

Cultural Contribution of Pandyas Dynasty in Tamil Country

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Abstract

Cultural contributions support societal cohesiveness, cultural preservation, identity formation, and generational impact. One of the oldest Tamil kingdoms in South India, the Pandyas, provided important cultural input that influenced the Tamil region's literature, history, a language, architecture design, especially practices of religion. The proposed study aimed to study about pandyas' contribution to Literature and Language, Arts and Architecture, Sculpture and Carvings and Input into Dance, Music further to trace the impact on later monarchies and cultural Exchange and maritime trade during early Pandyas period

Keyword: Cultural Contribution, art, architecture, carvings, sculptures.

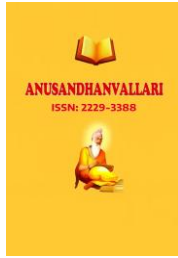
1. Introduction

The term "cultural contributions" describes the manner in which an individual, community, as well as society enhances or adds value to the cultural life of a local area or the global community. These contributions frequently take the shape of different works of literature, art, philosophical thought, practices, opinions, as well as behaviours in society that help to create a society's distinct character. Cultural contributions support societal cohesiveness, cultural preservation, identity formation, and generational impact. One of the oldest Tamil kingdoms in South India, the Pandyas, provided important cultural input that influenced the Tamil region's literature, history, a language, architecture design, especially practices of religion. Their reign, which lasted from the first centuries BCE until the Middle Ages, was characterised by a strong support for artistic fields, religion, and cultural establishments, particularly in and around Madurai (Nagaswamy, R. (1965).

2. Objectives

The major objectives of the study are as follows

- i. To study about pandyas' contribution to Literature and Language, Arts and Architecture
- ii. To examine the pandyas' contribution to Sculpture and Carvings and Input into Dance and Music
- iii. To trace the impact on later monarchies
- iv. To study the cultural Exchange and maritime trade during Pandyas period



3. Contribution to Literature and Language

Sangam Literature:

The entire prehistoric Tamil-speaking region has been referred to as the Tamilakam (Taminakam, Purananuru 168. 18) in Old Tamil. This about corresponds to the territory that is currently referred to as southern India and includes the areas that make up the modern Indian states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and portions of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. While it was also impacted by the Sangam Period, Sri Lanka is separate from its surroundings and is referred to be Eelam. The Sangam era in Indian history encompasses the period that ran from around 300 BCE to 300 CE in the histories of mediaeval Tamil Nadu, Kerala, formerly referred to as Tamilakam, and some areas of Sri Lanka. It was given the name in honour of the writings of poets and academics from the fabled Sangam academies, who had their headquarters in Madurai (Anjali (2017)). The Sangam era (300 BCE–300 CE), that is renowned for its extensive body of Tamil literature, was supported by the Pandyas. The Pandya kings of Madurai sponsored the Sangam conferences, also known as intellectual academies. The emergence of the Tamil language including literary heritage was aided by these works, which consist of epics, poetry, and religious literature (Dennis S. Jesudasan 2019).

Classical Tamil:

There are connections between Pandya patrons and some of the most well-known Tamil epics, such Silappatikaram. The varied social, cultural, and ethical ideals of the era are reflected in these masterpieces. The Pandya dynasty is sometimes attributed for supporting works like Thirukkural, authored by Thiruvalluvar, a timeless masterpiece of Tamil literature, even if the book's true provenance is up for discussion (Iyengar, K. R. Srinivasa, 1979).

4. Contribution to the Arts and Architecture

The Pandyas produced substantial contributions to the arts including architecture, especially to sculpting, decorative arts including dance and music, and temple construction. Their effect on these components of Tamil culture is visible in the lasting architectural and creative practices that continue vital for South Indian identity.

Temple Art and Architecture

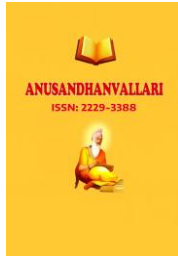
The Dravidian architectural style of temple building, which developed distinctive to South Indian temples, was developed mostly by the Pandyas (SoundaraRajanK.V., 1998). They have made contributions to architecture are seen in:

Gopurams (Gateway Towers):

A defining feature of Pandya architecture comprises the soaring gopurams. Under Pandya dominance, these magnificent structures which are frequently adorned with detailed sculptures of gods, goddesses, mythical scenarios, and heavenly beings became even more magnificent (Sharma, et. al. (2019)).

Meenakshi Amman Temple, Madurai:

This temple is among the Pandyas' most famous creations. The elaborate paintings, sculpted pillars, and enormous gopurams that characterise Pandya temple construction are all present in this impressive temple complex. The shrine honours the pinnacle of Pandya creative vision, Shiva in the shape of Sundaeswarar, along with Goddess Meenakshi, an image of Parvati.



Vimana (Temple Towers):

The tower behind the sanctum sanctorum, known as the vimana, is another exquisite feature of pandya temples. It is frequently decorated in carvings of gods and other holy objects.

Mandapams (Pillared Halls):

The intricate mandapams, found in Pandya shrines are renowned for hosting religious ceremonies, celebrations, and theatrical productions. Ancient mandapams frequently have life-size figures of gods, warriors, as well as dancers on finely sculpted pillars.

Rock-cut Temples:

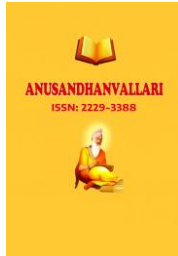
The Pandyas, who built cave shrines in places like Sittannavasal, became innovators in the field of rock-cut architecture. These exquisite carvings and paintings within these rock-carved temples in caves showcase the artists' proficiency with stone carving. The Shaivate deity Murugan is the subject of the KunnakudiShanmughanathar Temple, also referred to as the KunnakudiMurugan Temple. It is located in Kundrakudi, a hamlet on the outside of Karaikudi located in the Sivaganga district of the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Situated on the Tirupattur – Karaikudi Road, approximately 14 km (14,000 m) away from Karaikudi, the temple was built in the style of Pandyan architectural and artistic work. On the western face of this lower rock are three caverns with eighteenth-century Pandyan Dynasty stone-cut shrines. The oldest known sculptures from the guardian gods, Dvarapalas, in any South Indian shrine are found in the rocks. According to Kumar and Ajit (2016), the temple features a five-tiered gateway tower, the gopuram on the hill, which leads to an interior hall with pillars and the sanctuary.

5. Sculpture and Carvings

Stone and copper sculptures with intricate details decorate Pandya shrines and monuments. Their attention to religious themes, elegance, and accuracy in sculpting are what make their work remarkable. The only rock-cut temples that may be attributed to royal sponsorship are the ones located at Malayadikkurichi, Anaimalai (Yoganarasimha cave), as well as Tirupparamkunram (Subrahmanya cave). Regarding the foundations of temples, we have not yet discovered a single monument that bears an inscription from the ancient Pandya monarchs on its foundation. With the structure itself split into three declining tiers containing exquisite carvings of god, somewhat divine, as well as animal forms, the KalugumalaiVettuvankoil's architecture resembles a gallery showcasing many of the greatest specimens of Pandya thermoplastic art. Over eighty sculptures in all, comprising ganas and animals, are discovered arranged across the various levels of the Vimana tower. About 54 of them are on the upper tier and roughly 26 are on the ground tier; among these, four were on each of the four corners of the griva. The heavenly figures may be seen on the bottom tier, in addition to the four vimanadevatas at the very top. Eight statues of the apsaras, two on both sides of the vimana, are located on the highest tier, far from the line of ganas and animals. Six sitting male characters and six sitting female figures are located in the harantara downturns and on the outer edges of the kuta, respectively, on the bottom Tier.

Bronze Monuments:

The ancient bronze sculptures that portray Hindu deities such as Shiva wearing his Nataraja (cosmic performer) shape, Parvati, and other characters are particularly well-known, notably by the pandya artisans. These bronzes are prized for their religious expression respectively, dexterity, and fine craftsmanship.



Stone Monuments:

The Pandya period's stone sculptures exhibit a profound sense of realism, depicting even the smallest aspects of attire, jewellery, and facial expressions. Hindu mythology was frequently portrayed in temple ceilings, as well pillars, and walls via the carving of deities, goddesses, heavenly creatures, and great tales.

Ceramic and Stucco Sculptures:

The variety of Pandya creativity is further demonstrated by the ceramic and stucco statues found in some temples.

6. Input into Dance and Music

The Pandyas took part in a variety of ancient dances, as did other dynasties from the Tamil Nadu region. The Pandyan empire was known for performing a dance called Deverattam, which translates to "god or king dance" in Tamil. Usually, it was performed by warriors and rulers following a victorious conflict with other Indian kingdoms. It was a joyful dance, a sign of optimism regarding the battles to come.

Bharatanatyam:

The Pandya era is where the origins of this traditional dance style may be found. The shrine dance style was developed with backing from the Pandyas and was shown at religious festivals and rites. Pandya temples developed into important hubs for performances of dances, particularly Bharatanatyam, which originated in these hallowed places.

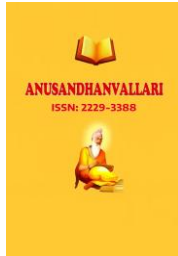
Music:

The Pandyas were additionally fans of traditional Carnatic music, and musicians whose created and played devotional hymns often frequently present on their courts. The Sangam literature makes reference to a variety of musical instruments, including flutes, mridangams, and yazhs, which are harp-like instruments. This suggests that music became a widely recognised form of art during their supervision. Temple music was heavily ritualised and codified throughout the later Pandya era, especially in the mediaeval era. The Pandyas were devoted Hindus who supported worship in temples which involved musical performances as a component of religious sacrifices. They were especially fond of Shaivism and Vaishnavism. In addition to being places of worship, the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai served as gathering places for performances of Carnatic music, songs of devotion, and bhajans (spiritual hymns). Oduvars (temple singers) were hired by temples around this time to perform devotional hymns in worship of the gods, primarily in Tamil. Temple music has always included the religious chants of the Shaivite and Vaishnava saints, Alwars along with Nayanars. The poet-saint Arunagirinathar's songs of devotion, known as Tiruppugazh, were frequently chanted in shrines and serve as an illustration of the blending of music as well as devotional rituals.

Musicianship and Arts:

The Pandian emperors fostered the growth of Tamil classical music as well as the invention of several musical devices. During their rule, the nadaswaram, a wind instrument, and the tavil, a kind of drum, were two examples of instruments used in temple music.

- i. The mridangam, thavil, along with parai are examples of percussion instruments that were crucial to both folk music and temple ceremonies.



- ii. Wind instruments including nadaswaram (long membrane instrument) had been widely employed in shrine rituals.
- iii. The veena and other instruments with strings were popular in classical and religious music concerts.

7. Frescoes and Murals

The practice of painting murals in temples was influenced by the Pandyas. The Sittannavasal cave temple, which paintings portray themes throughout Jain mythology while religious rituals, is the greatest example. These murals' vivid colours, which are derived from organic dyes, and the way they were painted technique had an impact on subsequent Dravidian art. These paintings include a wide range of subjects, including mythical stories, floral patterns, courtly life, and gods. The bright, realistic colour rendering of lotuses, individuals, and heavenly entities in the Sittannavasal paintings is what makes them so famous. Some of the very few remaining Pandyan murals in existence may be found in Sittannavasal, a Jain temple that dates back to the Pandyan era (Sudharsanam, 2022). It is well-known in order to mural paintings that adorn the cave's ceiling and sidewalls. Utilising black pigments with soot, green with Terre verre, red and yellow with ochre, and blue with ultramarine, the Sittannavasal paintings have a variety of colour palettes. These complex colour palettes juxtapose the normally monochromatic, red ochre paintings of previous southern Indian empires. Unfortunately, a large number of these Pandyan murals located in the Sittannavasal temple were damaged by vandals and remain very visible nowadays. Fish, ducks, and dancing individuals are among the subjects of other ninth-century cave paintings (Nagaswamy, R. (1965).

8. Support for Craftsmen

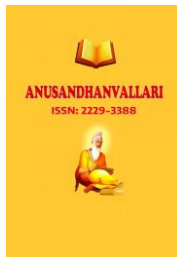
Many different artists and artisans were supported by the Pandyas. Expert craftspeople were engaged in the production of sculptures, jewellery, and temples. Their support of pearl collectors and jewellers, who created elaborate jewellery pieces for aristocracy and temples, produced the renowned Pandya pearls. The growth of craft guilds, which subsequently became a symbol of South Indian industry and commerce, was facilitated by these artisans.

9. Impact on Later monarchies

The succeeding Chola and Vijayanagara kingdoms, who inherited and further developed the Pandya style of architecture, were strongly affected by the cultural and architectural legacies nurtured during Pandya control. Pandya improvements are the source of the gopuram-centered temple design that gained prominence throughout the Vijayanagara along with Nayaka eras, particularly in the erection of enormous gateway towers.

10. Cultural Exchange and Maritime Trade

The Pandyas were well-known for their marine trade, which reached the western and Southeast Asian realms of the Greek as well as Roman empires. Along with bringing cash, this commerce allowed for cultural interactions that improved Tamil civilisation. Cross-cultural exchanges and foreign trade were facilitated by the Pandya monarchy. The Pandyas were well-known for their superior pearls, which were referred to simply as "Pandya pearls." They also traded spices, ivory jewellery, and stones.



Synchronicity across cultures

A fusion of many cultural while artistic traditions emerged via interactions with other cultures via commerce and conquering. The indigenous culture was enhanced by the influences of Sri Lanka, the Southeast Asian region, and various Indian dynasties.

11. Conclusion

In Tamil Nadu, the Pandyas' artistic and architectural accomplishments have left a lasting impact. Their musical compositions, dancing styles, sculptures, and temple designs have had a profound cultural impact on the southern part of India and have come to represent the region's spiritual and creative heritage. Throughout their support of temple construction, art, music, with performing, the Pandyas not just proclaimed their dedication to spirituality but also produced a thriving cultural legacy that continues to prosper nowadays. In Tamilnadu, the Pandyas are credited as being the forerunners in the creation of sculpture, paintings, and building. As of right now, the Mahapalipuram discusses the Pallavas' contribution, while the notable works of the early and later Pandyas are represented through the Kazhumalai Vettuvan Koil as well as Sittanavasal, which are all part of the former Pandyan empire. In Tamil Nadu, the Pandyas have had a significant cultural impact on language, arts, literature, spirituality, and commerce. Their influence on The southern part Indian history was profound and helped mould the distinctive characteristics of Tamil civilisation.

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