

Sangam Age (1st-3rd Century AD)

Description

The Sangam Age represents a glorious period in Tamil history. It flourished from the 1st to 3rd century AD. This era witnessed remarkable literary, political, and cultural developments significantly. Understanding Sangam Age is essential for UPSC Civil Services aspirants. Ancient Indian history forms a significant portion of examination syllabus. Questions on Sangam literature and kingdoms appear regularly consistently. Mastering this topic helps you score valuable marks effectively.

Meaning of Sangam

“Sangam” is the Tamil form of Sanskrit word “Sangha”. The word means a group of persons or association. The Tamil Sangam was an academy of poets and bards. They flourished in three different periods at different places. Tamil kings provided patronage to these literary academies generously. The Sangam tradition enriched Tamil literature and culture immensely.

According to tradition, Sage Agastya founded the first Sangam. Its seat was at Thenmadurai meaning South Madurai. The Sangam literatures speak highly of three kingdoms significantly. These were Chola, Pandya, and Chera kingdoms in south. Understanding Sangam’s meaning helps in cultural questions effectively. The **best IAS coaching in Delhi** emphasizes literary traditions thoroughly.

Three Sangam Kingdoms: The Tamil Realm

The three ancient kingdoms were Chola, Pandya, and Chera. Combinedly they were known as Tamilakham or Tamil realm. These kingdoms formed the political landscape of ancient Tamil. Each kingdom had distinct territory, capital, and characteristics clearly. The kingdoms competed and cooperated throughout the period variably.

The Aryan influence did not penetrate this region till 4th century BC. Our knowledge of pre-Christian era is meagre and indirect. Ancient Tamil literature known as Sangam literature is massive. However, it hardly fulfills demands of history and chronology. Understanding Tamil realm helps in regional history questions. The [top IAS coaching in Delhi](#) covers regional kingdoms comprehensively.

Earliest References to Tamil Kingdoms

The earliest references are preserved in three forms distinctly. Ashokan Inscriptions mention southern kingdoms specifically explicitly. Sangam literature provides detailed cultural and political information extensively. Megasthenes’s accounts give external perspective on south India. These sources together help reconstruct Sangam Age history partially.

Rock Edicts II and XIII of Ashoka mention kingdoms. Chola, Pandya, Satyaputra, Keralaputra, and Tambapanni appear in edicts. This proves these kingdoms existed during Mauryan times. They maintained independence from Mauryan Empire successfully autonomously. Understanding source

materials helps in historiography questions effectively. The [best UPSC coaching in Delhi](#) teaches source analysis thoroughly.

The Chola Kingdom

Territory and Capitals of Cholas

The homeland of Cholas was the Kaveri delta region. The adjoining region of modern Tanjore and Trichinapoly included. They were first to acquire ascendancy in far south. Their capital was Kaveripattanam also called Puhar on coast. Its early capital was Uraiyr located inland strategically.

The Kaveri delta provided fertile agricultural land abundantly. This agricultural prosperity supported Chola kingdom's economy and power. The coastal location facilitated maritime trade with foreign lands. Understanding geographical advantages helps in civilization questions effectively. The [top IAS coaching in Delhi](#) emphasizes geography-history connections.

Karikala: The Great Chola King

One early king Karikala figures prominently in ancient literature. He ruled around 190 AD according to traditional chronology. Karikala is credited with victories over neighboring kingdoms. He defeated rulers of Pandya and Chera kingdoms successfully. He is believed to have extended authority over Ceylon.

Karikala's military achievements expanded Chola influence significantly greatly. His victories established Chola supremacy in the region. Tamil literature extensively describes his exploits and achievements gloriously. Understanding individual rulers helps in political history questions. The **best IAS coaching in Delhi** provides ruler-wise details comprehensively.

External Sources on Chola Kingdom

Interesting glimpses into Chola history come from external sources. The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea describes maritime trade. Ptolemy's accounts mention Chola kingdom and its geography. These Greco-Roman sources complement Tamil literary evidence usefully. They provide chronological and geographical details absent in literature.

The external sources help establish international connections clearly evidently. They prove Chola kingdom's participation in world trade. Roman knowledge of Cholas indicates their commercial importance significantly. Understanding foreign sources helps in comprehensive historical analysis. The **top UPSC coaching in Delhi** uses multiple sources systematically.

Decline of Chola Power

Towards beginning of fourth century AD, Chola power declined. The decline happened mainly due to multiple factors combinedly. The rise of Pallavas on one hand weakened Cholas. Continuous wars waged by Pandyas and Cheras also contributed. The combination of internal and external pressures proved fatal.

The Pallava rise in northern Tamil region challenged Cholas. Traditional enemies Pandyas and Cheras exploited Chola weakness. The decline shows how regional power dynamics shifted constantly. Understanding decline patterns helps explain historical cycles effectively. The **best IAS coaching in Delhi** teaches analytical frameworks thoroughly.

The Pandya Kingdom

Territory and Capital of Pandyas

The ancient Pandya kingdom had its capital at Madurai. It comprised modern districts of Madura and Ramnad. Tirunelveli and southern parts of Travancore were included. The kingdom controlled important coastal and inland regions. Madurai became famous cultural and political center historically.

The Pandyas were first mentioned by Megasthenes significantly notably. According to Megasthenes, the kingdom was once ruled by a woman. This indicates matriarchal elements in early Pandya society possibly. Understanding social systems helps in civilization questions effectively. The **top IAS coaching in Delhi** discusses social structures comprehensively.

Pandyas in Ashokan Edicts

According to Ashokan edicts, Pandyas were independent people clearly. They lived beyond the southern border of Maurya Empire. This independence indicates their political strength and autonomy significantly. The Mauryan Empire recognized but did not conquer them. Understanding political relations helps in polity questions effectively.

Pandya's External Relations

In first century BC, King Kharavela of Kalinga led expedition against Pandyas. This shows Pandya kingdom's importance in inter-regional politics. A Pandya king sent embassy to Roman Emperor Augustus. Another embassy went to Emperor Trajan's court later. These diplomatic missions indicate international connections and prestige significantly.

The Roman connections show Pandya participation in world trade. Embassies demonstrate sophisticated diplomatic practices and awareness globally. Understanding international relations helps in foreign policy questions. The **best UPSC coaching in Delhi** covers diplomatic history thoroughly.

Nedunchezhan: The Greatest Pandya King

The greatest Pandya king was Nedunchezhan significantly notably. He defeated both Chera and Chola kingdoms successfully. His victories established Pandya supremacy in the region. Tamil literature celebrates his military and administrative achievements extensively. Understanding great rulers helps in political history questions. The **top IAS coaching in Delhi** provides comprehensive ruler profiles.

The Chera Kingdom

Territory and Capital of Cheras

The earliest reference to Chera kingdom occurs in Ashokan inscriptions. The term used is Keralaputra meaning sons of Kerala. It comprised modern districts of Malabar, Cochin, and Northern Travancore. Its capital was Vanji identified with different locations. Some identify it with Periyar River site variably.

Others identify Vanji with Karur or Karuvur in Trichinopoly. The exact location remains debated among historians currently. The kingdom controlled important western coastal region strategically. Understanding geographical debates helps in historical geography questions. The **best IAS coaching in Delhi** discusses such scholarly debates.

Nedunjeral Adan: The Conqueror King

Early Tamil literature describes Nedunjeral Adan's military exploits. He is called Imayavaramban in Tamil literature extensively. He ruled around 155 AD according to traditional chronology. He is credited with conquering whole India dramatically. From Himalayas to Cape Comorin he supposedly conquered.

He carved his emblem of bow on mountain face. This was done after subjugating northern kings allegedly. These claims are clearly exaggerated and legendary obviously. However, they indicate Chera military strength and ambitions. Understanding legendary accounts helps in literary analysis questions. The **top UPSC coaching in Delhi** distinguishes fact from legend.

Senguttuvan: The Red or Good Chera

The greatest Chera king was Senguttuvan significantly notably. He is called the Red or Good Chera. Senguttuvan is credited with invading the North successfully. He supposedly crossed the River Ganga during campaign. These military claims show Chera power and prestige.

Tamil epic Silappadikaram mentions Senguttuvan prominently extensively gloriously. His achievements are celebrated in Tamil literature widely. Understanding literary portrayals helps in culture questions effectively. The **best IAS coaching in Delhi** connects literature with history.

Comparison of Three Sangam Kingdoms

Kingdom	Capital	Emblem	Famous Port
Cholas	Uraiyr, later Puhar	Tiger	Puhar (Kaveripattam)
Cheras	Vanji or Karur	Bow	Muzris, Tondi, Bandar
Pandyas	Madurai	Carp (Fish)	Korkai, Saliyur

Understanding this comparison helps in factual questions significantly. The emblems show distinct identity of each kingdom. The ports indicate maritime trade importance for all. The **top IAS coaching in Delhi** provides such comparative tables.

Sangam Literature

Nature of Sangam Assemblies

Sangam was a college or assembly of Tamil poets. It was held probably under royal patronage regularly. However, we don't know exact number of Sangams. The period for which they were held remains uncertain. A Tamil commentary from 8th century AD mentions details.

According to this commentary, three Sangams lasted 9,990 years. This is obviously legendary and not historical fact. The tradition indicates continuity of literary activity over time. Understanding literary traditions helps in cultural questions effectively. The **best IAS coaching in Delhi** teaches critical analysis methods.

Compilation Period of Sangam Literature

The available Sangam literature was compiled circa AD 300-600. However, parts of this literature look back to 2nd century AD. This indicates both composition and compilation happened over time. The literature preserves earlier oral traditions and memories. Understanding compilation helps in chronological questions significantly.

Classification of Sangam Literature

The Sangam literature can be divided into two groups. Narrative texts are called Melkannakku or Eighteen Major Works. They consist of eight anthologies called Ettutogai in Tamil. Ten idylls are called Pattupattu in the collection. These narrative works describe life, war, and love extensively.

The didactic works are called Padinenkilkanakku or Eighteen Minor Works. These works provide moral and ethical teachings systematically. Eight Anthologies were written by third Sangam poets. Understanding literary classification helps in literature questions effectively. The **top UPSC coaching in Delhi** covers all literary genres.

Important Sangam Texts

Besides Sangam texts, Tolkappiyam is very important significantly. Written by Tolkappiar, it deals with grammar and poetics. It is the only work surviving from second Sangam. This makes it extremely valuable for linguistic studies. Another important text is Tirukkural dealing with philosophy.

Tirukkural is also called the Bible of Tamil Land. It contains wise maxims on ethics and morality. Two Tamil epics Silappadikaram and Manimekalai are famous. Silappadikaram was written by Ilango Adigal around 6th century. Manimekalai was written by Sattan of Madurai later. Understanding these texts helps in literary questions significantly. The **best IAS coaching in Delhi** covers all major texts.

Sangam Polity

Monarchy and Succession

The Tamils during Sangam age were ruled by kings. The monarchs were regarded as Ventar or great kings. The local chieftains were called Mannar or minor chiefs. The form of government was hereditary

monarchy clearly. The eldest son usually succeeded the father traditionally.

The kings held impressive courts where subjects were allowed. There was conspicuous absence of Privy Council or Chamber. The king was identified with god in ideology. The theory of divine right of kingship was accepted. Understanding political systems helps in polity questions effectively. The **top UPSC coaching in Delhi** discusses governance structures thoroughly.

Royal Advisors and Officials

The king was assisted by wise men always. These included ministers, poets, or purohitas as advisors. Wise men were divided into two categories distinctly. Aimperunkulu consisting of five important officials formed one group. Enperayam consisting of eight officials formed another group.

Aimperunkulu included Purohita, army chief, ambassador, spies, and ministers. Enperayam included accountants, executive officials, treasury officials, palace guards. Leading subjects also advised the king regularly. Understanding bureaucracy helps in administrative questions significantly. The **best IAS coaching in Delhi** provides detailed organizational charts.

Warfare in Sangam Age

Wars occurred frequently among the three kingdoms regularly. The pretext was often cattle-lifting or raiding expeditions. Cattle raids were common cause of conflicts traditionally. Military prowess was highly valued in Sangam society. Understanding warfare helps in military history questions. The **top UPSC coaching in Delhi** covers military aspects thoroughly.

Regional Specialties of Sangam Age

Tinai (Region)	Agam (Love)	Puram (War)	Inhabitants	Deities
Kurinji (Hills)	Pre-marital Love	Cattle raids	Kuravar (Hunters)	Murugan
Palai (Drylands)	â??	Burning of fields	Maravar (Warriors)	Korravai (Durga)
Mullai (Junglelands)	â??	â??	Kurumbars (Shepherds)	Krishna
Marudam (Plains)	â??	Siege of forts	Ulavar (Ploughmen)	Indra
Neydal (Coastland)	Parting of wives	Pitched battle	Paradavar (Fishermen)	Varuna

Understanding regional divisions helps in cultural geography questions. The **best IAS coaching in Delhi** explains such classifications.

Economy in Sangam Age

Self-Sufficient Economy

The Sangam economy was largely self-sufficient and independent. Common people comprised agriculturists or cow-herds primarily mainly. Hunters and fishermen formed other occupational groups significantly. Indigenous industries included textile manufacturing and weapon-making extensively.

Ship-building, carpentry, and metal smelting were also practiced.

A large number of merchants existed in society. They carried extensive trade with foreign countries regularly. Trade with Rome was especially important and lucrative. Roman coins from Augustus Caesar's period discovered in south. Understanding economy helps in economic history questions. The **top UPSC coaching in Delhi** covers economic aspects thoroughly.

Barter System

South Indians did not have coinage system of their own. They bartered their goods for other commodities directly. Honey and roots exchanged for fish-oil and toddy. Sugarcane and cornflakes exchanged for venison and toddy. These barter examples find mention in Sangam texts. Understanding exchange systems helps in economic questions. The **best IAS coaching in Delhi** discusses monetary history.

Religion in Sangam Age

Deities Worshipped

People worshipped Murugan, Tirumal, Balram, and Indra prominently. Temples were known as nagar, koil, kottam, or devalayam. Worship of Vedic deities was also not uncommon. The worship of Kannagi as chaste lady was common. Vedic practices like yagna, sraddha, and pinda were followed.

Varna system took roots even in south India. The influence of Buddhism, Jainism, and Ajivikas was paramount. Understanding religious diversity helps in cultural questions effectively. The **top IAS coaching in Delhi** covers religious developments comprehensively.

Relevance for UPSC Examination

Sangam Age holds immense importance in UPSC syllabus significantly. Questions appear in both Prelims and Mains examinations regularly. Prelims tests factual knowledge about kingdoms and literature specifically. Mains requires analytical understanding of political and cultural developments. You must explain regional variations and contributions clearly.

Ancient Indian history questions carry substantial weightage in examinations. Sangam literature appears in culture section prominently frequently. Three kingdoms comparison appears in political history context. Understanding comprehensive Sangam history helps answer diverse questions. The **best IAS coaching in Delhi** prepares students thoroughly.

How to Prepare Sangam Age for UPSC

Preparing Sangam Age requires systematic approach and understanding clearly. Start with NCERT textbooks for building basic foundation initially. Study three kingdoms, their rulers, and achievements systematically thoroughly. Make notes on Sangam literature and important texts carefully. Create comparison tables for kingdoms and regional divisions.

Focus on understanding cultural aspects beyond political facts. Practice answer writing on Sangam topics regularly frequently. The **top UPSC coaching in Delhi** provides structured guidance.

SHRI RAM IAS in Mukherjee Nagar excels in ancient history. Study material covers Sangam Age comprehensively with all details. The **best IAS coaching in Delhi** ensures quality delivery.

What is UPSC CSE Exam?

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