

1967

History of Tamil Nadu

1. Sources

The sources for the study of the history of Tamil Nadu may be broadly divided into two divisions.

(1). The Literary sources and (2) The Archaeological sources.

1. The Literary Sources

The Literary sources are again classified into Indigenous Literatures and Foreign Literatures.

The Indigenous Literatures are sub-divided into

(a) The Tamil Literatures. (b) The Non-Tamil Literatures.

(a) The Tamil Literatures—Sangam Age

The Sangam Literatures and Post Sangam Literatures are included in this division. They are the Tolkappiam, the Pattupattu and and the Ettuttogai. The two epics, Silappathikaram and Manimekalai, and the Patinenkilkanakku are the Post Sangam works.

(See the Chapter Sangam Age—Sources)

The Pallavas and the Pandyas :

For the study of the Pallava period, the hymns of the Tevaram Trio, viz Appar, Sundarar and Sambandar, give references to the Socio.economic and the Religious condi-

tion of the Pallava age. The Religious conflict, the great famine, and the Pallava and Chalukya conflict, may be studied through these works. The Naliyira Tivya Prabandam of the Alvars is a Religious work. Yet, the hymns are worth to be mentioned for the study of the invasions of the Pallavas and the contemporary rulers. The war-materials used by the Pallavas and the Rashtrakutas are mentioned. The Nandikkalambakam, a work dedicated to Nandivarman III; The Bharata Venba, which refers to the battle of Tellaru by Nandivarman III and the Pandikkovai are useful for historical studies.

Periyapuranam of Sekkilar throws much light on the historical evidences. He was the court poet of Kulottunga III. The Nayanmars, described in the Periyapuranam, were the Pallava monarchs, the generals, the feudatories and the saints of the Pallava or Pandya Kingdoms. Hence more information about the events in the history may be studied.

The Pandikkovai and Periyapuranam throw light for the study of Pandyas. The Divya suri-Carita and the Guru paramparai are other contemporary Vaishnavite works. Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam of Paranjoti also gives some historical Sources.

The Cholas

In the Chola period, a great encouragement was received from the public as well as from the kings for writing poems in Tamil. Many valuable works came out during this period

1. Kalingattupparani of Jayamkondar refers to the expedition of Kurunakara Tondaiman, 2. Ottakkuttar's Muvarula Kulottunga Cholan Pillai Tamil, and Takkayagap Parani explain some important problems in the chola history. Virasoliyam, Thandiyalangaram, Kongudesa Rajakkal Charitam, the Kamparamayanam, the Sivakasintamani and 14 works of Saiva Siddanta throw light on the culture of the people.

Sivagangai Charittira kummi, Panchalakkurichi Alivu Charitira kummi etc. also give clue to some unsolved problems in the history.

b. The Non-Tamil Literatures

The Ramayana and the Mahabaratha describe the society of the Pandyas. Kapatapura of the Pandyas is referred to in the Ramayana; Kautilya's Arthasastra also mentions about the Pandyas. Lokavibhagam, a work written by a Digambara Jain; Avanti Sundari Katasara of Bharavi, Mattavilasa Prakasana of Mahendravarman are some of the Sanskrit works of the Pallava period.

Sakti Patra's Achcharya Sudamani, Unmar vasavatatta etc. also useful for our study. Vidyachakravarti, a court poet of the Hoysala king wrote Katyakarnamrutam, Gangadevi's Madura Vijayam or Kambana Raya Vijayam are the sanskrit works written in the 14th 15th centuries. A detailed decription of Kumarakambana's expedition is given in the Madura Vijayam.

The Prabanamrutam and Saluvapyutam are the Telugu-Literatures of the Later Pandyas.

2. Foreign Accounts.

Many foreigners visited India either for commercial purpose or for visiting important Pilgrimage centres. Their accounts about India become a valuable source. Magasthenes' Indica refers to the Pandya kingdom.

Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, Geography of Ptolemy are some of the foreign works which throw light on the early ports and other trading centres. Mahavamsa, Dipavamsa etc. refer to the date of Kajahahu of Ceylon and other political relations. These literatures also say about Narasimha I's expedition to Ceylon. Livy and Pliny also give reference about Tamil Nadu.

Hiuen Tsang, a Chinese pilgrim visited Kanchi. He has given a vivid description of Kanchipuram. He also refers to the famine in the Pandya Country.

The accounts of Marcopolo say about the horse trading and the socio-economic life of the people. The Italian visitor Nicolo Conti; the Persian ambassador Abdul Razak; the Russian trader Atanasius Nikirin; the Persian traveller; Ferishta; the Portuguese interpreter Baposa and chroniclers Domiugos Poes and Fernao Nuniz have given a vivid account about the Vijayanagara empire.

II Archaeological Sources

The Archaeological sources may be classified into three divisions.

1. Epigraphy and Copper plate
2. Numismatics
3. Monuments

1. EPIGRAPHY AND COPPER PLATES :

Epiigraphy is the study of inscriptions. These inscriptions are found on 1. The Rocks 2. The Pillars 3. The Caves 4. The walls of the temples and 5. The Copper plates.

1. The Rocks : Inscriptions of Asoka; Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela etc. some of the inscriptions found out side the Tamil Country. Asoka's attempt to spread Buddhism by sending emissaries to the courts of the Cholas, Pandyas, Cheras and Sinhalese is found in the inscriptions of Asoka. Hathigumpha inscription refers to the strong unity of Tamil states.

2. The Pillars : Allahabad pillar Prasasti of Samudragupta refers to 12 rulers of South India which include Vishnugopa of Kanchi.

3. The caves : Tirupparangundram, Nagamalai, Anaimalai, Kilkuyilkudi, Tirukkovalur, Kudumiyamalai etc. are some of the places where inscriptions are found and they give reference to the Sangam period.

During the Pallava and the Pandya period, number of caves were carved out through out their empire. Mandagappattu, Magendravadi, Tirchy, Sittannavasal, Mamalapuram etc. are some of the caves of the Pallavas. Here, the achievements, the titles etc. of the Pallavas are mentioned on the walls. From the study of the Mantagappattu inscription it is noticed that prior to the Pallava period the temples were constructed with the help of the perishable materials like timber, marter, wood etc.

The Rathas of the Mamallapuram also bear inscriptions of the Pallava and the Chola period.

4. Temples : Kanchi, Mamallapuram, Tanjavur, Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Darasuram, Madurai, Tanjavur, etc. are the places where big and small temples are found with plenty of valuable historical inscriptions. They give

informations about the expeditions, method of administration (Uttiramerur), and the social and economic life of the people.

5. Copper Plates : The Copper plates were also used for inscribing matters. They give the date, the name of the ruler and the purpose of issuing such plates. They are found in the Prakrit and Sanskrit languages. Hirahadahalli, Gunapadeya, Mayidavalu are some of the Pallava Copper plates; Velvikkudi, Talavoypuram, Chinnamanur, Sivakasi copper plates describe about the Pandya Tiruvalangadu, Karantai, Anbil, Leydon etc. are some of the Chola Copper plates.

2. NUMISMATICS :

Numismatics is the study of coins. But the coins of the ancient period are not very helpful for the study. During the Sangam period, the Romans settled here and issued coins. The coins of these age are found at Arikkamedu, Madurai and other places. The Pandya coins represent fish; the Imperial Chola coins depict the squatting posture of the tiger; Varaguna II issued gold coins with his name. The coins of Vijayanagara rulers, the Nayaks, the Sultans etc. give information to write history of the concerned period. The prosperity and the social and economic status of the people may be studied on the basis of the size and the metal used.

3. MONUMENT :

The temples constructed during the various rulers of Tamil Nadu give a clear picture of their taste in Art. The sculpture of these temples narrate the types of ornaments, dresses and other materials used by those people. The Mahisasuramartini Mandaba at Mamallai, the Kailasanatha temple, Vaikunta Perumal temple etc. at Kanchi reveal the shape and types of various materials that they used. The descriptions of various gods are also identified from the

sculptures of these temples. Different poses of the dancing girls are found on the eastern gopura of the Chidambaram temple.

The archaeological monuments also give more informations for reconstructing the history of Tamil Nadu. The contributions of Bruce Foote and Mortimer Wheeler are remarkable in various ways in the field of excavations.

The excavations at Adichchanallur, Arikkamedu, Korkai, Uraiyur, Madura etc. throw much light on the socio and economic conditions of the early period.

Ganga Devi's Madura vijayam narrates about the invasion of Kumara Kampana in the Southern part. The Pandyan Chronicle and the Martyunjaya manuscripts throw more information Mathurai Chala Varalaru, Koil olugu, Chidambara purana, Chokkanatha Ula, Harichandra Purana etc, throw light on the Vijayanagar rule in Tamil Nadu. The migration of the Telugu and Karnadigas into the Tamil country not only changed the customs and conventions but also language and literature. Umarupulavar's Sriapuramam, Gnaprahasa Desikars Kanchikkalampaham, Paranjothiyar's Chidambara pattiyal, Ellappa Navalar's Arumayantati and other literature narrate the history of the Nayak age. Plenty of Sanskrit and Tamil literature throw light on the historicity of the Maratha people. The 19th and 20th century literatures, plenty of manuscripts and official documents, government Proceedings preserved in the Tamil Nadu Archives Madras constitute a treasure house of information they provide sources to study the Revenue, Military, education and religious condition of Tamil country under the British rule.

The volumes mentioned country correspondence contain the correspondence exchanged between the local powers and the government, plenty of Judicial proceedings, official Records of Arcot, the factory Records and Journals. The Diaries and Private Letters also give some valuable source material for the study of history. The private Diary of Ananda Rangam pillai, courtier to Dupleix at Pondicherry

is an authoritative record to study the social and political Condition. The conflict between the French and English and the secondary powers are beautifully described. Diaries of S. R. Lushington and his Report on the Tirunelveli country and John Hodgeson's Journal on Tirunelveli portray the Tirunelveli history and the Palayam of Panchalam Kurichi.

William Fullarton's Report to the Madras council (1784) and Thomas Monroe's Report (1808); the private correspondence of Lord Macartrey (1781-85); the personal and private letters of Mrs. Annie Besant etc are highly valuable for the historians.

2. SANGAM AGE

SOURCES

The Sources for the study of the History of the Sangam Age can broadly be divided into two categories. They are I. Literary Sources and II. Archaeological Sources.

I. Literary Sources: The Literary sources are again classified into 1. Indigenous Literary sources and 2. Foreign Literary sources.

Indigenous Literary sources are again sub-divided into Tamil Literatures and Non-Tamil Literatures.

The Tamil Literary sources

The Age of Sangam is noted for the efflorescence of Tamil Literatures. The classics of the third Sangam consist of 1. Tolkappiam, 2. Eight Anthologies (எட்டுத்தொகை) and 3. Ten Idylls (பத்துப் பாட்டு).

The Tamil Literatures are divided into two broad divisions, viz. *Aham*, depicting subjective reactions particularly among lovers to amorous situations and recollections of them; and *Puram*, portraying objective facts and events, liberality and war being the preponderant themes.

1. Tolkappiyam

The very name refers to the ancient classics. Tolkappiyar is its author. He was one of the disciples of Agastya. It is the greatest grammatical work on Tamil.

It contains 1276 Sutras. It speaks of the grammar of words and sentences, syntax, orthography and prosody, figures of speech, the conduct of love and war and some traditional concepts of Sociology. The date of Tolkappiyam should be second century B. C. This work contains three chapters (adikaras) viz Eluttatikaram, Sollatikaram and Porulatikaram.

The Porulatikaram is immensely valuable for the writing of the social and economic life of the people.

2. Eight Anthologies

The following poem describes the names of the Ettuthogai

நற்றிணை நல்ல குறுந்தொகை ஐங்குறு நூறு
ஒத்த பதிற்றுப்பத்து ஒங்கு பரிபாடல்
கற்றறிந்தார் ஏத்துங் கலியொடு அகம்புறமென்ற
இத்திறத்த எட்டு.

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| 1. Narrinai | 2. Kuruntogai | 3. Ainkurunuru |
| 4. Padirrup-pattu | 5. Paripadal | 6. Kalittogai |
| 7. Agananuru and | 8. Purananuru. | |

Aham-Poems dealing with Love

1. Narrinai : It consists of 400 stanzas which describe all the five Tinais. 275 poets wrote these songs; The names of the important sea-ports and other big towns are found in this work. Tondj, Korkai, Kunrur etc. are some of them. This work was compiled by Pannadu Tanta Maran Valuti.

2. Kuruntogai : 205 poets composed all the 402 poems of this work. Purikko patronised and Purikkudi Kilar compiled these songs. The poems of Atimantiyar, Iraiyanar, Vellivitiyar are found in the Kuruntogai. The names of the rulers like Ori, Pari, Nalli etc.; places like Sirumallur, Urantai, Mantai are found. The social life of the Sangam Age is beautifully described in this work. The poem (135) describes

“வினையே ஆடவர்க்கு உயிரே, வாணுதல்
மனையுறை மகளிர்க்கு ஆடவர் உயிர்”

3. **Ajinkurunuru** : The poets Orampogiyar, Ammuvar, Kapilar, Otalantaiyar and Peyanar composed 500 poems, in five divisions of 100 poems each, describing the five Tinais. These poems were compiled by Pulatturai Murriyā Kudalur Kilar. The character of the three rulers were described in these poems. The socio economic life of the people are narrated in this work.

4. **Ahananuru** : It also deals with five Tinais. It consists of 400 poems. It is otherwise called Neduntogai. This work, written by 145 poets was compiled by Ukkirapperuvalutyan under the patronage of the Pandya ruler Ukkirapperuvaluti. It also deals with five Tinais. Dr. C. E Ramachandran in his work on Ahananuru in its historical settings has given a beautiful account of the historical materials of these poems. Mauryan invasion of South India is referred to in this work by Mamulanar. Aryan influence, Local administration, dresses and ornaments, Yavana's trade are some of the historical sources. Tittan, Talaiyanankanattu Seruventra Neduncheliyan, Karikalan, Attanatti are some of the names of the rulers found in this work.

5. **Kalittogai** : It consists of 250 poems, dealing with five Tinais. Kurinjikkali is sung by Kapilar, Marutakkali by Marutanila Nakanar, Mullaikkali by Cholan Nalluruttiran, Neitarkali by Nalluntuvanar & Palaikkali by Perunkkadumko.

Puram-Poems dealing with war etc.

6. **Patiruppattu** : It is a quasi-historical collection of ten decades of verses, composed by ten different poets. Each throws light on a single chera monarch. The first and tenth decades are not available. At the end of each decade the name of the poet, the king on whom the decade was sung and the gift bestowed on the poet are given. Karur, Musiri, Tondi are some of the important places of the cheras. Utiyan cheral, Imayavaramban, Neduncheliyan, Palyanaichelkelu Kuttuvan, Cheran Chenkuttuvan etc. are some of the Chera kings. The intimation of the chera king with the Tamil poets are described.

7. Purananuru: Each of 400 stanzas of Purananuru contains between 4 and 40 lines. 160 poets composed these songs. These poems were composed in honour of 18 Chera, 18 Chola, 15 Pandya kings and a number of chieftains of Tamilaham. This work gives a very valuable information for writing the political history of the three kings.

8. Paripadal: It deals with both Aham and Puram. Though it consists of 70 poems, only 22 poems are now available. The socio and religious life of the people of Madurai can be studied from this work. The worship of Tirumal, Murugan, Korravai etc. are described in this work.

3. Ten Idylls (Pattuppattu)

Pattuppattu comprises of ten longer poems.

The following poem mentions the names of the Ten Idylls:-

“ முருகு பொருநாறு பாணிரண்டு முல்லை
பெருகு வளமதுரைக் காஞ்சி — மருவினிய
கோல நெடுநல் வாடை கோல் குறிஞ்சி பட்டினப்
பாலை கடாத் தொடும் பத்து ”

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| 1. Tirumurukarruppadai | 2. Porunararruppadai |
| 3. Sirupanarruppadai | 4. Perumbanarruppadai |
| 5. Mullaippattu | 6. Maduraikkanji |
| 7. Nedunlavadai | 8. Kurinjippattu |
| 9. Pattinappalai | 10. Malaipadukadam. |

Like Ettutogai, the above mentioned works are classified on the basis of their themes into Aham and puram.

1. Tirumurugarruppadai: This work, composed by Nakkirar, contains 317 lines. It is a quasi-religious poem. The author shows the way to a devotee to attain the supreme bliss of Lord Muruga at the six places called Arupadaividu. They are 1. Tiruchiralaivay (Tiruchchendur) 2. Tiruvavinankudi (Palani) 3. Tiruveragam (Swamimalai) 4. Tirupparankunram 5. Kunrutoradal 6. Palamudircholai. This work throws light on the strong faith of the people on religious practices, their dresses and ornaments etc.

2. Porunararruppadi : It was composed by Mudattamakanniyaar. It contains 248 lines. This poem throws light on the heroic deeds of Karikalchola. The singing and acting of Porunar, the bards, the description of the yal etc are also described.

3. Sirupanarruppadi: The author Nallur Nattattanar shows the way to go to Nalliyakkodan, the king of Oymanadu. It refers to all seven vallals (chieftains) Nalli, Ori, Pegan, Pari and Kari noted for charity are also described. The poverty life of the Paradavar, the virali and her dance are given. It contains 269 lines.

4. Perumpanarruppada: It contains 503 lines. Kadiyalur Uruttirankannanar, also the author of Pattinappalai, composed this poem. The Socio-economic life of the people of Mullai, Marudam and Palai are narrated.

5. Malaipadukadam : It is otherwise called Kuttararruppada. Perunkausikanar is the author of this work. A dancer who had received rewards from a chief. Vel Nannan suggests another dancer to approach the chief in order to receive similar gifts.

Aham

6. Kurunjippatu : Kapilar is the author of this poem. It contains 261 lines. It describes the love life of the Tamil people. The name of 99 flowers are described in these work. Since this poem describes the Kurinjittinai, it is called Kurinjippattu.

7. Mullaippattu: It contains 103 lines; Nappudnar composed this poem. The life of the people of the Yadavas and the *Kar*-season are beautifully described in this work. The kind and sweet words of the kings towards his soldiers; who received wounds in the battle-field and the nature of the expeditions are narrated in this work.

8. Pattinappalai : It is a love poem. It contains 301 lines. It gives a beautiful description of the port Kavirip-

pumpattinam. Kadiyalur Uruttirankannanar is the author of this poem. The theme of this poem centres around the refusal of the husband to part with his sweetheart, even if he were to be presented the city Kavirippumpattinam as a gift. The value of Karikala and the commerce and trade of the Chola country are described. These descriptions are coincided with the archaeological excavations.

Puram-Poems dealing with war etc.

9. Nedunalvadai : It was composed by Nakkirar. It contains 181 lines. It describes about Talayalankanattu Cheruvenra Nedunchelivan. It gives a beautiful description of the feeling of the queen who was left behind in the palace by the king. The suffering of the cold season and blooming flowers are also described.

10. Maduraikkanji : It consists of 782 lines. It was composed by Mangudi Marudanar. This work gives a vivid account of the Pandyan kingdom, its army, Capital, Seaports etc. It also refers to the social life of the people and the belief of the people on astronomy.

Post-Sangam works

The Padinenkikanakku and the Twin epics are the post Sangam works. This group is the continuation of the Sangam composition.

I. Padinenkilkkanakku

It denotes literary pieces, composed in the Asiriyappa metre, and each one of them is comparatively small in size.

The following poem gives the names of the eighteen works.

“ நாலடி நான்மணி நானாற்பது ஐந்திணைமுப்
பால் கடுகங் கோவை பழமொழி — மாமுலம்
இன்னிலை காஞ்சியுட னேலாதி யென்பவே
கைநிலை யோடாங் கீழ்க்கணக்கு ”

The Kilkanakka works do not belong to the same period. Again these eighteen works are classified into three divisions on the basis of their themes viz 1. Moral 2. Aham and 3. Puram themes.

MORAL WORKS

Name	Poems	Author
1. Naladiyar	400	Jains
2. Nanmanikkadigai	101	Naganar
3. Innanarppadu	40	Kapilar
4. Iniyavainarppadu	40	Pudanchentanar
5. Tirikadugam	100	Nalladanar
6. Asarakkovai	100	Peruvayin Mulliyar
7. Palamoli	400	Munruraiarayanar
8. Sirupanjamulam	100	Kariyasan
9. Elati	80	Kanimethaviyar
10. Mudumolikkanji	100	Kudalurkkilar
11. Muppal (Kural)	1330	Thiruvalluvar.

Tirukkural : Tiruvalluvar is the author of this work. It is by far the most outstanding production of the Padinenkilkanakku. It contains 1330 poems, divided equally into 133 chapters. Each chapter contains 10 poems and each poem has two lines. The poems deal with the objectives of Aram, Porul and Inbam (Dharma, Artha and Kama)

AHAM POEMS

Name	Poems	Author
12. Aintinai Aimpatu	50	Maran Poraiyanar
13. Tinaimali Elupatu	50	Kannan Sentanar
14. Aintinai Elupatu	70	Muvatiyar
15. Tinaimalai Nurraimpatu	150	Kanimetaviyar
16. Kainilai	60	Pullan Kadanar
17. Karnarppatu	40	Kannan Kuttanar

Kalavali Narppatu : It is composed by Poygaiyar. It is a war poem in forty stanzas, dealing with the conflict between

Kanaikkal Irumporai and Senkanan in the battle of Kalu-malam.

II. The Twin-Epics

The Twin-Epics are Silappathikaram and Manimekalai.

Silappathikaram: It is an unsurpassed gem though its authorship and date are not free from besetting doubts. This is written by Ilangovaligal. The reason for writing this epic is mentioned by the author in the following lines :

அரசியல் பிழைத்தோருக்கு அறங்கூற்று ஆவதாமம்
உரசால் பத்தினிக்கு உயர்ந்தோர் ஏத்தலும்
ஊழ்வினை உருத்து வந்து ஊட்டும் என்பதாமம்
சூழ்வினைச் சிலம்பு காரணமாக சிலப்பதிகாரம்

The Theme of this Epic is based on Silampu (anklet). It is woven around Kovalan, a rich merchant of Puhar, Kannaki, his wife and Madavi, a dancing girl.

This is divided into Puharkantam, Maduraikkantam, Vanjikkantam dealing with the Chola, Pandya and Chera Countries respectively. This Epic provides material of immense value for writing the socio-economic history of the Tamil.

Manimekalai: It forms the sequel of the Silappathikaram. Manimekalai was the daughter born of Kovalan and Madavi. She was a devotee of Buddhism and so naturally it provides a vivid exposition of the Philosophical doctrines of Buddhism. It also contains an exposition of logical fallacies.

II. The Non-Tamil Literatures

Ramayana and Mahabarata give one or two references. The Ramayana refers to the prosperity of the Pandyas, who were famous for pearls and gems. The capital of the Pandyas is mentioned as Kapatapura. The Mahabarata also describes about the Pandyas. Kautilya's reference (in his Arthasastra) about the Pandya Kavata is only to the Pandyas of Madurai.

II. Foreign Literary Works

1. Megasthenes: Megasthenes wrote what all he heard about the South. He refers to the Pandya Queen and the kingdom. He says that the kingdom was organised into 365 villages and each village had to bring the royal tribute to the treasury every day. Besides some valuable historical sources, he points out some unbelievable matters like one-legged men, gold-digging ants, winged horses, Seven years girl giving birth to a child, ear of a person touching the floor etc.

2. Strabo: He belonged to Rome. His work, Geography gives a vivid picture of the socio and economic life particularly Commerce and Trade of the Tamils in the Sangam Age. He refers to the Pandyan embassies to Augustus, and describes the nature of their duty. His reference about 120 ships from Hermus to Tamil Nadu, throws much light on export and import of the sangam people.

3. Pliny: He is also a Roman historian. His account is also useful for writing the history of Tamil Nadu. His work, Natural history-throws light on the Commerce of Tamilaham with Rome, which drained Roman wealth to the extent of 55 million Sesterces every year in return for pearls, ivory, muslin and other luxuries

4. The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea: The name of the author of this work is not known. He is a native of Egypt. This work belonged to the fourth quarter of the 1st Century A. D. Musiri, Tondi, Nirkunram etc., are some of the Sea ports found in his work. He also refers to the contact of the Romans with the Sea Ports of Western India.

5. Ptolemy: He has prepared the famous 'Map of the World'. He belonged to the 2nd Century AD. He derived information from other writers and drew the map. This map is very useful to get geographical knowledge of India. His reference to the important Sea Ports and towns help us to compare them with the Tamil Literatures. He has mentioned

the places like Musiri, Kalai Karias, Vaikkarai, Koreoura, Kolkhoi, Salour etc.

6 The Ceylonese Chronicles: The ceylonese chronicles Mahavamsa, Dipavamsa and Rajavali give very valuable information to fix the Age of Sangam. Through these chronicles, it is identified that there occurred three deluges which destroyed a large southern part of Ceylon.

2. Archaeological Sources

The Archaeological Sources are classified into 1. Epigraphy 2. Numismatics and 3. Monuments.

I. Epigraphy

Epigraphy is the most copious and authentic source for writing the history. But, for the study of the Sangam Age, the inscriptions are very limited.

Non-Tamil inscriptions

1. Rock Edict II of Asoka: It mentions the existence of five Tamil kingdoms. They are 1. The Cholas 2. the Pandyas. 3. Satyaputras 4. Keralaputras (Cheras) 5. Tamraparni. They are mentioned as the neighbouring independent kingdoms of the South during the rule of Asoka. Rock Edict XIII also refers to the Chola, the Pandya and the Tamraparni.

2. Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela: This inscription belonged to the first half of the Second Century B. C. It refers to the existence of a league of Tamil Countries. This league existed for about 113 years. Mamukanar narrates (Aham. 251) about Maurya's attempt to conquer the Tamil countries; but it ended in smoke.

Tamil inscriptions

3. Tirukkoyalar Inscription: It mentions about the self-immolation of Kapilar, the court poet and close friend of Pari, who was the Chieftain of the Sangam Age. It refers to the social custom during the Sangam Age.

4. Kalugumalai inscription : It is a Brahmi script. It mentions the names of the carvers of the rock-cut beds that they contain or of their occupants.

5. Kudumiyanmalai inscription : This belonged to the later Pallava Period, dated during the rule of Mahendravarman. It gives a vivid picture of the traditional musical note.

6. Velvikkudi Grant: It refers to the Sangam Pandya king, Palyahasalai Mudukudumi Peruvaluti.

7. Other inscriptions: Inscriptions found at Tirupparankundram, Karur, Nagamalai, Anaimalai, Sirkannavayil etc. of the Sangam Age also throw light on the historicity of the Sangam Age.

II. Numismatics

The rulers of Tamil Nadu did not give much importance to coins. Due to various political and social reasons, the coins were not used much for a long time till the rise of the later Pallavas.

The great controversy of the chronology of the Sangam period can definitely be fixed on the basis of the Roman coins excavated at Arikamedu, Vellur and Madura. Schoff remarks "most of the coins of Tamil Nadu belonged to Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero and some of them to Vespasian and Titus". The coins excavated at Madurai bear the imperial head and the Roman soldiers.

The Yavanas issued coins at Madurai & Puhar on their own accord for their own use. The ancient Tamil rulers had issued punch marked coins. Though barter system occupied an important place, coins were also in usage. The main defect of these coins is the absence of any legend on it. The recent discovery at Andippatti in the North Arcot District clears the fact that the Sangam chieftains had also issued coins. These coins were issued by S ntan, who belonged to the 2nd century A. D. at Kavi ippumpattinam and Kanchi were the place where coins were minted. Some blocks were found out here.

III. Monuments

Arikkamedu, Adichchanallur, Uraiyur, Kalaiyur, Tirukkampuliur, Kanchi, Tanjavur are some of the sites which show the condition of the Sangam Age.

1. Arikkamedu : Jouvea Dubreuil discovered this site in 1937 and excavation was conducted in 1941. Sir Martimes Wheeler discovered a Roman factory at Arikkamedu. The findings are the Mediterranean pottery, coins, gems, glass bowls of the Roman empire. These discoveries corroborated with the references found in the Sangam poems. This shows the close commercial contact with the Roman empire. Ptolemy refers to this place as "Poduke".

2. Adichchanallur : It is found on the southern bank of the river Tamraparni in the Tjuncelveli district. Bruce Foote discovered this place. Iron swords, daggers, gold and bronze diadem, animal figures bronze utensils etc are some of the findings of his excavation. The excavation of this place shows the existence of Muruga worship.

3. Uraiyur ; The excavation at this place reveals the existence of rouletted ware dated to the 2nd century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D.

4. Kilaiyur : The Archaeologists unearthed a Buddhist Vihara, constructed by burnt bricks, a votive stupa, a reservoir, a massive brick platform etc. in this site.

5. Tirukkampuliur (Trichy) : A massive structure, probably a granary for the agrarians, consisting of two compartments with a verandah is excavated in this place.

6. Kanchi : The amphores for storing wine, the potshells with Brahmi letters, 15 Satavahana coins, a 16-foot habitation deposit etc. are some of the noteworthy discoveries of this place.

7. Tanjavur : Roman Pottery, coins etc. were unearthed here.

Duties on imports and exports were collected at the harbour (Pattinappalai). Government also levied extra taxes on certain occasions. Tax remission was also there if any unusual happenings occurred.

Currency : The exchange of thing among the various lands are referred to in the Sangam Literatures. The references about the use of the coins may be studied from the gifts of the kings to the poets and the coins unearthed at Arikamedu.

Expenditure : A large share of the revenue was spent on the frequent wars. Another share was spent for the emoluments. Dams were constructed across the river, forts were built and liberal gifts were given to the poet bards, actors and dancers.

2. Sangam Age

8. Social life

Much authentic information on the social condition of the Sangam Age can be gathered from the Sangam Literatures. The following topics may be studied in this chapter.

- (i) Five fold Physiographical divisions
- (ii) The Caste system
- (iii) Social life of the people
- (iv) Position of women

(i) Five Physiographical divisions

The people of the Sangam age led calm life according to their regular occupations. The people had different modes of

living and occupations owing to the topographical division of their lands called Tinais. They are called Kurinji, Mullai, Marudam, Neithal and Palai. Hunters lived in the Kurinji region, shepherds in the Mullai, peasants in the Marudam, fishermen in the Neithal and hunters in the Palai region. Their habits and customs; professions and duties; beliefs and worship differed from one region to another; yet they were dependent in one way or other. A clear picture of each region may be studied here.

1. Kurinji: Hill and its surroundings were called Kurinji. The people who lived in those places were called hunters (Kuravar). The rich people among them were called Poruppan, Silampan, Verppan and Kodichchi. Their village was named as Sirukudi. It was also called as Kurichchi. Tiger, Yali, Ox, Elephant, Pig etc. were the animals; snake, crocodile etc., were also there; birds like Parrot, Pea-cock were closely connected with their life; Teak, Sandal-wood, bamboo, Vengai etc., were some of the trees; Kurinji and Kandal flowers were known to them. They were familiar with bamboo rice, toddy, edible roots and honey. Spears, shields, bows and arrows etc., were their weapons. They played with the instruments like Kurinji-Yal (with Kurinji Pan). The God of this region was Murugan.

2. Mullai: Forest and its surroundings were called Mullai. It was named after Jasmine. It was in between the two—Kurinji and Marutham. So the people were called Idaiyar. The rich class people were called Kurumporai Nadan, Tonral, Manaivi and Kilathi. Idaiyar, Ayar, Aychchiyar etc., were the middle class people. As they were cowherds, domestication of animals like hen, sheep, cows, buffaloes etc., became common. Based on barter system they exchanged their milk-products for other kinds of food-stuff. Rice was their staple food. They were chief producers of fruits and crops like maize and millet. The places where they lived were called Padi, Cheri, Palli etc., Mullai yal was the musical instrument. Their chief deity was Tirumal.

3. Marudam : Land and its surroundings were called Marudam. It derives its name after a flower of mistle tree. Agriculture was the chief occupation of the people. Ulavar, Kadaiyar, Ulathiyar, Kadaiyyar were the people lived in this region. Uran, Mahilnan, Kilathi, Manaivi, etc., were the high class people. Paddy, the chief crop was cultivated in different varieties such as Ponnal, Vennel and Chennel. Fruits like jack fruit, plantain, sugar cane, palmyrah also grown. They also adopted the barter system—salt and sea-fish from the Paradavar; milk and milk-products from Ayar and the hill produce from the Kuravar. Animals like cow and buffaloes; birds like stork; flowers like lotus and trees like Vanchi and Kanchi were said to be found in their region. Their musical instruments were Marudayal and Kinai. They worshipped Indra, the rain God.

4. Neydal : Sea and its surroundings were called Neythal. It derives its name after the flower of a plant that grew in the backwaters of the place. The high class people were called Cherpan, Pulamban, Parathi, Nulaichi. The middle class people were called Paratavar, Valavar, Nulaiyar, Alavar, Nulachiyar and Alathiyar. Fishing was the chief occupation and the fishermen were known as Minavar. They exchanged fish and salt for other kinds of requirements. House with large godowns were built by them. They used to burn in the terraces through out the night which served as light houses. They took to liquor and toddy. Neydal yal, Vilariyal etc., were the instruments on which they played on. Flowers like Neydalpu, Talampu, Mundagapu were in this region. Their habitation was called Pattinam or Pakkam. Kandal and Vandal were the flora and geese and lark were the fauna of this region. They worshipped Varunan, the God of sea.

5. Palai : Whenever nature failed in any one of the Tinais it can be attributed to Palai. This region was inhabited by Maravar Eyinar, and Marathiyar. They took hunting and obbery. They hunted animals like deer, rabbit and porcupine. They ate the flesh and meat of the hunted animals. They used to take toddy, the intoxicant. Highway robbery and warfare

were their occupations. Vultures were the fauna of this region. Korravai was the chief Goddess worshipped by them.

Thus the occupations of the people became improved from fishing to agriculture which in turn promoted the prosperity and happiness of the people.

II. The Caste System

Vettuvar, Irular, Pallar etc. were the names found even in the early period of the Sangam. As noticed in the five Tinais, the people who lived in the five divisions of lands were called Kuravar in Kurinji, Ayar in Mullai, Ulavar in Marudam, Paradavar in Neydal and Maravar in Palai. Among these divisions, there were lower and higher classes who were called in separate names. Inter-marriage systems though appeared to be in practice, was strongly opposed. Vettuvar, Kanavar, Eiyinar and Kuravar were hunters and cultivators in the mountains; Kovalars were cowherds; Ayar extracted ghee and Idaiyar reared sheep. They were also called Kon. The people of the Marudam land were called Ulavars or Vellalars. Paratavar lived in the coastal areas and Maravas in the Palai lands. The Maravas were war-like people. The Panar, Viraliyar, Porunar, Kuttar, Kuttiyar etc., were the artisan group. The Tutiyar and Pulaiyar lived outside the village and performed funeral obsequies. Though it is stated that untouchable was not in practice there were low caste and upper caste which may be due to their professions. Brahmins occupied the highest status in the later period. Hisinan and Hipirappalan were doing the menial jobs like washing the taboo clothes, removing the skin of the animals and burning dead bodies.

Fourfold Varnasrama was known to the Sangam people. Tolkappiar says about Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sutas. Brahmins were called Anthanar. In short "the social division was geographical and horizontal and not hierarchical and vertical."

III. Social life of the People

1. Family life : The man was the head of the family. His duties were to earn wealth and to look after the family. He gave the entire amount to his wife, and gave freedom to spend as she desired. Foster mothers and foster fathers also lived in the family. Segregation of family after the marriage from their parents and leaving the wedded wife alone and moved to some other place were also there.

2. Houses : The Housing varied according to the region and occupation in which the people lived. It is said that the houses were noted for their simplest kind in Kurinji and Neydal. Mullai and Marudam had houses built of mud and burnt bricks. Calves were found to be tied to pegs with long strings. The flooring of the houses was done with cowdung but sandal paste was used by the rich. The less earned people built their houses, roofed with thatches of grass or the leaves of palm trees. The houses of the aristocratic classes had porticos and open terraces. Nedunalvadai describes a beautiful harem in the palace of Neduncheliyan. King and queen had a very luxurious bed rooms. The cots were made of ivory legs. Houses were painted with beautiful figures of deities, birds and animals; Gardens were maintained in front of the houses. Buildings with several storeys were found.

3. Food : Rice formed the chief food of the people. They used cold rice and par boiled rice. Maize and millets were also eaten. The people of Kurinji took Kadalai, Kallu etc. Jaggery mixed with tamarind called Tinpuli was taken. Poor people had to feed on green vegetables like beans and bitterguard. Panar ate the cheap varieties of fish and sometimes they took the flesh of elephants killed in the battle. Avurmulankilar speaks about the abundance of curd, milk and ghee which were commonly used. Mallar ate snails; Kuravar took the porcupines and Fishermen ate the flesh of tortoise. Toddy was common among all people. Juice extracted from palmyrah and sugarcane, was also proved to be their drinks.

4. Agriculture: Agriculture was the basic economy and included the raising of cotton, pepper, rice and sugarcane. (சுழன்றும் ஏரீப் பின்னது உலகம்). The peasant was much respected. His life was the only life worth the name, the life of all the rest being one of servitude and sycophancy.

5. Carpenter: The well-developed houses with multi-storeyed buildings and great palaces with many number of doors and windows; the huge fort with an elevated entrance through which elephants could go freely are the examples of carpentry of Sangam Age. It is said that a skilled carpenter is said to have talent of constructing as many as Eight chariots with in a day. Nedunaiyadai narrates about the cot of the Pandya Queen. The legs were made of ivory. Boats and ships were also constructed by them. Boat's frontage was finished off with a horse head.

6. Weaver: Weaving and Spinning assumed great proficiency. Men, women and even children were engaged in this work. Among the women, widows took to weaving and spinning. Women engaged in the spinning of cotton yarn, were called Paruttippendir. Silk and Wollen cloth were also woven. Silk was known only by China. Separate class of tailors were also there. Purananuru describes, "beautiful cotton cloth so fine that the eye cannot follow the course of yarn and cloth bearing such designs as make it look like the slough of the snake".

7. Potter: The potters were called Kuyavar. They were skilled at making pots and vessels out of mud.

8. Smiths: Gold smiths, called Porkollar, made ornaments of gold, silver and pearls. Some of the goldsmiths made ornaments only for the Kings and Queens and they are called Aranmanai Porkollar, He was assisted by more than hundred Goldsmiths.

Blacksmiths made new war materials. It was their duty.
"வேல் வாடித்துக் கொடுத்தல் கொல்லர்க்குக் கடனே"

They also repaired household articles and agricultural implements. Their service was also used for making ships.

9. Painter : (See Fine Arts—In the Sangam Age)

10. Washerman : Washermen were known as Vannars. Ahananuru calls them as Kaliyar. The wife was called Pulatti. They washed the cloths with a kind of soil called Uvarman. The method of using starch to the clothes; avoiding coloured dresses to dry them in the sun etc., are some interesting features.

11. Culture : A Strong ethical sense and a responsiveness to finer sensibilities would appear implanted in the consciousness of the Tamils. It was the duty of the householders to entertain guests and they would not take anything leaving the guests outside. Even if it was midnight they would receive their guest happily. (“அள்ளில் ஆயினும் விருந்து வரின் உவக்கும்”) Even if one is unable to do active good, one should abstain from evil, as being the only way to win the approval of society and happiness hereafter. (“நல்லது செய்தல் ஆற்றிராயினும் அல்லது செய்தல் ஒம்புமின்,”)

In their trade, they did not sell things at higher rates. A true friend will stay by you in adversity, though he may be different to you in your prosperity. Even if a friend gave poison he would consume it pleurably,

9. Women of the Sangam Age

Feminine beauty was exemplified throughout Sangam literature.¹ Great significance was attached to the chastity of women. Women mastered education, poetry, music and drama. Women were experts in literature and grammar. Hospitality and patriotism were conspicuous qualities of the women of the Sangam Age. Their culture and love further beautify their personality.

Status : Women of the Sangam age had many responsibilities. Though husband earned money, it was her duty to preserve it for the maintenance of her family. They enjoyed a respectable status in the society.

Their occupations differed from one land to another, but their patriotism, unity, chastity and hospitality remained the same.

Education : The women excelled in various arts like music, drama, dance etc. Women excelled in education. Lyrics composed by women poets are monumental evidences of their mastery of education. Natchellaiyar, Nakaiyar, Nanmullaiyar, Ilaveyiniyar, Nappasalaiyar, Mudathama Kaniyar, ponmudiyar, Kakkaipadiniyar, Mullaiyar, Velli Veedhiyar were some of the famous women poets of the age. The mastery of grammar by Kakkaipadiniyar is amply known by the two grammar books known as "Kakkaipadiniyam" and "Siru kakkai padiniyam"

Married Life :

Marriage : Usually the marriage was conducted in the harvest season. There is, in fact, little definite information

1 செறிவும் நிறைவும் செம்மையும் செப்பும்
அறிவும் அருமையும் பெண்பா லான்.

bearing a reference to tali. The bathing of the bride by four women who had their husbands and children living, the marriage pandal strewn with fresh sand, the music of the marriage drum, the worship of gods, and the preference for the celebration of marriage on a day in the bright half of the month when the moon was with Rohini. The marriage was consummated the same night.

After the arrival of the Aryans the ritual and ceremony were introduced, but there is no clue to fix the date when this happened.

The spontaneous coming-together of the sexes (Kamak-Kuttum); secret marriage (Kalavu); open alliance contracted with the consent of parents (Karpu); unequited or unilateral love (Kaikkilai); and improper love (peruntinai) were some of the types of the marriages.²

People of sangam age considered good qualities absolutely essential for a happy married life. Parents will look for ten uniformities.

Marriage was conducted in non-Aryan fashion, without fire and without circumventing the fire. Agananuru (86) describes vividly the marriage ceremony of the Sangam age.³ Marriage conducted in the age of Silappathigaram was of Aryan fashion.

² பிரட்டே குடிமை ஆண்மை ஆண்டொடு
உருவு நிறுத்த காம வாயில்
நிறையே அருளே உணர்வொடு திருவென
முறையறக் கிளந்த ஒப்பினது வகையே.

(Tolkappiam - May - 25)

³ வாழிழை மகளிர் நால்வர் கூடி
கற்சினின் வழாது நற்பல உதவிப்
பெற்றோர் பெட்கும் பிணையை யாகென
நீரோடு சொரிந்த ஈரிதற் அலரி.

(Agam)

The love of the lady towards her spouse was bigger than the earth, higher than the sky and deeper than the sea.⁴ Parents happily handed over their daughter to her husband. The bride perspired thanks to the weight of the ornaments.⁵ Whether Thali was tied in the Sangam Age on wedding day was not known. Love bound the hearts of both husband and wife (Kuruntogai 40). Wife will take orders from the facial expression of her husband. Rich and sophisticated ladies too delighted in serving their husbands. when the wife sees her husband relishing the food prepared by herself gets more pleasure than any time.⁶ The wife prays to have the same husband even in the next birth.⁷

Household life : A home without mistress will be really barren however pompous it might be in appearance. The intensity of love of the wives towards their husbands are depicted in various poems.

Ainkurunuru mentions, "a newly married girl tells her companion that the water polluted by the wallowing cattle is indeed bad to drink in her husband's place, yet she

4 நிலத்தினும் பெரிதே வானினும் உயர்ந்தன்று
நீரினும் ஆறளவு இன்றே (Kurun-3)

5 இழையணி சிறப்பிற் பெயர் வியர்ப்பாற்றித்
தமர் நமக்கீத்த தலை நா ளிரவின். (Aham-136)

6 குவளை யுண்கண் குய்ப்புகை கமழத்
தான் றுழந் திட்ட தீம்புளிப் பாகர்
இனிதெனக் கணவனுண்டவின்
நுண்ணிதின் மகிழ்ந்தன் ரொண்ணுதன் முகனே
(Kuruntogai-167)

7 இம்மை மாறி மறுமை யாயினும்
நீயா கிய ரென் கணவனை
யானா கியர் நின் தெஞ்சு நேர்ப்பவனே (Kurun-49)

relishes it more than a mixture of honey or milk that will be available in her parent's house." Life without children would not give happy.

Chastity :

Chastity was to adhere to the lofty principles taught by parents and husband. There were six occasions when husbands went out of the house leaving wives alone. During these occasions the wife will not adorn themselves with ornaments. Silappathigaram states clearly that Kannagi did not adorn herself with ornaments when Kovalan was away from her.

Women won't wear earrings, nose rings, and anklets in her separation. Chastity among the women had three categories. viz, talaikkarpu, idaikkarpu and kadaikkarpu. The women who died immediately after the death of her husband was the first category. The women who performed Sati belonged to the second category. The third type of women sometimes tonsured their head.

Hospitality :

Hospitality was deemed to be the real meaning of life. Even if he gets a medicine to avoid death he will not avoid guests but consume it along with them.⁹ The wife will pleasantly invite the guests even if she had misunderstanding with her husband. A poet asked his wife to be happy in giving away

8 குறுகுறு நடந்து சிறுகை நீட்டி
இட்டுந் தொட்டுங் கவ்வியந் துழந்தும்
நெய்யுடை யடிசின் மெய்ப்பட விதிர்த்தும்
மயக்குறு மக்களை இல்லோர்க்கு
பயக்குறைதான் வாழும் நாளே.

—Aham

9 இந்திரர் அமிழ்தம் இயைவ தாயினும்
இனிதெனத் தமிழர் உண்டலும் இலரே.

—Puram

all his earnings to everyone, without waiting for his permission and without entertaining the idea that they can lead a prosperous life for a long time with the earnings. Women hospitalised their guests happily even during midnight.

It was the duty of the housewife to welcome and attend to the guests. Children also invited the guests and attended to them when the headmen was away.

Courageous Mother :

Mother's duty is to be got a son. Father's duty is to make him wise. To offer him a spear is the duty of the blacksmith. To direct his life is the duty of the King. To establish his magnificent valour in war, is the duty of the son (Puranaanuru 312). Okkur Masathiyar (in Puranaanuru 279) praises the character of a mother as follows: A mother was terribly infuriated on hearing that her son was wounded on his back (which was considered a sign of a coward) in war and swear to cut her breast that fed him if he was wounded on the back. But she felt happy when she noticed that his chest had been pierced by an arrow. She miked at the enemies. There are several examples of courageous mothers in Sangam literature.

Sati :

"Sati was common, particularly among the higher marital classes, and the ideal wife was held to be she who mounted the funeral pyre of her husband with no more concern than if she was entering a tank of cool water for a bath" (Pur-246). If she was with a child, Sati was forbidden. A widow's lot was rather hard. The beating of the breast in mourning for the deceased, tonsuring the head, and breaking of bangles are mentioned. She had to abstain from good food and to lead a life of austerity.

For women of Sangam age husband was the abode of love, affection and happiness. She vowed to have the same husband even in her next rebirths. If such a beloved spouse expires the wife also dies with him.

Sati was widely practised. Perungopendu was infuriated when elders stopped her from committing sati when her husband Pudhapandiyan died. Queen Koperunthevi died on hearing that her husband Pandian Nedunseliyan died. Re-marriage was not in vogue.¹⁰

Men of Sangam age, deem it a boon, to have chaste wives. Nature deemed to have obeyed the orders of chaste ladies. If chaste ladies, who worshipped husbands rather than god, orders, it will rain (Thirukkural-55)¹¹. A lady, will be given a flag and special title in recognition of her devotion to her husband. Nannan's wife received such a title. Sangam literature speaks of chastity of men. A soldier says "Let me be accused of unchastity if I don't win this war".

(Purananuru-71)

Family feud :

Petty quarrels between husband and wife adds to the pleasure of sexual life (Valluvar). The pleasure that arises in the place after a feud cannot be adequately described in words. That superb feeling has to be enjoyed. But wives loath the husbands when they return from prostitutes. Instances were not lacking when wives did not allow their husbands, returning from prostitutes, inside their houses.

Hobbies :

Women played games in the open ground. One of the favourite games was Kalangadudal. In this game, the pebbles or wood covered with gold would be thrown into air and caught them deftly by the hand. Playing throw-balls with

10. பெண்ணின் பெருந்தக்க யாவுள கற்பென்னும்
திண்மை உண்டாகப் பெறின். —Kural

11. தேய்வம் தொழாஅள் கொழுநன் தொழுதெழுவாள்
பெய்யெனப் பெய்யும் மழை. —Kural

molucca beans : swinging on a pole etc , were some of the indoor games. Cock-fights and ram fights were known; horse riding and elephant riding were also practised by the people.

Among the games of women. Flowers, Water Balls, Kalangu, etc. were used for the games¹². The games of women differ from land to land. Making flower garlands and lady dolls in mud were games of Neithal land. Rich girl played ball games on terrace with Golden anklets in their legs. They love to take bath in flooded rivers, Kurunthogai 80). They also played with tiny carts. Ladies of Sangam age were fond of palying with dolls. They made beautiful dolls and decorate it with Kumkum, flowers and silk dress. They name the dolls and conduct marriage for them. Kalangu is a famous game played by young and old even today in villages.

Hair Dressing and Ornamentation : Hair dressing received greater attention by the women. They also beautified their eye-lids and eye-brows with a dark substance. Men too adorned their hair with flowers. Foot wears were also known to them.

Nachinarkiniyar speaks of five hair styles (five plaits) i.e. Kulal, Alagam, Kondai, Panichni, Punjai Sirupanarrupadai (60) also mentions it. Smoke from Sandal and agil was used as perfume to the hair, after bath. They were decorated with fragrant flowers like Vetchi, Vengai, Narantham, Kuvilai, Adumbu Lilly, Jasmine etc.

Ladies loved several kinds of ornaments. Well designed and artistic ornaments made up of Gold, Silver, Ruby, Pearls, Emeralds and Shells were used by both men and women. Pearl garlands, ear rings and nose rings, anklets, rings etc. were remarkable.

¹² கைபுனை குறுந்தொடி தத்தப் பையபைய
முத்த வாரீமணற் பொற்கழங் காடும்.

Excellent painting works were found on cotton and silk sarees. Lovely dresses resemble the skin of snake and steam of milk. Dress was not used to cover the breast of ladies. Even gents did not wear upper garments. Only servants used upper garments and dhoties. Widows employed themselves by spinning cotton (Narrinai 3:5).

Harlots :

Harlots : Concubinage occupied an important place in the Tamil social order. They earned their livelihood by prostitution. By creating gulf between the man and his wife, she would keep him for a long time. Panar and Viralia, acted as intermediaries between the man and the parattair. Parathaiyars were of two sections viz. Cherifparatti (public harlot) and Katal Parattai (exclusively for one man). They were skilled in music and dance.

Prostitutes were known for their false image and false life. This fact is amply described in Madurai Kanji, Nedunalvadai, Pattinappalai and Silappathigaram. Madurai Kanji states as follows: These social ladies will entrap handsome and rich lads by their lies.¹⁴ Then they will exploit their wealth. After exploiting their wealth, the ladies will look out for other men's of wealth and health. Their scented eyes, hair and dress will captivate any one. These ladies were good at playing musical instruments as well.

Men of Sangam age were not bothered about their chastity. Neither the poets nor Kings said anything about men going to prostitutes. Men at times take revenge on these prostitutes on knowing their false image, flickering and exploitation. Sometimes men may return to their wives for ever.

13. இழைமருங் கறியா நுழைநூற் கவிங்கம்
எள்ளறு சிறப்பின் வெள்ளரைக் கொளிஇ.

—Malaipadu ... 561

41. நுண் பூனாகம் வடுக்கொள முயங்கி
மாயப் பொய்பல கூட்டிக் கவவுக்கரந்து.

—Maduraikanji - 566

10. Education

“Learn while young” was the maxim of ancient days.¹ Many number of poets with their excellent poems lived and promoted for the development of education. Kings patronised and encouraged them and wished them to stay in their court for many days. They gave them many valuable presentations.

The poets of the sangam age belonged to different castes. Education was not strictly ordained only to a particular community. The king would give first place to the learned man. When the mother heard that her son was a great learned man, she would be more happy than the day in which she gave birth to him. It is said that it was the duty of the father to give education to his son.²

2. Women’s education (See the topic “Position of women”)

3. Asiriyar or Kanakkayar: There were teachers and were called Asiriyar. The dance-master was called Natana-asiriyar; the flute master was called Kulalasisiriyar; likewise there were Mattala asiriyar, yal asiriyar etc. The prefix of the poets reveal the popular term Asiriyar Perunkannan, Madurai Asiriyar Nallandevanar etc. are some of the examples. There were young and also experienced teachers, known as Ilam Palasiriyar and Palasiriyar.

1. “உற்றுழி உதவியும் உறுபொருள் கொடுத்தும்
பிறரை நிலை முனியாது கற்றல் நன்றே”

2. “சான்றோர் ஆக்குதல் தந்தைக்குக் கடனே”

The kings and chieftain's were also great poets. Neduncheliyan says, that people should read either by giving fees or by rendering sincere service to the Guru.

4. Science and Astronomy : There were great mathematicians. They divided the days into various yamams (divisions). They were familiar with six seasons — kar, kudir, munpani, pinpani, ilaveni and mutuveni. They knew cosmology and the helio-centric theory of solar system. They predicted the future; the death of a king; the result of an expedition; the auspicious day etc.

5. Literatures : (See-Also PP...) The poets were respected by the people and the rulers. They advised the kings to avoid wars; to reduce taxes; to give up capital punishment and to become friendly with enemies. They lived for the prosperity of the country.

“ யாதும் ஊரே யாவரும் கேளிர் ”

Narrinai speaks of competition among prostitutes to captivate men which will lead to enmity among them.

Sangam literature states that women were not confined to their houses. They sang lovely verses in praise of the King. They mastered music and dance. They worshipped husband and God and maintained the welfare of the family. They were renowned for their hospitality and patriotism. They acted as messengers and became peace makers; They showed heroism; they guarded the lands; helped for cultivation and washing the clothes.

11. Economic Condition

Economy of Sangam age was apparently prosperous and glittering but the fact that there was a wide gap between the haves and have-nots cannot be disputed. We hear on one side poverty stricken, pale and hungry-looking ladies incapable of feeding their beloved kids with mother's milk, and ladies who fry greens grown in the dust heap without oil because she cannot buy oil. But at the same time we see ladies who drove chickens coming to eat the paddy, with their golden ear-rings and gents spending lavishly in brothel houses, day and night. This shows the unbridgable gap between the haves and have-nots in Sangam age.

Agriculture :

Agriculture was the predominant occupation of Sangam age.¹ It was the backbone of economy. They donate liberally to those who approach them for help.

The main source of revenue to the government came from agriculture. In the kingdom of Cholan Killivalavan (puram-40) the grains grown in a place, where a female elephant can sleep can be donated to seven male elephants.

Rivers like Kaveri, Pennai, Palar, Vaigai, Thamiraparani etc made Tamil Nadu flourish. The flooded Kaveri irrigates

¹ சுழன்றும ஏர்ப்பின்னது உலகம் அதனால்
உழன்றும் உழவே தலை.

Tiruchy, Thanjavur, Kudamukku and merges with sea near Kaveripoompattinam. Kaveri helped Tamil Nadu through its various rivers, canals and tributaries, dug by several Kings.

Paddy, Sugarcane, Cotton, Turmeric, Coconuts, Plantains, Dalls, etc., were significant crops. Neithal land too was as good as Marutham. Peacock roamed in Neithal mistaking it for Marutham. In Marutham too plantains, coconut trees, jack fruit, sandal and teak besides paddy were grown. Paddy was grown in valleys according to Madurai-Kanji.

Farmers ploughed the land. Thiruvalluvar states that the world depends upon farmers. They guarded the crops from higher plane known as Paran.

Suppar of the kings :

Kings like Karikal Cholan cleared the bushes, devastated the forest and made them into cultivable lands and residential plots. Land was ploughed with bulls. The folk songs sung while drawing water and planting seedlings refreshed the fatigued farmers. There were different methods of seedlings known as narrankal

Method of agriculture :

They used to change crops. Paddy may be followed by dall. Cotton was also grown. Sangam literature vividly describes the entire process of agriculture from seedlings to harvest. Thiruvalluvar also narrates the various method in a separate chapter.

Servants were employed in agriculture process and paid wages. Some were employed like slaves. Women too participated. Their romantic activities during the work did not escape the eyes of poets. Individual ownership of land was clearly established

Revenue :

Tax constituted major source of government revenue, besides tax, customs duty, amount collected from petty kings

treasure captured during wars also contributed to Government treasury.

Customs :

customs formed a major source of revenue to the Government. Toll gates were established. Customs duty was collected according to the weights of commodities² (Perum 80-81) Customs duty was known as Sungam and ulgu. People employed in Toll gates, especially during king Karikalvalavan days, enjoyed no leisure³

Presents from petty kings came both in cash and kind every year (Silampu⁴ and Malaipadu⁵ 575) When king Thirumalvalavan returned after conquering Himalayas, King of vatchire, and Maghadha brought huge presents (Silampu⁶) Elango states that enemies brought and submitted to Senguttuvan various presents like elephant ivory, pots of honey and deers etc.

Moreover, revenue came from fines, treasures captured during war, commodities seized from robbers and the properties of the deceased without heirs.

Major portion of revenue was spent on war, by way of donations to poets and in royal expenses. Rich nations spent mostly in wars. Money was spent to construct dams, for education, to destroy forests and to develop the nation as well.

2 சாத்தொடு வழங்கும் உல்குடைப் பெருவழி-
(Puruman 80-81)

3 நல்லிறைலன் பொருள்காக்கும்
வைகல் தோறும் அசைவின்றி. (Patinap 120-125)

4 திறை சுமந்துநிற்கும் தெவ்வர் போல. (Silampu)

5 வாரிக்கொள்ளா வரைமருஇவேழம். (Malai Nadu)

6 மாநீர் வேலி வச்சிர நன்னாட்டுக்
கோன் இறைக் கொடுத்த கொற்றப் பந்தரும்
மகதநன் னாட்டு வான்வாய் வேந்தன்
பசைப் புறத்துக் கொடுத்த பட்டிமண்டபமும்
(Silampu Indiraviia 99-102)

Weights and Land Measurements :

Veli, Ma, Sei etc. were measurements of the land. (Porunarartupadai_246 & Puranooru - 847) Kuruni, Pathakku, Thodi, Kasu, Kalanju were other measurements and weights. (Thirukural 1037 mentions Thodi)

Commerce and Trade

People residing in four lands were excellent farmers and businessmen (Madurai Kanji) Their trade was closely associated with their lives. Their trade and commerce differed from land to land. Commerce of sangam age can be classified into internal trade and foreign trade.

Internal Trade :

Transportation became absolutely essential for internal trade especially when different regions did different business. Vehicles, donkeys and bulls were used on road for inland transportation. Boats were used to cross rivers. Vehicles drawn by bullocks were used to carry salt bags⁸ (Sirupana rrupadai 55

7 வேலி ஆயிரம் விளையுட்டாக (Porunar 246)

“காய் நெல்லுத்துக் கவளங்கொளினே
மா நிறை வில்லதும் பன்னாட்காக்கும்
நூறு செறு வாலினும் தமிழ்த்துப்புக்குணினே

Puram 184

8 நோன்பகட் டுமண ரொழுக்கையொடு வந்த ”

9 கொடி நுகம் நிழைந்த கனைக்கால் அத்திரி
வடிமணி நெடுந்தேர் பூண (Aham 350)
நெடுஞ் செவிக் கழுதை குறுங்கால் ஏற்றை
புறநிறைப் பண்உத்துப் பொறை (Aham 343)

10 குறும்பல்லூர் நெடுஞ் சோணாட்டு
வெள்ளைப் பின் கொள்ளைசாற்றி
நெல்லொடு வந்த வல்வாய்ப் பஃறி (Pattinap—28-30)

Donkey : Sangam literature speaks of donkey used in transportation. They were also known as 'aththiri'. Donkeys transported pepper (Perumpan 71-81) Boats too were used for inland transportation¹⁰. They exchanged salt for paddy.

Barter System

Paddy was considered to be a significant grain in barter system. The value of the salt was equivalent to the value of paddy¹¹ Kurunthogai informs us of the exchange of salt for paddy (26) Fish and curd were also exchanged for paddy.

Starving hunters will ask for toddy in exchange for ivory. Honey and roots were exchanged for fish fats.¹ Sugarcane and rice were exchanged for toddy and deer flesh. Ghee will be exchanged for good cows and black buffalo instead of gold¹³.

Coins

Coins were also in practice. Coins were discovered in Sengam and gold coins were discovered in Arikamedu, Karur and Madurai areas thanks to the archeological excavations. Besides, literature speaks of coins. Purananuru speaks of ladies wearing gold coins around their waist.¹⁴ Poet Venna.

11 நெல்லும் உப்பும்தேரே ஊரீர்
கொள்ளீரோவெனச் சேரிதோறு நுவலும்" —(Aham 390)

12 தேனெய்யொடு கிழங்கு மாறியோர்
மீனெய்யொடு நறவு மறுகவும்
தீங்கரும் போ டவல் வகுத்தோர்
மான் குறை யொடு மதுவறுகவும்—(Per. m-214)

13 நெய்விலைக் காட்டிப் பசும்பொன் கொள்ளான்
எருமை நல்லான் கருநாகு பெறுவோம்
(Perumpan -159-160)

14 ஆசில் கம்மியன் மாசறப் புனைந்த
பொலஞ்செய் பல்காசு அணிந்த அல்குல்—Puram

ganar says that coins were flat, small and in the size of goose-berry. A poet named Kavan Boothanar states in Agapadal that coins were yellow in colour. In Puhar (where Greeks) and in Madurai Mints were situated. Greeks issued coins for their own circulation or for some other reasons.

Foreign Trade :

Famous historians like Pliny and Tacitus describe vividly the commercial transactions of Tamil Nadu. Tacitus explains that Roman property was wasted in the trade between Rome and India. He says that Roman ladies imported perfumes from India thereby wasting Roman money. Pliny also repeats it. Agananuru too confirms¹⁵ it. Moreover the coin-discovered in Karur, Madurai and Arrikkamedu also confirmed it.

Boats like Kattumaram, Odampunai Padagu, Thimil, Thoni, Ambu etc were used to cross rivers. (Purananuru 343, 299, 381, Agananuru 50). To cross the seas, Kalam, Marakal, Vangam, Navoy were used (Pattinapalai 172-173, urananuru 13) Flags were hoisted on ships¹⁶ Perumpanarrupadai (319-320) says that Navoys were quite big, which brought milk-white horses from West¹⁷.

Foreigners :

Foreigners who transacted business were known as 'Yavanars'. Pattinappalai praises Kaverippoompattinam as a city where various foreigners of high civilisation, speaking

15 யவனர் தந்த வினைமான் நன்கலம்
பொன்னொடு வந்து கறியொடுபெயரும் — Aham-140)

16 நுங்கு நாவாய் துவன்றிருக்கை
மிசைக் கூம்பி னசைக் கோடியும் — (Porttina 174-75)

17 நனந்தலைத் தேயெத்து நன்கல னுய்ம்மார்
புணர்ந்துடன் கொணர்ந்த புரவியொடனைத்தும்
— (Madurajkanji-322-323)

different languages, assembled to transact business.¹⁸ Some foreigners were mediators in foreign trade.

Godowns :

Pattinappali mentions godowns. "Commodities were stored in big godowns. They were stored prior to shipment or before taking imported commodities for inland market. The bags were sealed and placed one upon the other reaching great height. (Pattinapalai 137,141)

Light House & Harbours :

Perumpanarrupadai (349 & 351) mentions light house in order to direct the ships.¹⁹

Sangam literature and notes of foreigners refer to the harbours where foreign ships anchored. Puhar (Chola kingdom) alias Kaveripoompattinam, Musiri (Chera kingdom) and Korkai (Pandia Kingdom) were some of the noteworthy harbours of Sangam age.

Puhar (Kaveripoompattinam)

Puhar was a remarkable harbour of Chola Kingdom.²⁰ The ships entered into the harbour with out removing the cargo. Pattinapalai describes the harbour, the business transacted there and the imports and exports. Horses, peppers, gems, sandal, spices and perfumes were found in the harbour. Safety and security were maintained.

18 மொழிபல பெருகிய பழி தீர்த்தே எத்துப்
புலம்பெயர் மாக்கள் கலந்து இனிது உறையும்
முட்டாச்சிறப்பிற் பட்டினம் —(Patinap 213-18)

19 இரவின் மாட்டிய விலங்கு சுடர்நெகிழி
உரவுநீ நழுவுத்தோடு கலங்கரையும்
துறைபிறக் கொழியப் போகி —(Perumpan 349,351)

20 மீப்பாய் களையாது மிசைப்பரந்தோண்டாது
புகாஅர்ப் புகுந்த பெருங்கலந்தகா அர் —(Puram-352)

Musiri :

It was the gateway of Western India on those days. Musiri was a busy harbour of Chera Kingdom. This was considered to be near Kodungaloor on the banks of river Peri. Paddy (received in exchange for fish) pepper, golden articles, ivory, silk and pearls etc. were found in the harbour. Periplus states that these articles were exported from Kuttanadu.

Korkai :

Korkai harbour was famous for its beautiful pearls. Periplus states that prisoners were employed to collect pearls and Korkai harbour belonged to Pandya Kingdom. Madurai Kanji (135-138) was all in praise for Korkai harbour. Korkai was also known for its Valamburi Sangu.

Other Harbours:

Periplus refers to Eyirpattinam as 'Sopatma'. The terms 'so' and Aciyil, means fence. Sirupanattrupadai describes vividly 'Sopattanam'. Perumpanattrupadai states that horses were imported in this harbour.

There were two harbours named 'Thondi'—one is Chera Kingdom and another in Pandya Kingdom. 'Thondipattu' in Ainkurunuru describes Thondi in Chera Nadu; Aghananuru (10) speaks of Thondi in Pandya Kingdom. Several perfumes were imported in this harbour. Moreover, Kollathurai, at the fag of Vadapennai river and Naravu near Mangalore were noteworthy harbours.

21 நீரின் வந்த நிமிர்பரிப்புரவியும்
காலின் வந்த கருங்கரி மூடையும்
வடமலைப் பிறந்த மணியும் பொன்னும்
குடமலைப் பிறந்த ஆரமும் அகிலும்
தென்கடல் முத்தும் குணக்கடல் துகிரும்
ஈழத்து உணவும் காழகத்து ஆக்கமும்

Exports and Imports :

Pattinapalai explains the busy commercial transactions of Kaveripoompattinam. Madurai Kanji states (318-323) that salt, tamarine, dry fish and gems were exported and excellent horses were imported. Pliny wonders at the enormous sale of Pepper. Pliny disliked the taste, shape, colour and character of pepper. He was surprised to know that pepper stimulates appetite.

Pepper constituted 75% of exports. Medical practitioners like Hippocrates and Kelen used pepper for medicinal purposes, calling it, Indian medicine. Pliny states pepper was sold in Rome at double the rate of the prevailing price in Tamil Nadu.

Sandal was grown in Mysore, Pothiyamalai, Salem, Coimbatore and Puhar. This sandal was used as perfume in South India. But in Rome it was a medicine prescribed for dysentery. Aghil, another sweet smelling tree, was grown in Kudagu according to Pattinappalai (188) and Porunatarrupadai (238-239). Teak, sandal, pearl, pepper, rice and cloth besides peacock feathers were exported. Spices from East Indies, camphor and silk from China. Liquor, horse and gold from west were imported.

Light house called Kalamkarai Ilanku Sudar (as they gave signal to beckon the ships) was also there near the Sea-coast of each Port.

Gold, Pearl, Coral, Shells etc :

Gold was not a flourishing commercial product. Pattinappalai states that Gold was taken from Vadamalai (North mountain). That was brought to Kaveri and exported, and sometimes gold was also imported. Pearl was a precious stone of South India, especially from Korkai of Pandya Kingdom. Pliny states that, Roman people imported large quantities of pearls to beautify themselves. Queen Poulina, the wife of King Kaiyasu, decorated herself with pearls and other gems

worth about 40,000,000 sovereigns of gold. Queens of Tamil-Nadu also wore anklets made up of pearls.

Coral :

Coral was mentioned by Pattinappalai but we cannot say with certainty that coral was exported from Tamil Nadu. Pliny states that a Roman lady loved a pearl as much as an Indian loved coral. Rubies were found in plenty in Kongu Nadu.²² Shells were also subjected to commercial transactions. Shells were made into decorated bangles (Narrinai 77).

Horses :

Majestic horses, renowned for their valiant speed were imported from Persia.

Liquor : Liquor was referred to, in Sangam literature as Kal, Thoapi, Pizhi, Theral, Naravu, Maghil Mattu (Agan-anuru 173 & 348, Sirupa 237) Hungry stomach was satisfied with liquor. They exchanged ivory for liquor. Liquor was imported and not exported.²³ Kings, soldiers and women consumed liquor.

Shops :

Shops were known as Angadi. Day market was called Nalangadi and night market was called Allangadi. Bazaar streets of Madurai were broad. Sandal, Sandhu, Aghil, Cotton, hair, silk-dresses and weapons were sold. Flags were hoisted in front of shops to indicate the selling of things. Shops consist of Pepper bags, betelnut bags and other sixteen kinds of provisions. Clothes of various kinds and colours were sold. The shirts were also stiched and the readymade garments named Kanjugam, Neipai and Kuppayam were also sold. Dresses were washed and neatly pressed and perfumed.

²² இலங்கு கதிர்த் திருமணி பெறுஉம்
அதன்கண் வைப்பின் நாடு —(Patirrup-66)

²³ யவனர் நன்கலம் தந்த தண் கமழ் தேறல்

Culture of Commerce :

Commerce in Sangam age was not aimed at heavy profit but man based on justice. Madurai Kanji (50) and Pattinappalai (206-210) holds the commercial civilisation, the judicious and neutral attitude of businessman of age, who left a hamed to utter a lie.²⁴ For them truth is beauty, beauty truth. Sangam civilisation was a monumental evidence of lofty principles and glorious culture, and a fitting example to be followed by us.