

Sangam Age - The Dawn of History in the Deep South

The Megalithic Background

Megalith graves were encircled by big pieces of stones. They also contained pottery and iron objects buried with the corpse. They are found in the upland regions of Peninsula with the concentration in Eastern Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu

State formation and the rise of civilization

The megalithic people started to reclaim the fertile deltaic lands. The route to the south is called as *Dakshinapatha* which became economically important.

Megasthenes knew about Pandyas while Ashokan inscriptions mention about Cholas, Pandyas, Keralaputras and Satyaputras

Flourishing trade with Roman empire led to the formation of these three states i.e., Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas

Sangam Period

Sangam period is the period in the history of ancient Tamil Nadu spanning from c. 3rd century BC to c. 3rd century AD. It is named after the famous Sangam academies of poets and scholars centred in the city of Madurai.



Three early kingdoms

Kingdom	Capital	Port	Emblem	Famous Ruler
Cheras	Vanji – Modern Kerala	Muzuri and Tondi	Bow	Senguttuvan
Cholas	Uraiyur and Puhar	Kaveripatinam/Puhar. They had an efficient Navy	Tiger	Karikalan
Pandyas	Madurai	Korkai for Pearl Fishing	Fish	Nedunzheriyan

Cheras

- They had Palmyra flowers as their Garland
- Pugalur inscriptions mention of three generations of Cheras
- Senguttuvan introduced Pattni cult or Worship of Kannagi as ideal wife

Cholas

- Karikalan built Kallanai (Check dam) against River Kaveri

Pandyas

- Maduraikkanji written by Mangudi Maruthanar describes the socio-economic conditions of the Pandyas
- Invasion by Kalbharas led to their decline

These kingdoms had a profitable trade with the Roman empire. They produced Pepper, Ivory, Pearls, Precious stones, Muslin, Silk, Cotton etc. which led to prosperity in their region.

Rise of social classes

- Enadi – captains of the army
- Vellalas – Rich peasants
- Arasar – ruling class
- Kadaiyyar – the lowest class
- Pariyars – agricultural labourers

Four castes mentioned in Tolkappiyam

- Arasar – Ruling class
- Anthanar – Brahmanas
- Vanigar – People involved in Trade and Commerce
- Vellalar – Labourers

Five-fold division of land

Land	Type of land	Chief deity	Chief occupation
Kurunji	Hilly tracts	Murugan	Hunting and honey collection
Mullai	Pastoral	Mayon	Cattle rearing and dealing with dairy products
Marudham	Agricultural	Indira	Agricultural
Neidhal	Coastal	Varunan	Fishing and salt manufacturing
Palai	Desert	Korravai	Robbery

Sangam administration

- **Avai** – the imperial court
- **Kodimaram** – tutelary tree of every ruler
- **Panchmahasabha**
 1. Amaichar – ministers
 2. Senatipathiar – Army chief
 3. Otrar – Spy
 4. Thoodar – Envoy
 5. Purohitar – Priest
- **Kingdom's division**
 1. Mandalam/Nadu – Province
 2. Ur – town
 3. Perur – Big village
 4. Sitrur – Small village

Sangams

Sangam	Place	Chairman	Surviving texts
1 st	Then-Madurai	Agasthiyar	Nil
2 nd	Kapadapuram	Agasthiyar and Tolkappiyar	Tolkappiyam
3 rd	Madurai	Founder - Mudathirumaran Nakkirar	Ettutogai, Pattu Pattu (10 idylls)

Tamil language and Sangam literature

- **Narrative** – Ettutogai and Pattupattu which are called Melkankakku – 18 Major works. They are divided into Agam (love) and Puram (Valour)
- **Didactic** – Pathinenkilkanakku – 18 minor works. They deal with Ethics and Morals.
- **Thirukkural** – Written by Thiruvalluvar is a treatise covering various aspects of life.
- **Tolkappiyam** by Tolkappiyar is the earliest of Tamil literature. It is a work on Tamil Grammar but also provides information on Political and Social conditions of Sangam period

Epics

- **Silapadhikaram** by Elango Adigal
- **Manimegalai** by Sitthalai Sathanar
- **Valaypathi**
- **Kundalagesi**
- **Sivaga Sinthamani**