

## OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 10

Special Issue: 1

Month: August

Year: 2022

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Received: 10.07.2022

Accepted: 20.08.2022

Published: 30.08.2022

## Citation:

Valarmathi, S., and R. Nandhini. "A Critical Study on Pandyan Empire's Confrontation and Negotiation." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 10, no. S1, 2022, pp. 24–30.

## DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v10iS1.5252>



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# A Critical Study on Pandyan Empire's Confrontation and Negotiation

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Diplomacy that is of vital importance in interstate affairs often serves to promote national interest Palmer and Perkins say, "Diplomacy is an art of concealing a nation's real aim and of providing a smoke-screen for actions of a vastly different character".<sup>1</sup> The term diplomacy has various meanings. It is employed as a synonym sometimes for foreign policy, sometimes for 'negotiation' and sometimes for the process and machinery by which such negotiations are carried out.<sup>2</sup> According to Harold Nicolson, diplomacy is an essential elementary reasonable relation between man and man and between nation and nation Here marks, "Diplomacy is the management of international relations by negotiation; the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys; the business or art of the diplomatist".<sup>3</sup>

All States have to adopt some kind of foreign policy irrespective of their differences with other nations They resort to diplomacy to execute the desired policy in the field of international politics, since all states have some kind of relations with one another.<sup>4</sup> As diplomacy serves the purpose of foreign policy, both diplomacy and foreign policy are inter-related But there is a fundamental difference between the two J.R Child points out that the foreign policy of a state is the substance of foreign relations whereas diplomacy proper is the process by which that policy is carried out.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Norman D Palmer and Howard Perkins, *International Relations*, 2nd edition (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956), p 96

<sup>2</sup> Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy*, 3rd edition (London, Oxford University Press, 1969), p 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p 4.

<sup>4</sup> Gandhi Jee Roy, *Diplomacy in Ancient India* (New Delhi., 1981), p 4.

<sup>5</sup> Palmer and Perkins, *Op cit.*, p 84

Foreign policy is the substance where as diplomacy is a method.<sup>1</sup> The object of diplomacy as that of foreign policy is to protect the interests of a nation by peaceful means if possible and also to give every kind of assistance to the military operations if war can not be avoided.<sup>2</sup> While a country's foreign policy is designed to protect and promote the welfare of the country and its people, diplomacy serves as an effective means to attain that goal. Thus foreign policy and diplomacy are governed by the enlightened self-interest of a nation.<sup>3</sup>

Though the modern-day diplomacy and foreign policies are different from those followed in the medieval period, the objectives are the same. Surrounded on all sides by countries, friendly and hostile, and without natural frontiers, the Pandyas had to develop their own diplomacy to deal with them.

### Basic Determinants of Diplomacy

Diplomacy is never uniquely determined by any one single factor but is the result of the inter-play of a number of actors that effect the formulation of a policy under different circumstances. There are, however, some basic determinants which remain constant and unalterable. The important determinants that governed the diplomacy of the Pandyas were national security, material gains and military glory.

#### a) National Security

Diplomacy is the science of conducting the foreign relation of a State in which national security gets the top priority. Security means preservation of territorial integrity, i.e., prevention of loss of territory through war and conquest or mutilation by rival claims. Neither territorial integrity without full sovereignty nor sovereignty without full territorial integrity can be considered to be true security. The external security is closely linked with its internal security that incorporates in it self political stability, viable economy, and social harmony, all ensured by an absence of political disturbances such as civil wars and dynastic disputes. National security has to

be defended against fissiparous tendencies from within and external aggression from without.

The Second Pandyan Empire was founded after a civil war in which foreign intervention played a significant role. The internal dissensions came to an end with the defeat of Virapandya at the battle of Nettur.<sup>4</sup> But the Pandyas did not feel secure. Since the time of their first king, Jatavarman Kulasekhara Pandya I (A.D.1190-1216), the Pandyas had suffered humiliation and misery due to Kulottunga III's invasion and the atrocities committed by him.<sup>5</sup> Hence their main aim was to achieve national security at any cost.

Internal security is closely linked with internal stability and the Pandyas achieved this to a great extent by means of appointing their close relatives as Viceroy's at strategic centres. Marco Polo's accounts and inscriptions support this fact.<sup>6</sup> These Viceroy's who were fairly free provided stable administration in their respective provinces and helped the chief ruler in his campaigns against the invaders. The comparatively peaceful atmosphere and stable conditions that prevailed at that time enabled Maravarman Sundara Pandya I (A.D.1216-1238) to defeat the Cholas, their most formidable enemy, within two years after his accession.<sup>7</sup> The fidelity and co-operation of the Viceroy's greatly account for the Pandyan victory.

Protecting the people from hostile outsiders is one of the primary duties of the State. The geographical factor is an important determinant of a country's security. Geography includes location, extent of territory, topography, state boundaries etc. A country protected by natural boundaries could enjoy greater measure of safety from external threats. In the absence of such natural boundaries a country has to depend heavily upon its military means to defend itself against its enemies.

The location of a state has always played an important role in inter-state relations. Situated in the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Gandhi Jee Roy, *OP cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *A.R.E* No 256 of 1925 and *A.R.E* No 42 of 1906

<sup>5</sup> *I.P.S* No 166 and *A.R.E* No 554 of 1904.

<sup>6</sup> *S.I.I.*, Vol III, No 147.

<sup>7</sup> It took thirteen years for Narasimhavarman I, the Pallava ruler, to wage a war of revenge against the Western Chalukya ruler Pulikesin II

extreme south of the Indian sub-continent, the Pandya country was not affected by the political turmoil that prevailed beyond the Vindhyas. Nevertheless, the absence of any important natural barrier between the Pandya country and its northern neighbours made the latter's incursions relatively easy. The Cholas and the Hoysals proved to be a constant menace to the Pandyas. Besides the neighbouring states, the invaders from distant places too had cast their covetous look on the Pandyan territory, due to its strategic position as well as its enormous wealth as mentioned by Arab geographers. Hence, guarding itself against external challenges became a basic determinant of the Pandyan diplomacy.

### b) Material gains

Economic strength which is vital for the well-being of any people enables the state to acquire military capabilities adequate for its security purposes. The importance given to economy is seen in the ceremony of the king's coronation. "... the State is given for agriculture, for well-being, for prosperity, for development".<sup>1</sup> While dealing with the duty of the king, the classical Indian literature combines the two elements of growth and protection in general. The latter is in fact a corollary of the former according to the Vedic formula. Hence, the government's major efforts were directed to sustain and develop thenation's economy.

### c) Military Glory

Waging war for the display of their military might and striking fear in the enemy's heart is another basic determinant of the diplomacy of the rulers. Normally, war is the culmination of hostility and strained relationships between states. In the history of South India, "Wars were undertaken either as affording exercise for the development of martial virtues or for the purpose of achieving personal supremacy in rank and the title of the liege lord of the Tamil country".<sup>2</sup> R.T. Jangam defines war as an

attempt of one nation at imposing its will on another, resorting to force or violence.<sup>3</sup> To achieve its goals or to safeguard its interests, a nation may resort to war that may be predominantly military, political or economic in nature. War was considered generally useful to nations in protecting their sovereignty, enforcing their rights and solving their problems which seem to be insolvable through other means. More over the constant struggle for power, the existence of powerful and ambitious rulers and the desire of having strategic or fertile regions under one's control often led to armed conflicts.

### Diplomatic Strategies

Diplomacy aims at ensuring national security and interest and safeguarding territorial integrity and national sovereignty. C.D. Burnes in his book *War* says: "Diplomacy is the name for a method of negotiation, persuasion and conciliation for promoting the common interest of different nations and of adjusting those interests which are opposed... Without the diplomatic system, war would be more frequent than it is. Behind the diplomatic system, however, lie the preparations for war and in certain forms of policy the threat of war is used as an instrument of policy".<sup>4</sup> The words "negotiation", "persuasion", "conciliation" and "threat of war" are exact translations of the terms *sama*, *dana*, *bheda* and *danda* which were the cardinal points of ancient Indian diplomatic system.

### The Instruments of Diplomacy

The application of the six-fold policy was made through the four components of traditional diplomacy viz., *sama*, *dana*, *bheda* and *danda* either independently or jointly. *Sama* as a method of diplomacy stands for amity, politeness, reason, peace, negotiation, persuasion and conciliation. The conquering king is asked to observe this policy of conciliation by promising to protect villages and forests, sheep and cattle, roads and traffic and to bring back the banished and run aways. Kautilya are

<sup>1</sup> K.P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, Fifth edition (Bangalore, 1978), p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> P.T. SrinivasaIyengar, *Pre-Aryan Tamil Culture*, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> R.T. Jangam, *op. cit.*, p. Y08.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar in *War in Ancient India*, p. 301.

commends the application of this policy towards the conquered king so that the latter may remain loyal.<sup>1</sup> *Sama* was a method to bring a weaker king under one's control. If the weak king could not be brought down by a policy of conciliation alone, the other means of *dana* or gift may be employed.

### Conclusion

"War and Diplomacy, under the Second Pandyan Empire" is a fascinating case-study of interstate and intrastate relationship medieval South India. An inquiry into the diplomatic dealings and military activities of the medieval Pandyas involving the neighbouring powers in and around Tamilnadu lays bare several interesting facts about interstate relations during the period under survey (A.D. 1190-1312).

The first and foremost among the insights that emerge is the preponderant influence exerted on medieval polity and society by the socio-religious legal texts like Dharmasastras, Manusastra and Arthasastra. For instance *varnashramadharma* codified by Manu and Kautilya's theory of diplomacy and statecraft based on the Mandala theory deserve serious study for they provided a sort of pan-Indian model for society and polity. Even matters relating to the spheres of economics and religion have been affected by their pervading influence and the medieval Tamil polity and society were no exceptions. The medieval peninsular dynasties like the Kakatiyas of Warrangal, the Hoysalas of Dvarasamudra, the Yadavas of Devagiri and the Pandyas and the Cholas of the Tamil country were greatly guided by these socio-legal texts. The Mandala theory of Kautilya and his suggestions on matters of interstate war and diplomacy expounded in Arthasastra served as a practical manual on statecraft. The medieval rulers scrupulously followed Manu's or Kautilya's ideas and took pride in saying that they were the promoters and defenders of *manvanti* and the Hindu dharma. These socio-legal texts provided a paradigm of Kshatriya rajadharma throughout India and even beyond the seas in South East Asian countries also.

The role of diplomacy in this period could be understood in the light of Kautilya's Mandala theory that rests on the predisposition of rulers towards friendship and inimity consequent upon territorial proximity and acquisition, retention and extension of power. The Pandyas of the Second Empire, who wrested their independence from the Chola overlords under whom they had long suffered, assumed the role of the central power in the Mandala scheme (*Vijigisu*). Being the fulcrum of the scheme, the Pandyas regulated the kaleidoscopic pattern of power relations among the states that found themselves involved in the vortex of peninsular power politics and in whom a sense of inferiority, or superiority was generated leading to constant adjustments and readjustments in their attitudes towards and dealings with one another.

The valuable components of classical diplomacy viz., *sama*, *dana*, *bheda* and *danda* were put into extensive use during the medieval times in dealing with the enemy. The strategy of *sama* (conciliation) was mostly adopted in the case of an equally powerful ruler and that of *dana* (appeasement through gifts) was generally resorted to in the case of a superior ruler. *Bheda* (sowing seeds of dissension) was pursued to undermine the combined strength of the allies in the opposite camp and also with a view to set in motion the process of disintegration in the enemy state. *Danda* (use of force) was the final resort in the event of the failure of all the other three strategies. The use of these methods was decided upon as the situation warranted. Cunning, cajolery, greasing the palm and use of force were all tried in dealing with the belligerent ruler.

In the case of the Pandyas of the Second Empire, the policy of outright war with the outright enemy was the major course of action in their dealings particularly with the Cholas of Tanjore and their ally, the Hoysalas of Mysore. While the Pandyas' main purpose was to retrieve their lost glory and political freedom, they also waged wars to avenge the ignominy they suffered under the Cholas. The Pandyas were crowned with success in their war of independence and in their diplomatic dealings with their once-powerful masters, the Cholas, and also

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Bk VII, Ch 16.

with another formidable force viz., the Hoysalas. In all their endeavours it was the Kautilyan strategy that guided them most.

The second insight that emerges from this study is that as far as interstate relations at this time were concerned, the whole of the peninsular India together with the island kingdom of Ceylon emerge as one viable unit of historical study. What took place between the Cholas of Tanjore and the Pandyas of Madurai is a part of the larger game that was going on within this orbit. In the disturbed political situation of medieval Tamilnadu, vested interests were always ready to fish in troubled waters, Outsiders on the periphery like the Ceylonese, the Keralites, the Karnatakas and the Andhriles (the Kakatiyas of Warrangal) were ever ready to rush in whenever a power vacuum was created in the core region around Tanjore and Madurai i.e., around the Kaveri-Vaigai-Tambraparani basins. The regional and local potentates were drawn into tribute-yielding relations with the most powerful ones in the core region, particularly the rulers of the Second Pandyan Empire.

The relations between the two Tamil states of the Cholas and the Pandyas were inextricably intertwined with developments outside the frontiers of the Tamil country. Intrastate problems often acquired interstate dimensions. The apparently localized Chola-Pandya relations became very much complicated and at times assumed enormous proportions mainly due to outside interference. The Hoysalas of Kannadadesa, the Malayalis of Keraladesa, the rulers of Ceylon and the Kakatiyas of Telugudesas—all played an active role in the internal affairs of medieval Tamilnadu. In this respect the Kaveri-Vaigai-Tambraparani basin bears a close similarity to the Raichur Doab which was the economic cause for the protracted wars between the Deccani Sultanate and Vijayanagar. The fertile region of the Kaveri basin became a bone of contention among the Pandyas, Cholas and Hoysalas. Under the pretext of helping the Cholas, their politically, and thereby preserving the balance of power in the region, the Hoysalas were shrewd enough to strengthen their hold over the Kaveri basin

by having their secondary capital at Kannanur Koppamon the banks of the Kaveri near Tiruchirappalli Town.

To increase the volume of confusion already prevailing, the feudatories like the Kadavas, Kadambas, Banas, Nulambas and Telugu Cholas too contributed their share. Changing their loyalty and support every now and then these feudatories also proved to be vital components of diplomatic schemes and accounted in no small measure for their maintenance or upsets of the political equilibrium in the region. In this situation the diplomatic tactics such as formation of alliances and counter alliances, realignment of forces through dynastic marriages, large-scale military operations etc. became the salient features of interstate relations during the medieval period.

The third point of interest is the rapid growth of the Pandya power that, after defeating the Cholas, reigned supremely in the region and accomplished the historical mission of keeping the rule of the Tamil country in the hands of the Tamils. In spite of the Hoysala support through dynastic marriages, the Cholas could not avert their final collapse. The Hoysalas could only delay the Chola disintegration but were not able to prevent its fall for good and the death-blow to the already tottering Chola empire was eventually dealt by the Second Pandyan Empire. The Pandyas used the Chola territory, as a stepping stone and a spring board for a further jump into the north.

Further the creation of Brahmadeya settlements, particularly infertile regions, led to the emergence of centres of Sanskrit culture and as a result of interaction, the local culture, at least at the elite level, was greatly influenced and even assimilated to a large extent by the Sanskrit tradition, which sought to provide a pan-Indian identity. "The long-term result was the evolution of a syncretic culture in which Tamil and Sanskrit elements not only coexisted, but increasingly exerted reciprocal influences, creating an important regional variant of Indian culture generally". (Spencer, 18).

During this time a powerful priest-king was also developing between the Brahmin priests and the non-Brahmin rulers for mutual advantages. Even religion

and devotional bhakti were used to strengthen this alliance. Ritual ranking and divinity were accorded to the non-Brahmin rulers only through the mediation of the Brahmin priest. By such acts the non-Brahmin rulers were elevated to the level of awe-inspiring earthly representatives of god (Devaraja) and in that capacity they exercised unquestioned authority over the people from whom was expected implicit obedience.

The king was portrayed as an upholder of the social order, particularly in a period of progressive moral disorder. The king was also depicted as the most generous devotee and patron of gods and Brahmins. Thirdly, the military campaigns of the king were compared to the deeds of gods and heroes. In all these the Brahmins were consciously promoting the cult of Devaraja (God-King), sacred kingship.

Hence the kings needed the services and support of the Brahmin priests. Further it was believed that by helping the holy and righteous Brahmins, who were considered to be even superior to the profane rulers, a ruler was believed to invoke the blessings of the goddess of wealth and prosperity. Moreover some of the learned Brahmins played a crucial role as advisors to kings (Rajagurus) and as interpreters of the religious and legal texts on matters of social life and polity. These Brahmins in turn needed the active support and protection of the powerful kings, from whom they received vast landed properties and precious gifts like gold and silver and above all social esteem and protection. The temple-centered medieval culture was thus very much sponsored by the kings and priests, and the vast masses were simply bracketed by these two powerful groups.

Territorial expansion and consolidation of gains engaged much of the attention of those who drafted the Pandyan foreign policy. The presence of powerful kingdoms around (spheres of hegemony) posed now and then threats to the Pandyan sovereignty and hence the situation necessitated a strong army. Powerful enemies were cowed down and rendered ineffective through the instrument of war. Fear, was instilled in the hearts of the enemies by the demonstration of the Pandyan striking

capabilities. One painful fact about this period is the utter neglect of the welfare of the ordinary people, who were the real creators of wealth. No welfare measure worth the name was implemented. At times of war burden some taxes were imposed on them. Those who could not bear the situation simply migrated to other places, showing their displeasure and protest.

Although the people at the bottom took an active part in the process of creating wealth, they hardly had any share in the surplus production that was collected from the cultivators by the bureaucracy nor did they have any portion of the booty. In the process of redistribution, substantial portion of the surplus wealth was appropriated by the king and the courtiers, the Brahmins and the temples. This misappropriation of wealth and bad redistribution of resources sufficiently explain the reason why the oriental court was commanding fabulous wealth.

Control over the peasant community was maintained by the state monopoly of irrigation system – a hydraulic machinery. The subservience of the peasant community was ensured not only by extracting the maximum surplus from them but also by investing the king with absolute powers and divinity. The helpless dependence of the peasantry on the ruling classes rendered the mill-equipped to make any revolt in an organized way.

The study further reveals the fact that the attribution of the term "empire" to the Second Pandyan Kingdom is not really justifiable, for it did not really possess all the attributes of an empire such as a highly centralized or clearly defined territory with well-demarcated boundaries. The basis for the attribution of the term "empire" to the Second Pandya Kingdom is chiefly convention and not those factors that constitute an empire.

Normally the concept of empire implies a centralized territorial state with well-defined settled boundaries. In the period under study there was no single central power controlling a vast area with well-defined territorial boundaries. Expansion and contraction of territorial boundaries, waxing and waning of the political power of a ruler depended upon his military might and economic resources.

There were several centres of power such as Kannanur Koppam, Tanjore and Madurai with a number of powerful chieftains firmly planted in different parts of the Tamil country. The powerful Chola feudatories, the Kadavas, Telugu Chodas and Yadavas, were not fully subdued though they accepted the sovereignty of the Pandyas for the time being.

The Pandya power extended upto Nellore only for a short span of time during the reigns of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I and Maravarman Kulasekhara Pandya I. In this precarious situation there was no single "sphere of hegemony", and as such even the medieval Pandyas could not really claim to be empire-builders in the real sense. However, the greatness of the Pandyas who dominated the political scene in the south for a considerable period cannot be minimized.

In an overall assessment of the rulers of the Second Pandyan Empire, not with standing the defects that one could still notice, what strikes one most is the great success of their wars and diplomatic strategies. Through their skilful combination of war and diplomacy by dexterous use of military power and mental prowess, by making peace through dynastic marriages, the Pandyas of the Second Empire admirably rose from the very low level of political enslavement and subordination to the brilliant heights of political freedom and hegemony. This was, a marvelous political metamorphosis.

Despite such glorious transformation, the Second Pandyan Empire could not withstand the sudden attack of the Muslims under Malik Kafur. But for this invasion, the tour de force of the Muslims

which had a demoralizing effect on all Hindu powers in the South, the Second Pandyan Empire could have lasted for another hundred years. Drained of wealth and inner strength and energy, and deprived of a strong succession, the Second Pandyan Empire eventually vanished from the medieval political scene, after playing a very useful role assigned to it by history.

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