.
- During the Pandyas, the inscriptions on silver and gold coins were in **Tamil-Brahmi**, while copper coins bore Tamil legends.
- The Pandya coins with fish symbols were known as '**Kodandaraman**' and '**Kanchi**' Valangum Perumal'.
- Aside from these, the word '**Ellam Thalaiyangam**' was seen on coins depicting a standing king on one side and a fish on the other.
- The words '**Samarakolahalam**' and '**Bhuvanekaviram**' were discovered on coins depicting a Garuda, '**Konerirayan**' on coins depicting a bull, and '**Kaliyugaraman**' on coins depicting a pair of feet.

Architecture

- Pandyan architecture includes rock cut and structural temples.
- The early Pandyan temples had features such as vimana, mandapa, and shikhara.
- Small temple clusters can be found in Tamil Nadu's Tiruchirappalli district. A Nandi stands in front of the Maha Mandapa in Shiva temples.
- Finely sculpted idols, portals of temples, or gopurams on "Vimanas" were developed in the later stages of Pandya rule.
- Gopurams are temple entrances and portals that are rectangular in shape. The area above the entrance has a pyramidal shape. Gopurams gradually surpassed Shikaras in importance.
- During the reign of the Pandyas, Meenakshi Temple in Madurai and Nelliappar Temple in Tirunelveli were built.

Religion

- The **Pandyas** are thought to have followed Jainism at first before switching to Saivism.

- Many temples were repaired and endowed with gold and land by mediaeval and later Pandyas.
- Vedic practices were also given patronage.
- The invocatory portions of the **Pandya inscriptions** also reveal rulers' impartiality toward both **Saivism and Vaishnavism**.
- Many temples were built by the **early Pandyas**.
- The mediaeval and later Pandyas did not build any new temples, but they did ensure that the existing ones were well maintained.

Decline of Pandyas

- **Maravarman Kulasekhara I** (1310) died, and his sons Vira Pandya IV and Sundara Pandya IV fought a succession war for control of the empire.
- **Maravarman Kulasekhara** appears to have wanted **Vira Pandya** to succeed him (who in turn was defeated by **Sundara Pandya** after a short period of time).
- Unfortunately, the Pandya civil war occurred at the same time as the Khalji raids in south India.
- The neighbouring **Hoysala king Ballala III** took advantage of the political situation and invaded **Pandya territory**.
- Family feuds and sultanate invasions shattered the Pandya empire beyond repair, and coinage discoveries indicate that the **Pandyas** were confined to the old South Arcot region.
- The **Jaffna kingdom** declared independence from the crumbling Pandya influence in 1323.