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# History of Tamil Society

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## INTRODUCTION

Tamil civilization, as we have seen, begins at least 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.

## 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 Kappiyamsare 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.



**Note:** You will notice that among the old inscriptions, people (both local and tourists) have marked their names thereby destroying some of the ancient inscriptions. Such acts of destruction of heritage property or property belonging to others are called vandalism.

## THE SANGAM AGE

The word 'Sangam' refers to the association of poets who flourished under the royal patronage of the Pandya kings at Madurai. The poems composed by these poets are collectively known as Sangam literature. The period in which these poems were composed is called the Sangam Age.

### Sources:

**Inscriptions** - Hathigumpha Inscription of King Karavela of Kalinga, Pugalur (near Karur) Inscription, Ashokan Edicts II and XIII, and inscriptions found at Mangulam, Alagarmalai and Kilavalavu (all near Madurai)

**Copper Plates**- Velvikudi and Chinnamanur copper plates

**Coins** - Issued by the Cheras, Cholas, Pandyas and the chieftains of Sangam Age as well as the Roman coins

**Megalithic Monuments** - Burials and Hero stones

**Excavated Materials** - Adichanallur, Arikamedu, Kodumanal, Puhar, Korkai, Alagankulam, Uraiyur

**Literary Sources** - Tholkappiyam, Ettuthogai(eight anthologies), Pathupattu(ten idylls), PathinanKeezhkanakku (a collection of eighteen poetic works), Pattinapalai and Maduraikanji. Epics - Silappathikaram and Manimegalai.

**Foreign Notices** - The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, Pliny's Natural History, Ptolemy's Geography, Megasthenes's Indica, Rajavali, Mahavamsa and Dipavamsa.

#### The Titles Assumed by the Muvendaras

##### CHERAN

- Adhavan
- Kuttuvan
- Vanavan
- Irumporai

##### CHOLAN

- Senni
- Sembian
- Killi
- Valavan

##### PANDIYAN

- Maran
- Valuthi
- Sezhiyan
- Tennar

## CHERAS

Muvendaras (Three Great Kings) controlled the territories of Tamizhagam during the Sangam Age. The Tamil word 'Vendar' was used to refer to three dynasties, namely the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas.

The Cheras ruled over the central and north Travancore, Cochin, south Malabar and Kongu region of Tamil Nadu. The Pathitru Pathu (a collection of ten decades of verses) provides information about the Chera kings. It is known that the Chera king Senguttuvan went on a military expedition to North India.

He brought stones from the Himalayas for making the idol of Kannagi, an epic character from Silappathikaram. He introduced pattini cult. Chera Senguttuvan's younger brother was Ilango Adigal. He was the author of Silappathikaram. Another Chera king, Cheral Irumporai, issued coins in his name. Some Chera coins bear their emblem of bow and arrow.

### Prominent Chera Rulers

- Udayan Cheralathan
- Imayavaramban Netun Cheralathan
- Chera Senguttuvan
- Cheral Irumporai

## CHOLAS

The Chola kingdom of Sangam period extended upto Venkatam (Tirupathi) hills. The Kaveri delta region remained the central part of the kingdom. This area was later known as Cholamandalam. KarikalValavan or Karikalan was the most famous of the Chola kings.

He defeated the combined army of the Cheras, Pandyas and the eleven Velir chieftains who supported them at Venni, a small village in the Thanjavur region. He converted forests into cultivable lands.

He built Kallanai (meaning a dam made of stone) across the river Kaveri to develop agriculture. Their port Puhar attracted merchants from various regions of the Indian Ocean. The Pattinapaalai, a poetic work in the Pathinenkeezhkanakku, gives elaborate information of the trading activity during the rule of Karikalan.

**Kallanai** – It was a dyke, built with stones. It was constructed across the Kaveri to divert water throughout the delta region for irrigation. When it was built, Kallanai irrigated an area of about 69,000 acres.

### Prominent Chola Rulers

- Ilanchetsenni
- KarikalValavan
- Kocengannan
- KilliValavan
- Perunarkilli



## PANDYAS

The Pandyas ruled the present-day southern Tamil Nadu. The Pandya kings patronized the Tamil poets and scholars. Several names of Pandya kings are mentioned in the Sangam literature. Nedunchezhiyan is hailed as the most popular warrior. He defeated the combined army of the Chera, Chola and five Velir Chieftains at Talayalanganam. He is praised as the lord of Korkai. Pandya country was well known for pearl hunting.

Pandya kings issued many coins. Their coins have elephant on one side and fish on another side. MudukudimiPeruvazhuthi issued coins to commemorate his performance of many Vedic rituals.

### Prominent Pandya Rulers

- Nediyan
- Nanmaran
- MudukudimiPeruvazhuthi
- Nedunchezhiyan



### Royal Insignia

Sceptre (kol), drum (murasu) and white umbrella (venkudai) were used as the symbols of royal authority.

Muvendar	Garland	Port	Capital	Symbols
Cheras	Palmyra flower	Muziri/ Tondi	Vanchi/ Karur	 Bow and arrow
Cholas	Fig (Athi) flower	Puhar	Uraiyur/ Puhar	 Tiger
Pandyas	Margosa (neem) flower	Korkai	Madurai	 Two Fish



## Minor Chieftains – Ay, Velir and Kizhar

Apart from three great kings, there were several brave independent minor chieftains.

The name 'Ay' is derived from the ancient Tamil word 'Ayar' (meaning shepherd).

Among Ay chiefs of Sangam Age, Anthiran, Titiran and Nannan were the important names.

The Velirs-Vellalars- constituted the ruling and land-owning class in the ancient Tamizhagam. The famous Velirs were the seven patrons (KadaiyezhuVallalgal). They were Pari, Kari, Ori, Pegan, Ay, Adiyaman and Nalli.

They were popular for their generous patronage of Tamil poets. Kizhar was the village chief.



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

## SANGAM POLITY

### Kingship

The kingship was hereditary. The king was called Ko. It is the shortened form of Kon. Vendan, Kon, Mannan, Kotravan and Iraivan were the other titles by which the king was addressed. The eldest son of the reigning king generally succeeded to the throne. The coronation ceremony was known as arasukattilerudhal or mudisoottuvila.

The crown prince was known as komahan, while the young ones were known as Ilango, Ilanchezhiyanand Ilanjeral. King held a daily durbar (naalavai) at which he heard and resolved all the disputes. The income to the state was through taxation.

Land tax was the main source of revenue and it was called 'Irai'. This apart, the state collected tolls and customs (sungam), tributes and fines. The kings and soldiers wore the heroic anklet (Veera kazhal). On the anklet, the name and achievement of the wearer were blazoned. Spies were used not only to find out what was happening within the country, but also in foreign countries.

A wound in the back was considered a disgrace and there are instances of kings fasting unto death because they had suffered such a wound in the battle.

## **The Court**

The king's court was called Arasavai. The king occupied a ceremonious throne in the court called Ariyanai. In the court, the king was surrounded by officials, distinguished visitors and court poets. The rulers had five-fold duties.

They were encouraging learning, performing rituals, presenting gifts, protecting people and punishing the criminals. Ambassadors were employed by the kings. They played a significant role. The king was assisted by a number of officials.

They were divided into Aimperunguzhu (five-member committee) and Enberaayam (eight-member group).

## **Army**

The king's army consisted of four divisions, namely, infantry, cavalry, elephants and chariot force. The army was known as 'Padai'. The chief of the army was known as Thanaitalaivan.

The prominent weapons used during this period were sword, kedayam (shield), tomaram (lance), spears, bows and arrows. Tomaram is mentioned as a missile to be thrown at the enemy from a distance. The place where the weapons were kept was known as paddaikottil. The forts were protected by deep moats and trenches. The war drum was worshipped as a deity.

## **Law and Justice**

The king was the final authority for appeal. In the capital town, the court of justice was called Avai. In the villages, Mandram served as the place for dispensing justice. In civil cases, the method of trial followed was to call upon the plaintiff to thrust his hand into a pot containing a cobra. If the cobra bit him, he was sentenced; if the cobra did not bite him he was considered innocent and acquitted.

Punishment was always severe. Execution was ordered for theft cases. The punishment awarded for other crimes included beheading, mutilation of the offending limbs of the body, torture and imprisonment and imposition of fines.

## **Local Administration**

The entire kingdom was called Mandalam. Mandalam was divided into Nadus. Kurrmwas subdivision of Nadu. The Urwas a village, classified into perur (big village), Sirur (a small village) and Mudur (an old village) depending upon its population, size and antiquity. Pattinam was the name for a coastal town and Puharwas the general term for harbour town.

## Important Towns

Puhar, Uraiyur, Korkai, Madurai, Muziri, Vanji or Karur and Kanchi.

## Thinai (tract)-based Sangam Society

The land form was divided into five thinais (eco-regions).

Eco-region ( <i>thinai</i> )	Landscape	Occupation	People	Deity
Kurinji	Palmyra flower	Hunting /gathering	Kuravar/kurathiyar	Murugan
Mullai	Forest region	Herding	Aayar/aaichiyar	Maayon
Marutham	Riverine track (plains)	Agriculture	Uzhavan/uzhathiyar	Indiran
Neithal	Coastal region	Fishing/saltmaking	Parathavar/ nulathiyar	Varunan
Palai	Parched land	Heroic deeds	Maravar/Marathiyar	Kotravai

Land was classified according to its fertility. Marutham was called menpulam (fertile land). It produced paddy and sugarcane. The rest of the landscape, excluding Neithal, was called vanpulam (hard land), and it produced pulses and dry grains.

## Status of Women

There was no restriction for women in social life. There were learned and wise women. Forty women poets had lived and left behind their valuable works. Marriage was a matter of self-choice. However, chastity (*karpu*) was considered the highest virtue of women. Sons and daughters had equal shares in their parents' property.

**Women Poets of Sangam Age**-Avvaiyar, VelliVeethiyar, Kakkaiadinaiyar, Aath Manthiyar, PonMudiyar

## Religious Beliefs and Social Divisions

The primary deity of the Tamils was Sivan or Murugan. Other gods worshipped during Sangam period were Sivan, Mayon (Vishnu), Indiran, Varunan and Kotravai. The Hero stone (*natukkal*) worship was in practice. Buddhism and Jainism also co-existed. Caste did not develop in Tamizhagam as it did in the northern India. Varuna system (occupation-based caste) came to the Dravidian south comparatively late.

## Dress and Ornaments

The rich people wore muslin, silk and fine cotton garments. The common people wore two pieces of clothes made of cotton. The Sangam literature refers to clothes, which were thinner than the skin of a snake (*Kalingam*).

Women adorned their hair plaits with flowers. Both men and women wore a variety of ornaments. They were made of gold silver, pearls, precious stones, conch shells and beads. The People were fond of using aromatic perfumes.

### **Arts**

Here are many references to variety of musical instruments such as drum, flute and yazh. Karikalan was master of seven notes of music (EzhisaiVallavan). Singing bards were called panar and vraliyar. Dancing was performed by kanigaiyar. Koothu (folk drama) was the most important cultural practice of the people of Sangam Age. They developed the concept of Muthamizh (Iyal, Isai, Naatakam).

### **Occupation**

The major occupations of the people were: agriculture, cattle rearing, fishing and hunting. Other craftsmen like carpenter, blacksmith, goldsmith, and potters were also part of the population. Weaving was the most common part-time occupation of the farmers and regular full time job for many others.

### **Festivals and Entertainments**

People celebrated several festivals. The harvest festival, (Pongal) and the festival of spring, kaarthigai, were some of them. Indira vizha was celebrated in the capital. There were many amusements and games.

This included dances, festivals, bull fights, cock fights, dice, hunting, wrestling and playing in swings. Children played with toy cart and with the sand houses made by them.

### **Trade**

Trade existed at three levels: local, overland and overseas. The extensive and lucrative foreign trade that Tamizhagam enjoyed during this period stands testimony to the fact that Tamils had been great seafarers.

Warehouses for storing the goods were built along the coast. The chief ports had light houses, which were called KalangaraillanguSudar. Caravans of merchants carried their merchandise to different places in oxen-driven carts. Barter system was prevalent.

There were two kinds of markets or bazaars in the leading cities like Puhar and Madurai. In Madurai they were Nalangadi (the morning bazaar) and Allangadi (the evening bazaar). In these markets large varieties as well as large quantities of goods were sold and purchased.

**Major Ports:** Musiri, Tondi, Korkai

**Main Exports** - salt, pepper, pearls, ivory, silk, spices, diamonds, saffron, precious stones, muslin, sandal wood

**Main Imports**-Topaz, tin, wine, glass, horses

### **Trade Contact with Overseas Countries**

Archaeological excavations have confirmed the trading relations between the Tamizhagam and the countries such as Greece, Rome, Egypt, China, South East Asia and Sri Lanka.

#### **Muziris - First Emporium**

The Roman writer Pliny the Elder writes of Muziris in his Natural History as the 'first emporium (shopping complex) of India'. A temple of Augustus was built at Muziris, which had a Roman colony.

A papyrus document (now in Vienna museum) of 2nd century BC (BCE) records the agreement between two merchants' shippers of Alexandria and Muziris.

### **Kalabhras**

Towards the end of the 3rd century AD (CE), the Sangam period slowly went into a decline. Following the Sangam period, the Kalabhras had occupied the Tamil country for about two and half centuries.

We have very little information about Kalabhras. They left neither artefacts nor monuments. But there is evidence of their rule in literary texts. The literary sources for this period include Tamil Navalarcharithai, Yapernkalamand Periapuranam.

SeevakaChinthamani and Kundalakesi were also written during this period. In Tamizhagam, Jainism and Buddhism became prominent during this period. Introduction of Sanskrit and Prakrit languages had resulted in the development of a new script called

#### **Vattezhuththu.**

Many works under Pathinen Keezhkanakku were composed. Trade and commerce continued to flourish during this period. So the Kalabhra period is not a dark age, as it is portrayed.

### **Economy**

The economy was mixed as elaborated in the Thina 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.

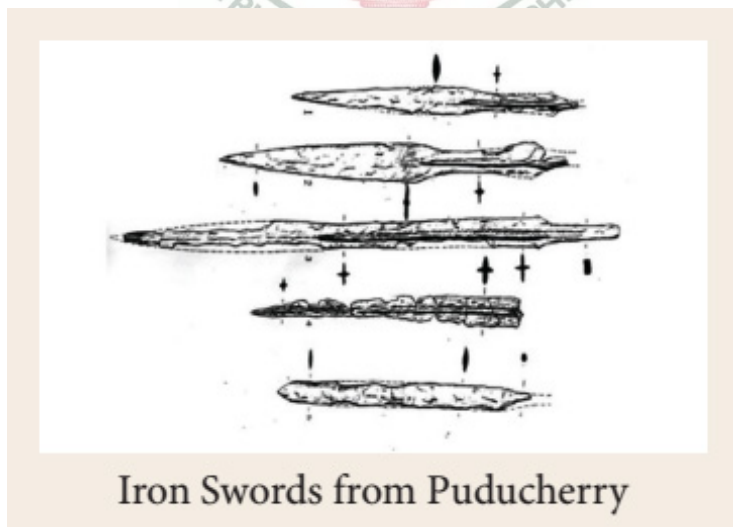
#### **Pottery**

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

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 Arikamedu, Keezhadi and Pattanam in Kerala.

**Glass Beads:** 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. Arikamedu 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.



Shell bangle bragments and a conch, Kodumanal

## 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** The terms vanikanand 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 Navaiare 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

**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.



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**

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 Khuan Luk 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.

Arikkamedu, Kaveripoompattinam, Azhagankulam and Korkai on the east coast and Pattanam in Kerala were port centres. Kanchipuram, Uraiyyur, 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 Yag nais 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.

