

9th Social Science Lesson 3 Notes in English

3. Early Tamil Society and Culture

Introduction

- Tamil civilization, as we have seen, begins atleast **three centuries before the Common Era (CE)**.
- As seafaring people, Tamil traders and sailors established commercial and cultural links across the seas and merchants from foreign territories also visited the Tamil region.
- The resulting **cultural and mercantile activities and internal developments** led to urbanization in this region. Towns and ports emerged. Coins and currency came into circulation. Written documents were produced.
- The Tamil Brahmi script was adopted to write the Tamil language. Classical Tamil poems were composed.
- In the unit one, we studied the cultural developments in the Tamil region from the prehistoric period to the beginning of the Iron Age.
- In this lesson, we will learn about the development of Tamil culture in the **Early Historic Period also known as the Sangam Age**.

Sources for the study of early Tamil society

The sources for reconstructing the history of the ancient Tamils are:

1. Classical Tamil literature
2. Epigraphy (inscriptions)
3. Archaeological excavations and material culture
4. Non-Tamil and Foreign Literature

The Classical Sangam Tamil Literature

The Classical Sangam corpus (collection) consists of the **Tholkappiyam, the Pathinen Melkanakku (18 Major works) and the Pathinen Kilkanakku (18 minor works) and the five epics.**

Tholkappiyam

- Tholkappiyam, attributed to **Tholkappiyar**, is the earliest written work on Tamil grammar.
- Apart from elaborating the rules of grammar, the third section of Tholkappiyam also describes poetic conventions that provide information on Tamil social life.
- The texts of **Pathinen Melkanakku include Pathupaattu (ten long songs) and Ettuthogai (the eight anthologies).**
- These texts are the oldest among the classical Tamil texts. The texts of **Pathinen Kilkanakku belong to a later date.**

The Ettuthogai or the eight anthologies are

1. Natrinai
2. Kurunthogai
3. Paripaadal
4. Pathittrupathu
5. Aingurunuru
6. Kalithogai
7. Akanaanuru
8. Puranaanuru

Pathupattu collection includes ten long songs

1. Thirumurugatrupadai
2. Porunaratrupadai
3. Perumpanatrupadai
4. Sirupanatrupadai
5. Mullaipaattu
6. Nedunalvaadai
7. Maduraikanchi
8. Kurinjipaattu
9. Pattinappaalai
10. Malaipadukadam

Pathinen Kilkanakku (18 minor works)

- The Pathinen Kilkanakku comprises **eighteen texts** elaborating on ethics and morals.
- The pre-eminent work among these is the **Thirukkural composed by Thiruvalluvar**.
- In **1330 couplets** **Thirukkural** considers questions of morality, statecraft and love.

The Five Epics

The epics or Kappiyams are long narrative poem of very high quality. They are,

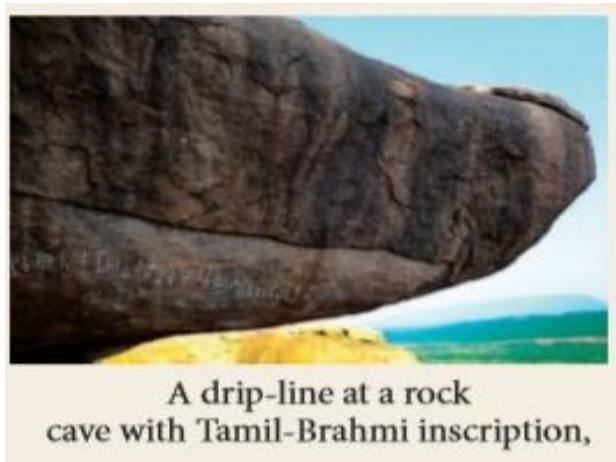
1. Silappathikaaram
2. Manimekalai
3. Seevaka Chinthamani
4. Valaiyapathi
5. Kundalakesi

Epigraphy

- Epigraphy is the **study of inscriptions**. Inscriptions are documents scripted on stone, copper plates, and other media such as coins, rings, etc.

- The development of script marks the beginning of the historical period.
- The period before the use of written script is called prehistoric period. Tamil-Brahmi was the first script used for writing in Tamil Nadu.
- Inscriptions in Tamil-Brahmi are found in caves and rock shelters, and on pottery and other objects (coins, rings and seals).

Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions



- Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions have been found in more than **30 sites** in Tamil Nadu mostly on cave surfaces and rock shelters.
- These caves were the abodes of monks, mostly Jaina monks. The natural caves were converted into residence by cutting a dripline to keep rain water away from the cave.
- Inscriptions often occur below such **driplines**. The sites have smooth stone beds carved on rock surface for monks who led a simple life and lived in these shelters.
- Merchants and kings converted these natural formations as habitation for monks, who had renounced worldly life.
- **Mangulam, Muttupatti, Pugalur, Arachalur and Kongarpuliyankulam and Jambai** are some of the major sites of such caves with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions.
- Around Madurai many such caves with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions can still be seen. Many of them are located along ancient trade routes.
- **Acts of destruction of heritage property or property belonging to others are called vandalism.**

Hero Stones



The Tamil-Brahmi inscription
at Arachalur



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above inscription

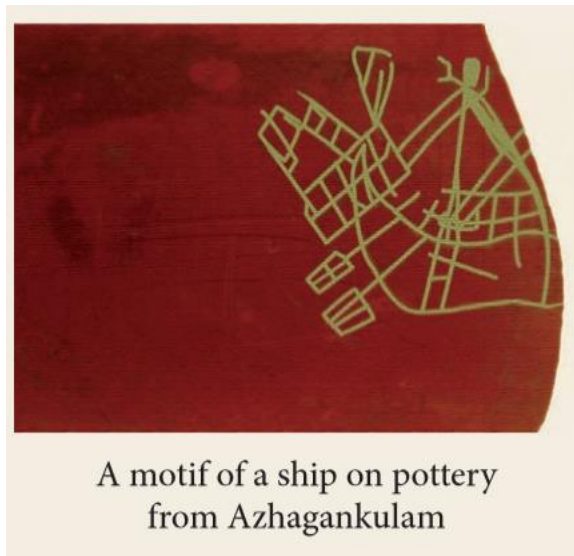


A rock bed at K. Puliankulam

- Hero stones are memorials erected for those who lost their lives in the battles and in cattle raids.
- As cattle were considered an important source of wealth, raiding cattle owned by adjoining tribes and clans was common practice in a pastoral society.
- During the Sangam Age, the **Mullai landscape** followed the pastoral way of life. Tribal chieftains plundered the cattle wealth of enemies whose warriors fought to protect their cattle.
- Many warriors died in such battles and were remembered as martyrs. **Memorial stones were erected in their honour.**
- Sangam literature vividly portrays these battles and clashes, and describes such hero stones as objects of worship.

- Tholkappiyam describes the procedures for erecting hero stones. Hero stones of the Sangam Age with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions can be found at **Pulimankombai and Thathapatti in Theni district and Porpanaikottai in Pudukkottai district**.
- Those of the Sangam Age discovered till now do not have images or sculptures. Hero stones of the post-Sangam Age and the Pallava period occur in large numbers in pastoral regions especially around the Chengam region near Thiruvannamalai district.
- These hero stones have inscriptions and the images of warriors and names of heroes.

Inscriptions



- Pottery vessels from the Early Historic Period have names of people engraved on them in Tamil-Brahmi script.
- Potsherds have been discovered in **Arikkamedu, Azhagankulam, Kodumanal, Keezhadi**, and many other sites in Tamil Nadu.
- Pottery inscribed with names in Tamil-Brahmi script have also been found in **Berenike and Quseir al Qadhim in Egypt and in Khor Rori in Oman** indicating that early Tamils had trade contacts with West Asia and along the Red Sea coast.
- People etched their names on pottery to indicate ownership. Many of the names are in Tamil while some are in Prakrit.

Prakrit

Prakrit was the language used by the common people in the Northern part of India during the Mauryan period.

Archaeology and Material Culture

- Archaeology is the study of the past by interpretation of the material cultural remains. Such remains are unearthed by the systematic excavation of old inhabitation sites called archaeological sites.
- Archaeological sites have mounds which are an accumulation of soil, pottery, building and organic remains and objects.
- In many parts of Tamil Nadu they are called **Nattam, Kottai and Medu**. Such sites provide evidence of how people lived in the past.

Archaeological Sites

- Archaeological excavation refers to systematically digging a site to recover material evidence for exploring and interpreting societies of the past.
- Archaeological excavations at the early historic sites are the source of evidence of the activities of the Sangam Age people.
- Excavations at **Arikkamedu, Azhagankulam, Uraiyur, Kanchipuram, Kaveripoompattinam, Korkai, Vasavasamudram, Keezhadi, Kodumanal** in Tamil Nadu, and **Pattanam** in Kerala provide the evidence we have of this period.
- Arikkamedu, near Puducherry, is a Sangam Age port, excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).
- British archaeologist, **Robert Eric Mortimer Wheeler**, French Archaeologist, **J.M. Casal**, and Indian archaeologists, **A. Ghosh and Krishna Deva**, excavated this site.
- They found evidence of a planned town, warehouse, streets, tanks and ring wells. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is a Central government agency that manages archaeological sites and monuments in India.
- The Government of Tamil Nadu has its own department for archaeology called the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology.
- **The Indian Treasure Trove Act (1878), the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act (1972), the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (1958)** are legislation related to the preservation of archaeological remains in India.

Material Culture

- Archaeologists have found evidence of brick structures and industrial activities, as well as artefacts such as **beads, bangles, cameos, intaglios, and other materials** in these sites.
- Tamil Brahmi inscriptions on pottery and coins have also been unearthed. Evidences of the various arts, crafts and industries together help us reconstruct the way of life of the people of those times.
- From this we learn and understand how they might have lived.
- **Cameo** – an ornament made in precious stone where images are carved on the surface.
- **Intaglio** – an ornament in which images are carved as recess, below the surface.

Coins



- Coins as a medium of exchange were introduced for the first time in the Sangam Age.
- The coins of the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas, punch-marked coins, and Roman coins form another important source of evidence from the Sangam Age.
- Punch-marked coins have been found at Kodumanal and Bodinayakkanur. Roman coins are concentrated in the Coimbatore region, and are found at **Azhagankulam, Karur, and Madurai**.
- They were used as bullion for their metal value and as ornaments. Bullion means precious metal available in the form of ingots.
- Punch-marked coins are the earliest coins used in India. They are mostly made of silver and have numerous symbols punched on them. Hence, they are known as punch-marked coins.

Non-Tamil Sources (Foreign Accounts)

- Non-Tamil literary sources also offer information on early Tamil society.
- The presence of the non-Tamil sources reveals the extensive contacts and interactions of the early Tamil society with the outside world.

Arthasastra

- Arthasastra, the classic work on economy and statecraft authored by **Chanakya during the Mauryan period, refers to Pandya kavataka**.
- It may mean the pearl and shells from the Pandyan country.

Mahavamsa

- Mahavamsa, the Sri Lankan Buddhist chronicle, composed in the **Pali language**, mentions **merchants and horse traders** from Tamil Nadu and South India.
- Chronicle is a narrative text presenting the important historical events in chronological order.

Periplus of Erythrean Sea

- Periplus of Erythrean Sea is an ancient **Greek text** whose author is not known. The term Periplus means navigational guide used by sailors.
- Erythrean Sea refers to the **waters around the Red Sea**. It makes references to the Sangam Age ports of **Muciri, Thondi, Korkai and Kumari**, as well as the Cheras and the Pandyas.

Pliny's Natural History

- Pliny the Elder, was a Roman who wrote **Natural History**. Written in **Latin**, it is a text on the natural wealth of the Roman Empire.
- Pliny speaks about the pepper trade with India and he states that it took **40 days** to reach India, from Oealis near North East Africa, if the south west monsoon wind was favourable.
- He also mentions that the Pandyas of Madurai controlled the port of Bacare on the Kerala coast. The current name of Bacare is not known.
- Pliny laments the loss of Roman wealth due to Rome's pepper trade with India – an indication of the huge volume and value of the pepper that was traded.

Ptolemy's Geography

- Ptolemy's Geography is a **gazetteer and atlas of Roman times** providing geographical details of the Roman Empire in the second century CE.
- **Kaveripoompattinam (Khabaris Emporium), Korkai (Kolkoi), Kanniyakumari (Komaria), and Muciri (Muziris)** are some of the places mentioned in his Geography.

Peutingerian table



Map of Peutingerian table,

Peutingerian table is an illustrated **map of the Roman roads**. It shows the areas of ancient Tamilagam and the **port of Muziris**.

Note: Taprobane refers to Sri Lanka as Island. Muziris refers to the port of Muchiri.

Vienna Papyrus

- Vienna papyrus, a Greek document datable to the second century CE, mentions **Muciri's** trade of olden days.
- It is in the **Papyrus Museum attached to the Austrian National Library, Vienna (Austria)**.
- It contains a written agreement between traders and mentions **the name of a ship, Hermapollon**, and lists articles of export such as pepper and ivory that were shipped from India to the Roman Empire.
- Papyrus, a paper produced out of the papyrus plant used extensively for writing purposes in ancient Egypt.

The Sangam Age

- The Sangam Age or the Early Historic period is an important phase in the history of South India.
- This period is marked out from prehistory, because of the availability of textual sources, namely Sangam literature and Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions.
- Sangam text is a vast corpus of literature that serves as an important source for the study of the people and society of the relevant period.

Chronology

- There is considerable debate among scholars about the age and chronology of Sangam society. The Sangam texts are generally dated to between **third century BCE and the third century CE**.

- The references in Greco-Roman texts, TamilBrahmi inscriptions and the references to **the Cheras, Cholas and the Pandyas in the Ashokan inscription** corroborate this date.
- It is generally agreed that the Sangam poems were composed in the early part of the historical period, but were compiled into anthologies in the later period.
- Ashokan Brahmi - the script used in Ashokan edicts or inscriptions.

The Thinaï

- The concept of Thinaï is presented in the **Tamil Grammar work of Tholkappiyam** and this concept is essential to understand the classical Tamil poems.
- Thinaï is a poetic theme, which means a class or category and refers to a habitat or eco-zone with specific physiographical characteristics.
- Sangam poems are set in these specific eco-zones and reveal that human life has deep relationships with nature.
- The themes of the poems are broadly defined as **akam (interior) and puram (exterior)**.
- Akathinaï refers to various situations of love and family life, while Purathinaï is concerned with all others aspects of life and deals particularly with war and heroism.
- **Ainthinaï**: The Five Thinaïs or landscapes. Tamilagam was divided into five landscapes. Each region had distinct characteristics – **a presiding deity, occupation, people and cultural life according to its specific environmental conditions**.
- This classification has been interpreted by scholars to reflect real life situations in these landscapes.

The five landscapes are Kurunji, Mullai, Marutham, Neythal and Paalai.

- Kurunji refers to the hilly and mountainous region.
- Mullai is forested and pastoral region.
- Marutham is the fertile riverine valley.
- Neythal is coastal region.
- Paalai is sandy desert region.

Sangam Age Polity: Political Powers of Tamilagam

- The Sangam Age has its roots in the Iron Age. In the Iron Age people were organised into chiefdoms.
- From such communities of Iron Age emerged the Vendhars of the early historic period and the Velirs of the Sangam Age were chieftains.
- The **Mauryan emperor, Asoka, conquered Kalinga (Odisha) and parts of Andhra and Karnataka regions**.
- **Ashokan inscriptions found in present day Odisha, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are not seen in Tamil Nadu and Kerala**.
- Therefore, we may conclude that the Tamil rulers were independent of Mauryan authority.

The Muvendhar



A Chera coin with bow and arrow, and an elephant goad on the obverse and elephant on the reverse



Chola Coins with a tiger on the obverse, elephant and the sacred symbols on the reverse



Sangam Age Pandya coin with fish symbol

- Among the political powers of the Sangam Age, the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas occupied pre-eminent positions.
- They were known as Muvendhar (the three kings). The muvendhar controlled the major towns and ports of the Sangam period.

The Cheras

- The Cheras, referred to as Keralaputras in the Ashokan inscriptions, controlled the region of present-day Kerala and also the western parts of Tamil Nadu.
- **Vanci** was the capital of the Cheras while **Muciri and Thondi were their port towns**. Vanci is identified with Karur in Tamil Nadu while some others identify it with Thiruvanchaikalam in Kerala.
- **Pathiruppathu speaks about the Chera kings** and their territory. The Cheras wore garlands made from the flowers of the palm tree.
- The inscriptions of Pugalur near Karur mention the Chera kings of three generations. Coins of Chera kings have been found in Karur.
- The **Silappathikaram speaks about Cheran Senguttuvan**, who built a temple for **Kannagi**, the protagonist of the epic.
- The bow and arrow was the symbol of the Cheras. Legend has it that **Ilango** who composed the Silappathikaram, was the **brother of Cheran Senguttuvan**.

The Cholas

- The Cholas ruled over the Kaveri delta and northern parts of Tamil Nadu. Their capital was Uraiyur and their port town was **Kaveripoompattinam or Pumpuhar**, where the river Kaveri drains into the Bay of Bengal.
- **Pattinappaalai is a long poem about Kaveripoompattinam composed by the poet Kadiyalur Uruthirankannanar**. Silappathikaram describes the trading activities at Kaveripoompattinam.
- **Karikalan** is notable among the Chola kings and is credited with bringing forestlands under the plough and developing irrigation facilities by effectively utilising the water from the river Kaveri.
- The foundation for the extensive harnessing of water for irrigation purposes, which reached its zenith in later Chola times (**10th to 13th centuries**) was laid in his time.
- Karikalan fought battles with the Pandyas, Cheras and other chieftains.
- The Chola emblem was the tiger and they issued square copper coins with images of a **tiger on the obverse, elephant and the sacred symbols on the reverse**.

The Pandyas

- The Pandyas who ruled the southern part of Tamil Nadu are referred to in the Ashokan inscriptions.
- **Madurai was the Pandya's capital**. Tamil literary tradition credits Pandyan rulers with patronizing Tamil Sangams (academies) and supporting the compilations of poems.
- The Mangulam Tamil-Brahmi inscription mentions the king **Nedunchezhiyan**.
- **Nediyon, Mudathirumaran, Palayagasalai Mudukudumipperuvazhuti** were some of the important rulers of the dynasty. The **Pandyan symbol was the fish**.

Velirs / Chieftains

- Apart from the Vendhars, there were Velirs and numerous chieftains who occupied territories on the margins of the **muvendhar**.
- The velirs were the seven chiefs **Pari, Kari, Ori, Nalli, Pegan, Ai and Athiyaman**. Sangam poems write extensively about the generosity of these velirs.
- These chiefs had intimate relations with the poets of their time and were known for their large-heartedness.
- These chieftains had alliance with one or other of the **muvendhar** and helped them in their battles against the other Vendhars.

Society in Sangam Age

- Many of the communities of the Iron Age society were organised as tribes, and some of them were Chiefdoms.
- The Sangam Age society was a society in transition from a tribal community ruled by a chief to a larger kingdom ruled by a king.

Composition of the Society

- Social stratification had begun to take root in Tamil society by the Sangam times.
- There were several clan-based communities including groups such as **Panar, Paratavar, Eyinar, Uzhavar, Kanavar, Vettuvavar and Maravar**. The Vendhars, chiefs, and their associates formed the higher social groups.
- There were priests who were known as Antanars. There were artisan groups **specialising in pottery and blacksmithy**. The caste system we find in northern India did not take root in Tamil country as social groups were divided into five situational types (tamil) and related occupational patterns.
- Even though Sangam society was characterized by limited consumption of commodities, the kings, chiefs and merchants led a prosperous life. People at the margins lived in poverty.
- **Panars** depended on their patrons for their livelihood. The development of agriculture and pastoral ways of life might have harmed the eco-system and the naturally available forest and wild animals.
- It is possible that some of the hunter-gatherers might have been pushed to the forest areas and a few might have taken up the occupation of manual labourers.
- The development of agriculture in the wet-land region depended on the use of certain groups of people as labourers.

Women

- Women are frequently referred to in Tamil texts as mothers, heroines, and foster-mothers. Women from **Panar families, dancers, poets, and royal women** were all portrayed in Sangam literature.

- There are references to women from all five eco-zones. For example, **Vennikkuyathiyar** is identified as a poetess from the village of Venni.
- There are references to women protecting **Thinai fields from birds** and **Umanar** women selling salt showing that women were involved in primary production.
- Instances where women preferred to die along with their husbands also occur in the literature of the times.

Economy



Paddy grains collected from Porunthal excavations



Different types of pottery from Porunthal excavations.



Russet coated painted pottery with wavy line decoration

- The economy was mixed as elaborated in the Thinai concept.
- People practiced **agriculture, pastoralism, trade and money exchange, hunting-gathering, and fishing** depending upon the eco-zones in which they lived.

Primary Production

- Agriculture was one of the main sources of subsistence. Crops like **paddy, sugarcane, millets** were cultivated. Both wet and dry land farming were practiced.
- In the riverine and tank-irrigated areas, paddy was cultivated.
- Millets were cultivated in dry lands. Varieties of rice such as **sennel (red rice), vennel (white rice), and aivananel (a type of rice)** are mentioned in the literature.
- Rice grains were found in burial urns at excavations in Adichanallur and Porunthal.
- People in the forest adopted punam or shifting cultivation.
- Pastoralism – nomadic people earning livelihood by rearing cattle, sheep, and goat.

Industries and Crafts of the Sangam Age

- Craft production and craft specialization were important aspects of urbanization. In the Sangam Age there were professional groups that produced various commodities.
- The system of production of commodities is called industry.

Pottery

- Pottery was practised in many settlements. People used pottery produced by **Kalamceyko (potters)** in their daily activities and so they were made in large numbers.
- **Black ware, russet-coated painted ware, black and red ware** potteries were the different types of pottery used.

Iron Smelting Industry

- Iron manufacturing was an important artisanal activity.
- Iron smelting was undertaken in traditional furnaces and such furnaces, with terracotta pipes and raw ore have been found in many archaeological sites.
- For instance evidence of iron smelting has been found in **Kodumanal and Guttur**.
- Sangam literature speaks of blacksmiths, and their tools and activities. Iron implements were required for agriculture and warfare (swords, daggers, and spears).

Stone Ornaments



A terracotta seal with rice husk impression, Keezhadi



A map of major Sangam Age sites



Carnelian Beads of Sangam Age



Carnelian beads with etched designs of Sangam Age



Gold ornament axe



Gold pendant, Porunthal



Gold ornaments, Pattanam

- Sangam Age people adorned themselves with a variety of ornaments.
- While the poor wore ornaments made of **clay, terracotta, iron, and leaves and flowers**, the rich wore jewellery made of **precious stones, copper, and gold**.
- **Quartz, amethyst (sevvantikkal) and carnelian (semmanikkal)** were some of the semi-precious stones used for making ornaments.
- Diamond drills were used to pierce holes in the hard stones and etched carnelian beads have been found in the megalithic monuments.

Gold jewellery

- Gold ornaments were well known in this period. **Gold coins from Roman** was used to make jewellery.
- Evidence of gold smelting has been found at Pattanam in Kerala.

- Gold ornaments have been unearthed at the megalithic sites of **Suttukeni, Adichanallur and Kodumanal**, and towns of **Arikkamedu, Keezhadi and Pattanam** in Kerala.

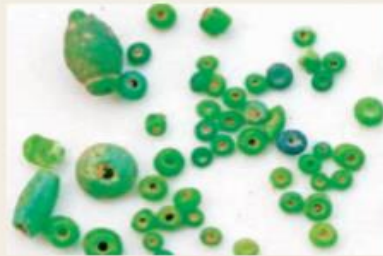
Glass Beads



A bronze tiger with carnelian stones, Kodumanal



A bronze vessel from a megalithic burial Auroville, Puducherry



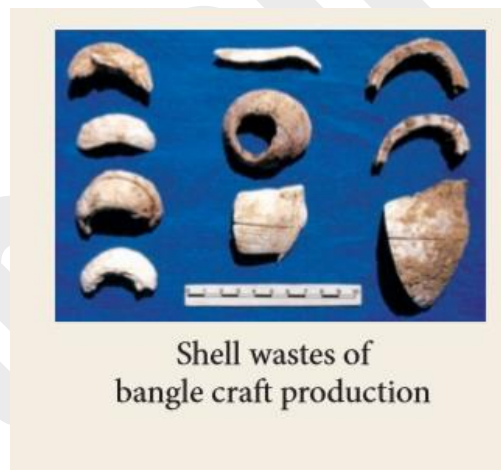
Glass beads from Porunthal excavations

- The presence of glass beads at the sites reveals that people of the Sangam Age knew how to make glass beads.
- Glass material (silica) was melted in a furnace and drawn into long tubes which were then cut into small beads. Glass beads came in various shapes and colour.
- **Arikkamedu and Kudikkadu, near Cuddalore** show evidence of glass beads industry. It is possible that people who could not afford precious stones used glass beads instead.

Pearl Fishery and Shell Bangle



- The Pamban coast is famous for pearl fishery. A pearl has been discovered in recently excavated **Keezhadi site**.
- Shell bangles were very common in the Sangam Age. The Parathavars collected conch shells from the Pamban Island, which were cut and crafted into bangles by artisans.
- Whole shells as well as fragments of bangles have been found at many sites. Sangam literature describes women wearing shell bangles.



Textiles

- Textile production was another important occupation. Evidence of spindle whorls and pieces of cloth have been found at Kodumanal.
- Literature too refers to clothes called **kalingam** and other fine varieties of textiles.
- Periplus also mentions the fine variety of textiles produced in the Tamil region. Spindle whorls were used for making thread from cotton.

Exchange, Trade, Merchants, and Trade Routes

- We saw the primary production of grains, cattle wealth, and various commodities. These goods were not produced by everybody and were not produced in all settlements. Resources and commodities were not available in all regions.
- For example, the hill region did not have fish or salt and the coastal regions could not produce paddy.
- Therefore trade and exchange was important for people to have access to different commodities.
- **Specialised groups called vanikars (traders)** travelled in groups trading goods and commodities between regions.

Traders

Akanaanuru poem 149 describes the trading at the port of Muciri as follows:

“the well crafted ships of the Yavana came with gold returned with pepper at the wealthy port of Muciri”



The trade route from Tamilagam to Rome.

- The terms **vanikan** and **nigama (guild)** appear in Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions.
- There were different types of merchants: **gold merchants, cloth merchants, and salt merchants.**
- Salt merchants were called **Umanars** and they travelled in bullock carts along with their family.

Means of Transport

- Bullock carts and animals were used to transport goods by land. Trade routes linked the various towns of Tamilagam.
- Various types of water crafts and sea-going vessels such as **Kalam, Pahri, Odam, Toni, Teppam, and Navai** are also mentioned in Tamil literature.

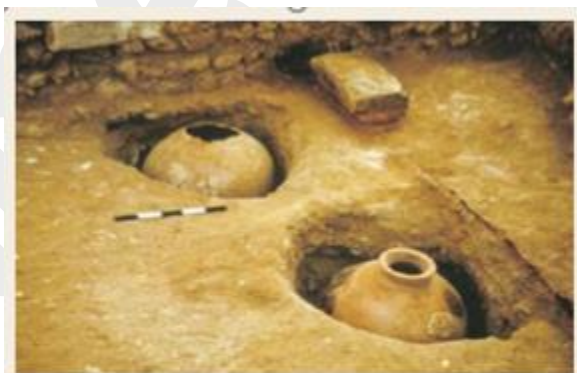
Barter and Coins

- Barter was the primary mode of exchange. For instance, rice was exchanged for fish. Salt was precious and a handful of it would fetch an equal amount of rice.
- The extensive availability of coin hoards of the **Sangam Age of the Cheras, Cholas, Pandyas, and Malayaman** indicates that they were used widely.

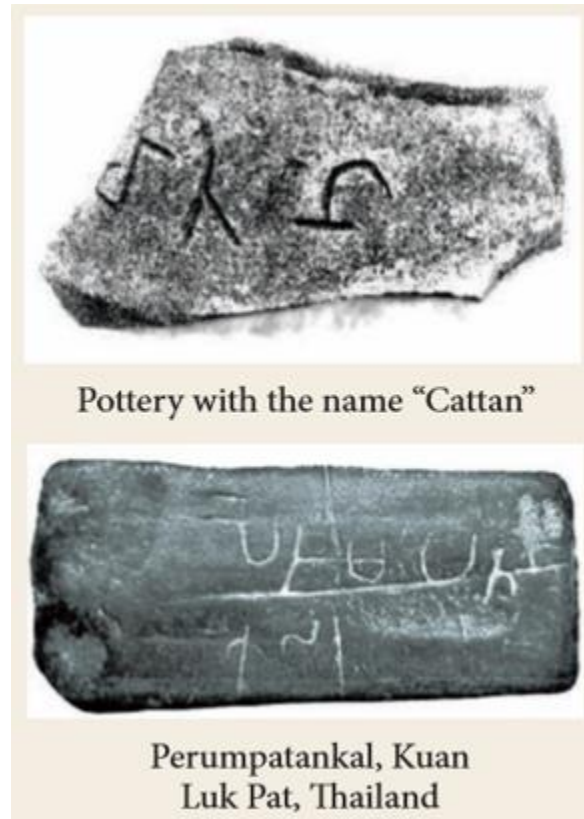
Tamilagam and Overseas Interactions

- Tamil country had connections with countries overseas both in the east and west.
- Roman ships used monsoon winds to cross the **Western Sea or the Arabian Sea to connect Tamilagam with the Western world.**
- Spices including pepper, ivory, and precious stones were exported. Metal including gold, silver and copper and precious stones were imported.
- Yavanar referred to the **Westerners**, including the Greeks, Romans and West Asian people. Yavana derives from the **Greek region of Ionia.**

Tamil Nadu to Red Sea Coast



Ceramic Jars from Tamilagam with preserved pepper, Berenike, Egypt



- An Indian jar with **7.5 kg of pepper, teak wood, a potsherd** with Tamil-Brahmi inscription and Indian pottery have been discovered at **Berenike**, a port on the Red Sea coast of Egypt.
- At Quseir al Qadhim, another port located north of Berenike on the Red Sea Coast, three Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions, **Panaiori, Kanan, and Cattan**, have been found on pottery discovered here.
- A stone with the name "**Perumpatankal**" has been found at KhuanLuk Pat, Thailand.
- Southeast Asia was known as **Suvarna Bhumi** in Tamil literature. This stone was used by a person called Perumpattan, probably a goldsmith. It was a touchstone used to test the purity of gold.

Emergence of towns and ports

- The Sangam Age saw the first urbanization in Tamilagam.
- Cities developed and they had **brick buildings, roof tiles, ring wells and planned towns, streets, and store houses**.
- The towns worked as ports and artisanal centres. Arikamedu, Kaveripoompattinam, Azhagankulam and Korkai on the east coast and Pattanam in Kerala were port centres.
- Kanchipuram, Uraiyur, Karur, Madurai and Kodumanal were inland trade centres.
- Many goods and commodities were produced in these centres and were exported to various regions.
- Though few in number, large towns appeared in the Sangam Age.

- Small villages however were found in many areas. **Bronze vessels, beads, shell bangles, glass beads, pottery with names of people written in TamilBrahmi script** were found at these sites.

Faith and Belief System

- Like the diverse nature of the society and economy, the belief system of the Sangam Age was also diverse.
- It consisted of animism, ancestor worship, hero worship and worship of several deities.
- Tholkappiyam lists the presiding deities of **Kurunji, Mullai, Marutham, Neythal and Paalai landscapes, as Murugan, Thirumal, Indiran, Varunan and Kotravai**, respectively.
- However, people also worshipped natural forces and dead heroes, and ancestors. The force of anangu is mentioned in the literature which indicates the prevalence of animistic beliefs.
- Jainism was present as evidenced by the caves with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions. **Performance of Yagna** is also evidenced.
- Buddhism was also present in certain centres. Different groups practiced various forms of worship

Culture of Arts

- Various art forms too existed in the Sangam Age. Performances of ritual dances called Veriyatal are referred to in the literature.
- Composition of poems, playing of music instruments and dances** were also known. The literature mentions the fine variety of cuisine of the Sangam Age.
- People took care of their appearance and evidence of antimony rods (kohl sticks) made of copper has been found in archaeological sites.
- They were used by women for decorating their eyebrows.

Tamil-Brahmi Script																									
used in the Sangam Age for writing the Tamil Language																									
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More to Know:**1. Keezhadi near Madurai, Tamil Nadu**

Brick Structures at Keezhadi

- Keezhadi is located near **Silaimaan east of Madurai, on the highway to Rameswaram.**
- In a large coconut garden, called Pallichandai Tidal, the Archaeological Survey of India excavated an ancient town dating to the Sangam Age.
- Archaeological excavations have produced evidence for brick buildings, drainage, Tamil-Brahmi inscription on **pottery, beads of glass, carnelian and quartz, pearl, iron objects, games pieces, and antimony rods.**
- Further excavation may shed light on the nature of the craft production and the cultural activities undertaken at this settlement.

2. Kodumanal, Tamil Nadu

Excavated
Megalithic Burial
at Kodumanal



Iron objects (horse
equipment) from
Kodumanal

- Kodumanal is located near **Erode** in Tamil Nadu and is identified with the Kodumanam of Pathitrapattu.
- Evidence of **iron, stone bead and shell work**, as well as megalithic burials have been discovered at this site.

- More than 300 pottery inscriptions in Tamil-Brahmi have also been found.



Shell bangle fragments and a conch, Kodumanal



Carnelian beads, Kodumanal



Jar with writing in Brahmi



Human skeleton from Kodumanal

3. Pattanam, Kerala



Pottery sherds from West Asia



Canoe excavated at Pattanam

- Pattanam is located near **North Paravur in Vadakkekara village of Ernakulam** district of Kerala.
- It was an ancient port town that had overseas connections with the western and eastern worlds.

4. What is an urban centre?

A planned town with brick architecture and a proper layout. Urban centres have a larger population involved in non-agrarian, commercial and political occupations. Various industrial activities are seen in these towns.

5. Pulimankombai Hero stone



Hero stone-Pulimankombai

- Pulimankomba is a village in the Vaigai river valley in **Theni district**.
- In **2006**, rare hero stone inscriptions in Tamil Brahmi script were discovered in this village. One of the inscriptions from Pulimankombai reads **"Kudalur Akol pedu tiyan antavan kal"** It means **"The stone of Tiyan Antavan who was killed in a cattle raid at the village of Kudalur"**.