

The Pandya Dynasty

One of the three main lineages from the southern part of the country, the Pandya dynasty was an ancient Tamil state in South India that developed during the [Sangam Age](#). Many early Tamil inscriptions of Pandyas have been found in Madurai and its surroundings.

Throughout its reign, the Pandya rulers and the kingdom faced decline and upliftment periodically. The early obscurity of the kingdom was during the invasion of the Kalabhra, following which the Pandyas had revived themselves under Kadungon. They again lost their fortune after the rise of the Cholas but managed to revive back.

The Pandyas Kingdom - Origin & Sources

- The Pandyas established their dynastic rule in southern Tamil Nadu by the end of the sixth century CE after Kalabhras
- Pandyas were one of the Muvendaras that ruled the southern part of India, though intermittently, until the pre-modern times
 - *The term Muvendar refers to a Tamil word meaning three chiefs, used for the heads of three ruling families, the Cholas, Cheras, and Pandyas*
- The history of the Pandyas of the Sangam period, circa third century BCE to third century CE, has been reconstructed from various sources such as megalithic burials, inscriptions in Tamil Brahmi, and the Tamil poems of the [Sangam literature](#)
- Accounts of travellers such as [Marco Polo](#), Wassaff and [Ibn-Battuta](#) are useful to know about political and socio-cultural developments of this period
- Another major source of information about the Pandyas comes from the copper plates that inform the essence of royal orders, genealogical list of the kings, their victory over the enemies
- Madurai Tala Varalaru, Pandik Kovai and Madurai Tiruppanimalai provide information about the Pandyas of Madurai of later period

The Re-Rise of Pandyas

Under the Chola king, Parantaka I, the Pandya King Rajasimha II was defeated and that led to the decline of the Pandya empire. But that did not mark the end of this dynasty. Discussed below is the timeline for the re-rise of Pandyas in the southern part of the country:

- In the wake of the vacuum in Chola state in the last quarter of the 12th century after the demise of Adhi Rajendra, Chola viceroyalty became weak in the Pandya country. Taking advantage of this situation, the Pandya chieftains started ruling their regions independently
- After the decline of the Cholas, the Pandya kingdom became the leading Tamil dynasty in the thirteenth century

- The illustrious ruler of the second Pandya kingdom was Sadaiyavarman Sundarapandyan (1251-1268), who not only brought the entire Tamil Nadu under his rule but also exercised his authority up to Nellore in Andhra
- After Sundarapandyan, Maravarman Kulasekharan ruled successfully for a period of 40 years, giving the country peace and prosperity

Other Important Pandya Rulers

- Nediyan, Palshalai Mudukudumi were the early Pandyan kings
- Kadunkon had recovered the Pandya territory from the Kalabhras according to copper plates
- Other important rulers include Arikesari Maravarman (624-674), Kochadayan Ranadhira (700–730), Maravarman Rajasimha I (730–765), Srimara Srivallabha (815–862), Nedunjeliyan I and Nedunjeliyan II

Pandya Empire - Administration

- The territory of Pandyas is called Pandymandalam, Thenmandalam or Pandynadu, which lay in the rocky, hilly regions and mountain ranges except the areas fed by the rivers Vaigai and Tamiraparni
- Pandya kings preferred Madurai as their capital
- As for political division, Pandya Mandalam or Pandya Nadu consisted of many valanadus, which, in turn, were divided into many *nadus* and *kurrams* (meaning group of villages)
- Kings and local chiefs created Brahmin settlements called Mangalam or Chaturvedimangalam with irrigation facilities. These settlements were given royal names and names of the deities
- Royal officials were called by different names:
 - **The prime minister was called Uttaramantri**
 - **The royal secretariat was known as Eluttu Mandapam**
 - The titles of military commanders were Palli Velan, Parantakan Pallivelan, Maran Adittan and Tennavan Tamizhavel

Pandya Dynasty - Social and Political Aspects

- Royal palaces were called Tirumaligai and Manaparanan Tirumaligai during the Pandya reign and the royal couches they used were named after the local chiefs, which attested to the legitimacy of the overlordship of the kings
- The political division of land was as follows:
 - The **land assigned to Brahmins** was **Salabogam**
 - The land assigned **to Ironsmiths** was called **Tattarkani**
 - The land assigned **to Carpenters** was known as **Taccu-maniyam**
 - The land donated to the **Brahmin group for imparting education** was called **Bhattavriutti**
- A scholar named Wassaff claims that the trade of horses was very common during this period
- Other goods that were traded included spices, pearls, precious stones, elephants and birds

- **The busiest port town under the Pandyas was Kayalpattinam (now in Thoothukudi district)**
- Literacy was also promoted during this period and the administrators used various methods to do so. Singers were appointed to recite Bhakti hymns in temples to promote literacy, theatre plays were done based on similar issues

Religious Beliefs during the Pandya Reign

- It is believed that initially the Pandavas followed Jainism but had later adopted Saivism
- Medieval Pandyas and later Pandyas repaired many temples and endowed them with gold and land
- Patronage was also extended to Vedic practices
- The impartiality of rulers towards both Saivism and Vaishnavism is also made known in the invocatory portions of the Pandya inscriptions
- The early Pandyas had created many temples. However, no new temples were created by the medieval and later Pandyas, but they ensured that the existing ones were well maintained