

HISTORY – PREMODERN PERIOD

ANCIENT TAMILAKAM

Part: III - Video: 13

SOURCES

- [Ashokan edicts](#) c.270-230BCE – mention the political condition in South India.
- [Ashokan rock edicts II](#)- lists the Tamil ruling houses Cholas, Pandya, Keralaputras, and Satiyaputras as neighbour rulers. The Mauryan empire at that time included northern parts of Karnataka and Andhra. It was Ashoka who expanded the Mauryan empire but was not able to conquer the most southern parts. The Tamil kingdoms were treated as independent neighbours.
- Sangam Age -c. 300 BCE to 300 CE. The period can be taken as the beginning of historic age in Tamilakam. Both sangam age and ancient Tamilakam appears at same period.
- The details about this period are collected from the [sangam literature](#).
- Pre – history (e.g., palaeolithic period), proto – history (e.g., Harappa period), historical period (written records, more advanced form, e.g., Mauryan period).
- [Archaeological evidences](#).
- Excavated materials from [ancient sites](#) from ports, capital town, with architectural remains such as in Arikamedu, Kodumanal, Uraiyur, etc.
- The [coins issued](#) by the Chera, Cholas, Pandya and the chieftains of the Sangam Age.
- [Roman copper, silver and gold coins](#).
- The [Tamil- Brahmi inscriptions](#) found in the caves of TamilNādu and Kerala such in Mangulam, Jambai and Pugalur.
- Short [inscriptions found on the pottery, rings and stones](#) in the Tamil Nadu and some sites outside India like in Berenike and Quseir al Qadhim / Egypt.
- The *Arthashastra* of Kautilya.
- *The Periplus of Erythrean Sea*, an ancient Greek text of c.100 CE. Mention about the Korkai.
- Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, c. 100 CE
- Ptolemy's *Geography*, c. 200 CE
- A Roman map called: [Peutingerman Table](#).

CHOLA

- Controlled the [central and northern parts of TamilNādu](#).
- Their core area was the [Kaveri delta](#), later known as [Cholamandalam](#).
- Situated [north east of the territories of Pandya](#).
- Between [Pennar and Velar rivers](#).
- References from the [sangam literature](#).
- [Uraiyur near Trichy](#) was their capital – [famous for cotton trade](#).
- Capital later shifted to [Puhar or Kaveripattinam](#).
- Many merchants came to Puhar for trade.

E ▶ ENTRI

- *Pattinappalai*, a sangam poem composed by the poet Katiyalur Uruttirankannanar - the trading activity in the Puhar during the rule of **Karikala Chola**.
- Emblem – tiger.
- It is said that in 200 BCE, a chola king named **Elara** conquered Sri Lanka and ruled over it for 50 years. One of the earliest kings.
- Later on, king Duttugaminiof Sri Lanka expelled the cholas.
- Pottery pieces with graffiti in Sinhala Brahmi found at the coastal area of Tamilakam pointed early contact. Indicated the cultural contact with Sri Lanka and chola.

- Of the cholas begins in the 200 CE with their famous king **Karikala** – son of Illanjetchenni. He is portrayed as the **greatest chola king and efficient ruler** of the sangam age.
- He founded **Puhar** and **constructed 160 km of embankments along the Kaveri River**. This was built with the labour of **12000 slaves** who were brought as captives from Sri Lanka.
- He **converted forest into habitat regions** and **developed agriculture** by providing **irrigation** through the embankments
- He **built reservoirs**.
- His greatest **military achievement** - **defeat Chera, Pandya**, - supported by eleven Velir chieftain: at Venni.
- **Karikala** – credited with another major **victory at Vahaipparandalai** – he defeated many chieftains.
- A poem on *Pathupattu* describes how he **deposed and imprisoned** early in his reign, succeeded in **escaping and re-establishing himself as king**.

- **Perunarkilli**- performed the **Vedic sacrifices – Rajasuyam**
- **Tondaiman ilandiraiyan** – **poet**, four songs survive: one emphasizes the **personal character of a king is important for him to rule well**.
- After his death, followed by the **succession dispute** – two contenders for the throne – **Nalangilli and Nedungilli**.
- **Nalangilli** – conducted **Vedic sacrifices**.

- Chola power rapidly **declined**.
- Their capital **kaveripattinam** was destroyed.
- **Chera and Pandya extended their powers at the coast of cholas**.

- **Puhar** – great **centre of trade and commerce**.
- **kaveripattinam** had a **large dockyard**.
- Main source of wealth – **trade in cotton cloth**.
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Vedic Rituals

- Followed in north India.
- Southern people had their own religious ceremonies – Lord Murugan (war and fertility), hero worship, etc.
- To obtain political legitimacy.

PANDYA

- First mentioned by – **Megasthenes: Indica**– their kingdom was celebrated for **pearls, ruled by women**, which suggest the **matriarchal influence** in the society. Hementions that the **kingdom was founded by the daughters of Herakles**.
- The queen is credited by Megasthenes with an **army of 500 elephants, 4000 cavalry, 1300infantry**.
- Territory occupied the **southern and south east portion** of the Indian peninsula.
- Roughly included, the modern districts of Tirunelveli, Ramnad, Madurai in Tamil Nadu.
- **Capital–Madurai**.
- **Emblem – Fish**.
- References in sangam literature – state was **wealthy and prosperous**.
- Pandya kingdom**profited from trading with the roman empire**.
- They sent ambassadors to the roman emperor Augustus.
- Some performed **Vedic sacrifices**.
- The **earlyPandya kings included- Nediyan, Palshalai, Mudukudumi, Nedunjeliyan**.
- Death of **kovalan – hero of Silappadikaram** – supposed to have taken place during the reign of **Nedunjeliyan**. Nedunjeliyan was followed byanother **king with same name**.
- He is credited with the many major miliary victories, he **defeated a confederacy of Chera chola and five Velirchieftains’ art the Battle of Talaiyalanganam**, he was still young. In this battle Chera king was taken as the prisoner.The **five Velir chieftains – Thithiyan, Elini, Erumaiyuran, Irungovenman, Porunan**.
- He is also described as having **conquered territory** from other chieftains.
- He is also given the credit for **capturing Milalai and Mutthuru, Pudukottai district – two important places from Vel chief**.
- Early 2nd century BCE – **Tamil Brahmi inscription from Mangulam records**the gift made to **Jaina monks** by a subordinate and relative of Nedunjeliyan.
- The inscriptionmentions a Pandya kind by the name – **Nedunchezhiyan** of 200 CE.
- 100 BCE inscription from **Alagarmalai** – mentions a person called: **Kalu / Katumaran Natan**– who from his name seems to a **Pandyan prince**.
- The **Madurai kanji in the Pathupattu**contains a full-lengthdescription of **Madurai and under Nedunjeliyan**
- Its author **Mangudi Maruthanar** also refers to the **battle of Alanganam** called his **patron lord of Korkai**.
- The poem refers to **Mudukudumi – peruvazhuthi**
- Another **Nedunchezhiyan – victor of Talaiyalanganam** and a few other Pandya kings.
- **Korkai** was an important **port** near the Thampraparani famous **pearl fishery**.
- Korkai is **referred in the periplus as kolkao**.

E ▶ ENTRI

- Their coins have **elephant on one side** and stylised **image of fish on the other side**.
- They **invaded the southern Kerala** and controlled the **port of Nelkynda** near Kottayam.

Power and legitimacy:

- The most important basis of **legitimation of political power in early historical south India** was the **eulogy of the poets**.
- **The relationship between the poet and patron** in ancient Tamilakam was the **reciprocal one**.
- The poet was dependent on his patron for material support and wellbeing; The king too was dependent of the poet.
- It was only the **poets praise of his generosity and heroism** that could lead to his attaining last fame.
- The **poet's anger could prove costly for his patron and lead to his ruin**.
- In **some poems poor bards begged their patron** for favours and gifts.
- Others indicate that kings would give generously even if it is meant going out on a looting expedition.
- The **relationship between ruler and the poet was often very close and intense** based on strong bonds of loyalty even friendship.

- **Sangam poems reflect the emergence of Vedic sacrifices**.
- Several poems refer to the Vedic sacrifices of the kings.
- **The Pandya ruler Mudukudumi** held the title **Palshalai** which means **one who has many halls sacrificial halls**.
- Certain **chiefs** claimed to have emerged from the **sacrificial fire** of a northern sage and connected themselves both with **the sage Agastya**.
- The chieftain **Adigaiman** – is described as having been **born in a family which honoured the Gods by performing worships and sacrifices**.

- **Tamil Brahmi inscriptions** record the **donations of caves for Jaina monks and nuns** by the kings' chieftains as many others.
- Kings were involved in the **long-distance maritime trade** as consumers of **luxury goods**.
- They **imposed levy / toll** and **customs on trade goods** brought into various **ports and towns**.