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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**REVIEW ON SANGAM AGE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF TAMIL NADU**

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**Abstract**

The state of Tamil Nadu is well-known and has a rich history and customs. The belief that only the truth endures was the foundation of ancient Tamil culture. It equipped the populace with the poise and calmness needed to resist terrible foreign invasions. Language and art, philosophy and religion, social habits and customs, political institutions, and business organizations are all ways that culture expresses itself. The entire nature had been incorporated into Tamil culture during the Sangam era. Culture is therefore an all-encompassing term for the sum of what a person experiences in a society's different facets of daily life. Culture can be compared to a camera's eye that focuses on and captures the essence of a civilization.

**Keywords:** Sangam, Tamil Culture, Ancient era, Literature, Dance, Music, Heritage

**Introduction**

Tamil Nadu has its sights set on the future as well as the history. On all fronts, including the economy, social, human resources, culture, and so forth, the state is developing quickly. Tamil Nadu is one of the top three Indian states in terms of the amount of foreign investment it receives in industries like telecommunications, power, and the automotive and information technology sectors, among others. On the social front, the state has a high per capita income, social services are easily accessible to citizens, and it generates a sizable pool of trained labour to boost

productivity. It makes sense that the past and current in Tamil Nadu coexist peacefully. The Kurinji or hilly region, the Mullai or woodland region, the Palai or arid region, the Marudham or fertile plains, and the Neidhal or coastline region are the five main physical divisions of the land. Eastern and Western borders of Tamil Nadu are where the Eastern and Western Ghats converge. The lifeblood of the state is the Cauvery River, which rises in the Coorg area of the neighbouring state of Karnataka. The Cauvery River irrigates the lush Coromandal Plains, and Thanjavur-Nagapattinam delta of Tamil Nadu is known as its

"granary." Other rivers in the state are Tamiraparani, Pennar, Palar and Vaigai.<sup>1</sup>

The Sangam Tamils led the best possible existence in terms of culture and civilization. The Sangam age, also known as the Sangam literary age. The ancient Tamil Nadu was ruled by the Chera, Chola, and Pandya kings. With their distinctive language and civilization, they controlled Tamil Nadu. In the Sangam era, only communal life was left, and a ruler oversaw everyone. The Sangam era saw the growth of literature and religious tolerance. Despite having many differences in social and economic standing, customs, and modes of worship, they lived in harmony. The determination of the Sangam age's chronology is a very challenging endeavor in and of itself. Scholars present a range of opinions. The majority of academics concur that the Sangam age occurred between 300 B.C. and 300 A.D. The inscriptions greatly aided in our understanding of the Sangam age's beginnings. The oldest are Brahmi inscriptions, which may be found across Tamil Nadu. The inscriptions date from 200 B.C. There are currently no literary allusions to Brahmi inscriptions or ancient inscriptions. As a result, it is believed that the Sangam age began around 300 B.C. The Asoka inscriptions are the earliest texts that describe the Sangam era. The Chera, Chola, and Pandya were autonomous dynasties, according to Asoka's rock edicts Nos. 2 and 13. This results in the Sangam age being fixed at beginning in the year 300 B.C.<sup>2</sup>

The state of Tamil Nadu is well-known and has a rich history and customs. The steadfast belief that only the truth endures was the foundation of ancient Tamilagam culture. It equipped the populace with the poise and calmness needed to resist terrible foreign invasions. Language and art, philosophy and religion, social habits and conventions, political structures, and business organizations are all ways that culture expresses itself. The entire natural world had been absorbed into Tamil culture during the Sangam era. Thus, culture is an all-encompassing concept that encompasses all of a society's encounters with its numerous facets of daily life. Culture serves as a lens through which the character of a society can be focused and observed.<sup>3</sup>

### **Sources of Tamil Nadu History**

Historians mainly look at two types of historical sources while researching the past. These historical sources are both main and secondary. Something that has historical precedent is a main source. It might be a historical document, a piece of pottery, a coin discovered at an archaeological site, etc. On the other hand, a work that offers commentary on the past qualifies as a secondary source of history. Typically, this is a freshly published book that recounts historical events, frequently written by a historian or other trained academic conversant with the relevant historical period and civilisation. Historians look at numismatic, literary, archaeological, and epigraphic sources for studying Tamil history. The Sangam literature, which is typically dated to the last decades BCE to the first centuries CE, is the primary source of ancient Tamil history.<sup>4</sup>

### **Literature Source**

The main source for societal growth due to literacy is literature, which is furthered by other cultural and economic advancements made possible by political will and force. Literature with broader implications covered not only the King's courts but also the real life structures existed outside the palaces. It gives a vivid description of the status of the lifestyle, the internal and external cultural norms, taboos, social divisions, casteism, economic activity, poverty, primary vocation, etc. With its record of chronological events through various literary contributions like poems, works, novels, plays, etc., literature facilitates learning history and its flow of events. Literature that has been the sources of evidence for historians is grouped into three broad classifications:

- Literature produced by Indian laureates is an example of an inland literary source.
- Foreign Literary Sources: Literature created in foreign land that discusses the South Indian Kingdoms and current events
- Foreigner Accounts: a special section devoted to the travel diaries and accounts of emissaries, scholars, and other foreign visitors.

## **Literature from the Sangam Period**

There is a wealth of literature that describes the values of the Sangam Period, which is regarded as the Golden Era of Tamil Nadu. Only two works - Ettuthogai and Pathupaattu - are officially recognized as belonging to the Sangam Period, despite the fact that many are listed as such.

The literature of the Agathiyam, Pathinenkizkanakku, Tolkappiyam, Silappadigaaram, Valaiyapathi, Manimekalai, Kundalakesi, Seevagachinthamani, and Thirukkural periods, in addition to these two major authentic works of the Sangam Period, explains the social, religious status and values as well as the superior culture of the Tamils, also known as Dravidians. Puranaanooruisa collection of poems that shows the strength of both the kings leading the nation and the kings of tiny kingdoms. The qualities of the Chera Kings for art, peace, and military strategy are depicted in Pathithupatru. All of these writings reveal much about the Sangam Period Tamils' cultural legacy, love affairs, friendliness, bravery, and goodness.<sup>5</sup>

## **Sangam**

Sangam literally translates to "confluence" in Sanskrit. However, this name might be translated into English in the context of early South Indian history as an assembly, college, or academy of learned individuals gathered under the patronage of the Pandyan rulers, who were great admirers of literature and the beautiful arts. The Sangam was a nonprofit group for poets. It was comparable to a Round Table Conference where only a genuine poet was permitted to sit down. High-caliber literary works were produced by this academy or group of scholarly individuals, which also included the Sangam poets.

In Southern India, the Sangam Period spans from the first century B.C. until the end of the second century A.D. It was given that name in honour of the Sangam academies of that time. There were three Sangams (Academies of Tamil poets) held in the historic region of South India known as Muchsangam, according to Tamil folklore. The Pandya kings of Madurai provided these Sangams with the royal support they needed to develop. Gods and legendary sages are said to have attended the First Sangam in Madurai. There is no published literary work by this

Sangam.<sup>6</sup> The solitary remnant of the Second Sangam, which took place at Kapadapuram, is Tolkappiyam. Mudathirumaran established the Third Sangam in Madurai. A few of these Tamil literary works have persisted, and they can be used as sources to reconstruct the Sangam period's history.

## **Chronology**

The chronology of the Sangam age is a topic of debate among researchers. The fundamental cause of this is the lack of agreement over the age of the Sangam works, which have significant historical significance for research into the Sangam period. K.A.N. Sastri dates the Sangam age between A.D. 100 and 250 based on the literary style of the Sangam period. The Tolkappiyam is thought to be the oldest Tamil work still in existence. According to M. Arokiaswami, as Tolkappiar, the author of Tolkappiyam, lived during the 4th or 3rd century B.C., the same time period can be used to date this literary work. We can locate the Sangam age in the roughly 600-year period from c. 300 B.C. to A.D. 300 by using archaeological data to support the literary sources.<sup>7</sup>

## **Tradition of the three Sangams**

The three Sangams prove that these were not contemporaneous, but rather succeeded one another. According to the historical writings of Iraiyanar Ahapporul, there were three Sangams (I, II, and III) that were held and that were successful for a total of 9990 years. There were 8598 students present. The founding father was Sage Agastyar. Their sequential order and the floods that occurred in the pauses between them are also mentioned in the Ahapporul commentary. There were 197 Pandyan monarchs who supported these Sangams, or academies. The first two of the three succeeding Sangams, according to legend, are from prehistory. All three events took place at the Pandyas' capital. The first Sangam had its headquarters in old Madurai, and the second academy was held in Kapatapuram, since the capital changed periodically. During subsequent downpours, the sea washed both of these centres away. Modern Madurai served as the site of the third Sangam. Compared to the other Sangams, the third Sangam's date may be determined with a higher degree of certainty. This time period is

considered to be the first two centuries of the Christian era and most likely the century immediately before. The second Sangam era is thought to have been the age of Tolkappiar, and the third Sangam era corresponds to the Indo-Roman trade with the modern Imperial Rome. Based on the evidence found in the tales of the ancient Greek writers, this dating was determined. There are several allusions to the international trade between the Tamil region and the Mediterranean region. The Sangam literature confirms this as well. As a result, the third Sangam saw the creation of a large number of still-existing masterpieces. The Sangams, which tried to preserve the purity of the language and literary norms, can be compared to the French Academy in modern-day Europe.<sup>8</sup> The Sangam was initially open to co-option, but eventually entrance was granted through a miraculous plot by Lord Siva, who served as the Sangam's permanent president.

### **Sangam Literature**

Three different Sangams (Muchsangam) Early Sangam was established at what is now Madurai, Middle Sangam operated out of Kapadapuram, and Madurai served as the location for the establishment of the Last Sangam. It is known that the Early Sangam of Then Madurai (South Madurai) and the Middle Sangam of Kapadapuram were both drowned as a result of a flood, and that the Pandya Kings in Madurai created the Third Sangam, which is regarded as the Last Sangam. The Sangam 20 and its literature are considered to be part of the Last Sangam of Madurai. This is due to the fact that the other two Sangams' literary materials, in addition to other resources, have been lost beneath the surface of the Indian Ocean. Thamizagam or Tamilagam was the name given to the ancient South Indian region that is now known as Sangam Literature. Sangam Literature is also referred to as the ancient Tamil literature. The famous collections known as Akananooru, Kurunthogai, and Natrinai included a total of 2381 poetry written by 473 different poets, 102 of whom chose to remain nameless. Natrinai was the only one of the three that was published. A classification of the available writings Akam, which means "inner," and Puram, which means "outer," are the two categories that Sangam Literature fell within. Even though the classification of Akam and Puram was not followed to

the letter in every instance, the interpretation was taken into consideration, and the literature was placed in the most logically relevant group. Every other piece of Sangam literature, with the exception of Paripaatal, is concerned with the feelings and interactions of humans.<sup>9</sup>

### **Significance of Sangam Literature**

As was said previously, the works of Sangam include vast amounts of material that can be used to further one's understanding of the early history of Tamilakam. They provide insight into an issue of significant historical significance. The Tolkappiyam is a treatise on Tamil grammar and poetics. Its composition is thought to have taken place during the second Sangam. It is the oldest piece of Tamil literature that has been preserved. Whereas it is believed that the earliest examples of Tamil poetry, which are now available and are collectively referred to as Sangam poetry, were written during the time period of the third Sangam. Ettutogai (Eight Collections), Pattupattu (Ten Songs), and Patinenkilkanakku (The Eighteen Minor Works) are the three components that make up Sangam Literature, and modern scholars reserve the term "Sangam Literature" for only those works in verse (prose is of much later origin). These three components are judged to have been produced in the order listed between the years 150 and 250 A.D.

Modern scholarship uses the term "Sang Jivakachintamani, Manimekalai, Silappadikaram, Valayapathi, and Kundalakesi are the works that make up what are commonly referred to as the "Five Epics" or "the five great poems." These are given dates that are considerably further in the future. The latter two of these are no longer in existence. Therefore, of the three "great poems" that we currently have, Silappadikaram and Manimekalai are called the "twin epics" because they form a continuous story narrating the story of a single family. This family includes Kovalan (the wealthy merchant prince of Puhar), Kannagi (Kovalan's chaste wife), Madhavi (the dancer) with whom Kovalan lived in wedlock, and Manimekalai, the child of this we Silappadikaram was written by IlangoAdigal, the author of the work. It is related in the epic that Ilango was the brother of Senguttuvan, the current monarch of the Chera people. Sathanar penned Manimekalai

with the primary intention of disseminating Buddhist teachings among the Tamil community. Nevertheless, these lyrical works focus on the cities of Madurai, Puhar (Poompuhar/ Kaveripattinam), Vanji (Karur), and Kanchi to describe the social, religious, economic, and political aspects of the state of Tamilakam.<sup>10</sup>

Although it is possible that the individual poems that are included in the three groups that were just mentioned were written within the first three centuries of the Christian era, it is highly likely that they were collected and arranged in the order in which they are now found much later in history. The length of the poem was one of the extremely essential criteria that were used for classifying the poems into one of three primary categories. In the "Eight collections," the poems range in length from three to thirty one lines, whereas in the "Ten Songs," the poems range in length from three to seven hundred and eighty two lines, with the shortest poem having 103 lines and the longest poem having 782 lines. The canonical ethical and didactic writings are contained within the "Eighteen Minor Works." The majority of the didactic literature, which includes the extremely well-known Tirukkural, is written in the style of stanzas, with each stanza consisting of two to five lines. There are now 2279 poems contained within the Sangam collections. The length of these poems ranges from 3 lines to over 800 lines. Some of these compositions are credited to a single author, while others, such as the Naladiyar, include the collaborative efforts of a number of different poets. This collection of Sangam poetry that we have access to contains more than 30,000 lines.

In addition to the 102 poets who wish to remain unknown, these were written by 473 different poets, many of them were women. There were close to 50 female poets included in the list. These works are representative of a material culture that is relatively evolved. In addition, they demonstrate that by the time of the Sangam period, Tamil as a language had already achieved maturity and had developed into a powerful and elegant medium for the presentation of literary ideas. The language has unavoidably become antiquated; however it is unlikely that modern Tamil speakers will find it more difficult to comprehend. Even though academics have

subdivided the Sangam poems into numerous groups based on the subject matter of their verses, there are only two distinct types of Sangam poetry. The two forms available are the brief ode and the more involved poetry. When it comes to historical significance, shorter odes, rather than longer songs, are more important. The duration of these sources does not, however, typically affect the historical value of the information they provide.<sup>11</sup>

### **Culture of Tamil Nadu**

Tamil Nadu has a rich history and culture that dates back more than 2,000 years and is still thriving today. The dynasties that controlled the state of Tamil Nadu at various points in history were responsible for the development of its rich cultural heritage. Numerous dynasties that were in power supported the arts and culture, which led to the unique Dravidian culture that Tamil Nadu is now known for developing and evolving.

The fields of art, architecture, and literature experienced immense growth and development during the reign of the Pallavas, Cholas, and Pandya kings, reaching new heights. Tamil language history can be found in the Tolkapiyam, a Tamil grammar treatise that is dated to be approximately 500 B.C. The Sangam literature is older still, dating to 500 B.C.<sup>12</sup>

### **Art and Culture in Sangam Age Dance and Music**

Between AD 300 and 600, dance and music, which predominated as folk arts during the Sangam era, underwent a startling transformation. Dance was done on stage in accordance with established criteria and was almost a profession. A great work on dance and music, Silappadikaram is relevant to artists of all ages. KadaladuKathai and ArrangerruKathai. Dance-related knowledge is preserved in great detail through Silappadikaram's Vettuvavari, AychchiyarKuravai, and Kunrakkuravai. Silappadikaram provides information about the art of dance and music, dancing instructors, musicians (both vocalists and instrumentalists), the performance stage, makeup, and other aspects while describing Madavi's dance performance. There are references to music and dancing in Manimekalai as well. Before performing on stage, dance requires rigorous practice and preparation. The kids were given dance instruction from instructors referred to as adalasan. At the age of

five, learning began on a fortunate day and at a fortunate time. Seven years were spent on the learning process. The performance would have been done accordingly if the teacher had seen the disciple's development. These specifics can be found in Silappadikaram's Arangetru Kadai. The professors were anticipated to have a fundamental interest in dance and music, as well as a general aesthetic sense. It is believed that Nattiyannul directed the teachers while they instructed the kids in dancing. The qualifications of the mentor who taught the student this art are vividly described in Silappadikaram. The writings and treatises on dance and music, as well as all facets of dance, had to be thoroughly studied by these teachers. They should be proficient in the study of music and knowledgeable about how to perform musical instruments. Teachers should be skilled performers. Music, which is intrinsically linked to dance, should be played in conjunction with dance as an art.<sup>13</sup>

## **Music**

Dance and music are two arts that have a close relationship, thus it seems sense that both have flourished during this time. In music, the word Kotti denoted tala. The Tirikadugam makes reference to the merit of listening to music played solely to the tala beat. This demonstrates how modern music science has advanced. There have been composers and musicians who have been able to create music that touches the heart with their melodic voice. Only oral tradition was used to pass music down from generation to generation throughout history. Dance performances on stage are significantly influenced by the nattuvangam performers, a group that includes musicians and singers.<sup>14</sup> The theme chosen and the musicians and instrumentalists who perform nattuvangam have a significant impact on the impression that is made during a danseuse's performance. Only music treatises and the ongoing heritage of hymnal music, for instance, folk music, provide a precise understanding of the musical scales utilized in ancient Tamilagam. The most significant source of knowledge on music is Silappadikaram. It mentions a lot of musical scales. In Silappadikaram, music is only presented when it is pertinent to the plot.

The Arangerru Kadai, which discusses the

debut of the danseuse, Kanalvari, and Aichiyar Kuravai, has the majority of references to music.<sup>8</sup> The qualities of the vocal musician, Yaazh player, flute, drummer, and dancing instructor are described in the Arangerrukadi. There is a mention of the musical instruments that were used during the premiere. Kanalvari makes reference to the technique for playing stringed instruments like the yaazh. Additionally, there are references to music in other chapters. Tamil Nadu had music in everything and everywhere. The land cultivators had a custom of singing a certain style of song that was appropriate for the situation while working the soil. The song Mugavai Pattu was played while the field workers counted the grams. The date of Silappadikaram and the commentary of Arumpada Urai and Adiyarkkunallar are separated by several centuries. The treatises that are referenced in them cannot be dated. It is possible that some of the pans listed in Silappadikaram existed before.<sup>15</sup>

## **Literature**

With the exception of the Sangam literature, the period that many academics have referred to as the "dark age" has generated some of the richest writing that Tamil Nadu has ever produced. The age of eight was liberated from the gloom by this amazing expansion of literary tradition. The great works of the era include Tirukkural and the epics Silappadikaram and Manimekalai. This era saw the development of the didactic poems collected as Pathinenmekanaku literature. A state of chaos had been induced by the Kalabhra invasion, and many fundamental principles of life were being lost. In such situations, philosophers would be instrumental to society through the written expression of their ideas and thoughts. A well-known piece of didactic writing from the age, Tirukkural of Tiruvalluvar addresses the three facets of life: ethics, materialism, and worldliness.<sup>10</sup> It has the distinction of having been translated into numerous languages, both Indian and international, as literature that focuses on moral principles in daily life. Other works by Kilkanakku include Naladiyar, Eniyavai Narpadu, Nanmanikkadigai, Kalavazhinarpadu, Inna Narpadu, Karnarpadu, Aintinai Elupadu, Aintinai Aimpadu, Tinaimozhi Eimpadu, Tirikadugam, Tinaimalainurriaimbadu, Acharakkovai and many

other works. Many of these, according to scholars, are Jain works<sup>16</sup> In contrast to the other seventeen works; KalavazhiNarpadu is homage to Kochenganan. It details the king's deeds and includes a detailed account of battles.

The growth of Parani literature in the later period, such as the Kalingattupparani of Jayamkondar, should have been sparked by KalavazhiNarpadu of Poigayar. The age is proud to have produced the monumental epics Silappadikaram and Manimekalai, which served as the foundation for the creation of the socio-cultural history of the time. Without these two pieces of literature, the history of the time would have been lost. The various cults that were popular at the time were accorded their due respect in the epic, even though Silappadikaram exalts the Jain religion. The chapters on Vettuvavari, AichiyarKuravai, and Kunrakkuravai provide evidence of this. A list of the temples dedicated to the many deities worshipped in Tamilagam is provided in the chapter Indira vizhavuUrareduttakadai. There is speculation that the book was composed with the help and approval of the Kalabhakula Buddhist ruler AchchyutaVikkanta's successors. Tirumular, who composed his Tirumantiram in more than 3000 words, was a native of Chola nation. Four works by KaraikkalAmmayar can be found in the eleventh Tirumarai of the Saiva canons. They are Tim Alangadu'sArpudaTiruvantadi, TiruvirattaiManimalai, and two MuttaPadigams. The 101 lyrics of this ArpudaTiruvantadi are an expression of ammayar's passionate love to Siva Buddha datta, a Buddhist scholar who lived in the Chola nation in the early 5th century.<sup>17</sup> He wrote several Buddhist texts in the Pali language, includingBuddhavamsaddakada,Abhidaimnavatara,Vi nayavinichchiyam,Uttaiavinichehayam, Rugarupanibagam, and Jibalankaram. He was residing in the Buddhist monasteries at Kancheepuram, Kavirippumpattinam, Uraiyur, and Budhamangalam. AchchyutaVikkanta, the kalabhra ruler, gave him favours.

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## Conclusion

According to historical data, Sangam Tamils were considered to have a culturally-based lifestyle. With the use of sangam literature, it is possible to grasp the history of the ancient Tamil Nadu from its borders. From Venkadam in the north to Cape Comerin in the south, ancient Tamilaham of this era is surrounded by seas on three sides. The value of education and learning was placed first, and Tamil culture has never lacked for recognizing the learned. Vedic knowledge was valued, and studying them was a requirement for education. Architecture, both secular and religious, expanded. Regarding the development of the arts like music and dance, the era produced an epoch. Dance has evolved from the folk dance of the Sangam era to a highly skilled art form during this time.

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