



HISTORY

UNIT – 3

Dear Students,

I hope all of you studied Pressure groups well. Now we are going to study about Tamil Society.

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 Melkanakkui nclude Pathupaattu(ten Idylls) 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) Nattrinai
- (2) Kurunthogai
- (3) Paripaadal
- (4) Pathittrupathu
- (5) Aingurunuru
- (6) Kalithogai
- (7) Akanaanuru
- (8) Puranaanuru



Hero Stones

- 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

Inscriptions on Pottery

- Pottery vessels from the Early Historic Period have names of people engraved on them in Tamil-Brahma script.
- Potsherds have been discovered in Arikamedu, 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 KhorRori 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 was the language used by the common people in the Northern part of India during the Mauryan period.

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 Arikamedu, Azhagankulam, Uraiur, 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.