

HISTORY – PREMODERN PERIOD

ANCIENT TAMILAKAM

PART: 4

Video: 14

FIVE ECO ZONES - TINAI

- The **ecological differences of the region** are reflected in the **ancient Tamil poetry** – eco zones
- In ancient Tamil poetry, **Tamilakam is portrayed as combination of five tians (physiography)**.

TINAI	PHYSIOGRAPHY	OCCUPATION	INHABITANTS
Kurinji	Hilly backwoods	Hunting and gathering	Kuravar, Vetar, Kanavar
Mullai	Pastoral tracts	Pastoralism and shifting cultivation	Ayar, Itaiyar
Palai	Arid zones, uncultivable	Cattle lifting and robbery	Kallar, Eyinar, Maravar
Marutham	Wet land	Agriculture by plough and irrigation	Uzhavar, Tozhuvar
Neythal	Sea coast	Fishing and salt making	Paratuvar, Valayar, Minavar

- The names of these tinai are obtained from the trees or plants associated in their own particular physiography.

Kurinji is the name of a flower found in mountainous region.
Mullai plant in mullai region.
Nir Maruthum is a tree grown in wet land.
Palai is the name of a tree.
Neythal is a flowering plant in coastal region.

- Generally, most of the **Tinai are fragments and mixed up all over the region**.
- The **mode of human adaption varied** from Tinai to Tinai depending on ecological conditions.
- Tamilakam has **different form of subsistence** as determined by the ecological conditions of the five tinai.
- The **social groups also varied**.

E ▶ ENTRI

- People from each Tinai went out interacting with the peoples of other tinais and entered into barter of goods.
- Agrarian zones attracted all of them.

The people of kurinji came down to the other zones for exchanging their resources like honey, meat, fruits, and other wild goods.

The people of mullai exchanged their dairy products milk, gheewiththe coastal people fish and salt.

Marutham had trade relation with all other tinais for their agricultural products.
Menpulam – agricultural land.

- The names of inhabitants are associated to their occupation not any castes.

ECONOMIC LIFE

- Revenue is important for the functioning of kingdoms – to maintain army, to lead expeditions, to provide salaries, for the development of society, etc.
- **Trade -local and long distance** constituted a very important source of royal revenue.
- Customs officers functioned in Puhar.
- Transit duties(chungam) were also collected from merchants.
- For the safety of merchants and prevention of smuggling - soldiers were stationed on the roads. Highway bandits were there to loot materials.
- The **spoils of war** further added to the royal income.
- The real foundation of war and polity lay in the regular **income from agriculture**.
- The king claimed a share of the agricultural products but the share collects by him is not specified.
- Main products: paddy, ragi, sugarcane.
- The region produced – grains, fruits, pepper, turmeric.
- It seems that the king had a share in all this produce.
- The kingdom maintained a rudimentary army from the taxes.

- Income from trade, war booty, agricultural products, enable the king to pay the bards and priests who were largely brahmanas.
- The brahmanas first appeared in the Tamil land in sangam age.
- Many brahmanas functioned as poets, and this role they were generously rewarded by the kings.
- Brahmanas were gifted with golds, cattle, etc.
- Karikala– is said to have given one poet – 16,00,000 gold pieces.
- In the *Pathirupattu* or *Padirrapattu*– the sage Kapila – advises kings that they should give important jobs such as those of advisers to brahmanas.

- The kshatriyas and Vaishyas appear as varna in the sangam texts.
- *Tolkapiyam*: earliest Tamil grammar work – portrays Tamil society as consisting of four varna divisions.
- Caste system prevailed in the sangam period.

E ▶ ENTRI

- The **captains of the army** – **Enadi** – at a formal ceremony.
- The **ruling class** was called **Arasar**.
- The **heroic death** was generally **valued**. Hero worship was important.
- In *Prananuru*– the poet addresses a **potter who must make urns for the dead**.
- There are several references to **cremations**. Mostly the dead bodies were buried.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

- The help of **iron plough shares**.
- **Sickles** were used.
- **Blacksmiths knew metallurgy of iron**.
- Some ancient sites have **furnaces used for iron smelting**.
- **Kodumanal** – evidence of furnaces.
- A **dealer in ploughshare** figures as a **donor** in a **cave inscription** in Tamilakam. Indicate ploughshare dealers or dealers of agricultural implements.
- **Buffaloes** were used to the plough.
- **Irrigation facilities** were organized by **local cultivators and by kings and chieftains**.
- **River water was channelised** to the fields.
- **Information on embankments**.
- **Remains of an ancient reservoirs** were discovered near **Puhar**.
- Irrigation was important because of low rainfall.

CRAFT PRODUCTION

- There are evidences of craft production such as **-bronze vessel, beads, and gold works, textiles, shell bangles, ornaments, glass, pottery making**.
- Craft production was common in the **major urban centres** such as - **Arikamedu, Uraiyur, Kanchipuram, Kaveripattinam, Madurai, Korkai, Muziris**.
- People migrated to towns for the occupation and craft activities.
- *Maduraikanchi* speaks about - **day markets** as well as **night markets** selling several craft goods.
- **Raw materials for the production** of various objects and ornaments were **not available everywhere**.
- The names of persons mentioned in **inscriptions on pottery** reveal the presence of **non-Tamil speakers**, mostly traders in certain craft centres and towns.
- *Manimegalai* refers to **Magadha artisans, Maratha mechanics, Malva smiths** and **Yavana/Romans-Greek carpenters** working in co-operation with Tamil craftsmen.
- These references indicated the expansion of trade in Tamilakam based on its craft activities.
- **Trader related terms** – **vanikan, chattan, nigama** - guild.
- **Salt merchants** – **umanar**.
- **Travelled in bullock carts along with their families for trading activities**.
- **Chattu** refers to the **itinerary or mobile merchants**. Migrate from one village to another village like Banjaras.
- **Roman gold and silver coins** have been found in many **hoards in the Coimbatore region**.
- **Koglavanikan** – corn merchants
- **Aruvaivanikan** – textile merchants

SOCIETY

- Interaction with **north Sanskrit culture**.
- Tamilakam had contact with **northern and foreign peoples**.
- Buddhism, Jainism, the worship of the gods Vishnu and Shiva emerged in Southern region.
- **Cultural, religious transition from north to south**.
- The **sangam poets** were familiar with the **Mahabharata and Ramayana legends**.
- The *Tolkapiyam* states that **marriage rituals** were introduced into Tamil country by the Aryans.
- **Legends about Agastya and Parashurama** both came to south India. Legends of Ahichitra- Brahmin settlements – Parashurama and Mazhu.
- **Agastya** mentioned an important sage in Tamil tradition.
- The *Manimekalai* mentions his **miraculous birth from a jar** and connects him with two Chola kings.
- The **rig Veda** refers to **rishi Agastya's curious birth from a kumbha/jar**.
- Early medieval tradition lists him as a **member of the first and second sangam**.
- A work on grammar – *Agattiyam* is said to have been **composed by him in the first sangam**.

WOMEN

- Engaged in **agricultural activities** - paddy planting, seeds and weeding.
- Tasks – **husking and winnowing of paddy** were performed entirely by women.
- **Young girls** kept watch over the agricultural fields and drove away birds and animals.
- Women were involved in **cattle rearing, dairy farming**.
- The terms – **ayichchiar, kovichchiar, idaichchiar** - were used for **shepherdesses**.
- Sangam texts refer to **women spinners** as **paruttipentuka**.

AGE OF KALABHRAS – POST SANGAM PERIOD

- The **period between the sangam age and the Pallava, Pandya period** roughly between **c.300CE and 600 CE** – age of Kalabras in the history of Tamilakam.
- The **three traditional kingdoms** – Chera, Chola, Pandya - disappeared in this interval due to the **occupation of their territory** by a warlike group called - Kalabras.
- **Historians** like Neelakandan Shastri mention this period as **Dark age**.
- **Some of the historians** do not support the idea of post sangam period as dark age because **important works of Tamil literature** were written at this period.
- This is the time when the greatest work **Tirukkural** was written along with many other works grouped as the **eighteen minor works**.
- The epics **Silappadikaram** and **Manimekalai** also belong to this period.
- Jainism and Buddhism become more influential in Kerala and Tamil Nādu.
- A period of transition leading to enlarged state societies under the Pallava ruling over north Tamil Nādu and the Pandya in the south from the 16th century onwards.
- A **group of inscriptions** founded at **Pulangurichi - in Sivagangai – c.400CE**. Tells us name of **two kings Chenden and Kurran**. Some scholars identify them as Kalabhra rulers.