



Vol. 1, No. 4; Oct – Dec (2025)

SAKHA: Multidisciplinary Journal of Science, Arts & Technology

Available at <https://sakha.co.in/journals/mjsat>



Epigraphy Evidences of Sangam Literature (A Gleaned from Archeological Evidences)

S. Gajalakshmi^{1a}, and Dr. S. Sridhar²

¹Ph.D., Research Scholar, Department of History, Arignar Anna Government Arts College,
Villupuram, Tamil Nadu, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of History, Arignar Anna Government Arts College, Villupuram,
Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract

In view of the above mentioned extensiveness we have to undertake a variegated enquiry and search for corroborative evidences from other disciplines as well to determine the dates of various sangam works. The sources that could be tapped use-fully in this regard are enlisted hereunder literature Epicgraphy foreignchronicles archaeological evidence someone literatures written to the Ramayana the most powerful literature by the Valmiki and arthashastra written by kaudilya and also edicts of Ashoka hathikumbha inscription of caravela and Tamil inscriptions accounts of magasthani Though this work is assignable to 7th cent. A.D., the commentator of the work Nakkirar refers to the history of Muchchangam the three Tamil Academies.

Keywords: *Silappadikaram Arthshasthiram, Iraiyanar, Kalaiyalurai, Inscription, Kabadapuram.*

^a Corresponding Author: ggajaselvam@gmail.com

Introduction

The date of Sangam literature has all along been a point in dispute amongst scholars. While some scholars are of the view that the literature could be assigned to the period from fifth century BC. to fifth century A.D.¹ others assert that these could not be taken back beyond first century BC.² There are still some more historians who opine that the date of these literature would be the early centuries of the Christian era.³ But there is a general consensus amongst scholars that the entire Sangam corpus could not have been produced within an uninterrupted and exclusive span but that several works might have been created in separate groups and collections interspaced over a long stretch of time.

1.1 Literature

- a) a) Ramayana written by Valmiki
- b) Vartika written by Kathayana - 4th cent. B.C.
- c) Arthasastra written by Kautilya 3rd cent. B.C.
- d) Sangam works
- e) Silappadikaram - Commentary by Adiyarkunallar
- f) Iraiyanar Kalaviyal – Commentary

1.2 Epigraphy

- a) Edicts of Asoka
- b) Hathikumbha inscription of Kharavela
- c) Archaic Tamil inscriptions

Literature

a) Ramayana of Valmiki

Valmiki in his Ramayana had stated that Sugreeva while deputed Hanuman to search for Sita, had advised him that there was a town known as Kapatapuram in the extreme south of India and cautioned him that he should continue in his assignment without being enamoured by the splendour of the city. The passage is indicative of the fact that Kapatapuram, where the fabled second Tamil

Academy was stated to have been held was all there at the time before being submerged in the sea subsequently. Further it records that he had referred to countries like Andhra, Puntra, Chola, Pandya and Kerala.⁴ The above passages clearly show that there were three kingdoms in Tamilnadu namely Chola, Pandya and Kerala and the city where the second Tamil Academy flourished *i.e.*, Kapatapuram was also in existence at that time. The first passage further reveals that Kapatapuram was a well-planned city and it was situated at the extreme south of India.

b) Vartika of Kathyayana

The date of Kathyayana, who has written the Vartika or commentary to Panini's Ashtadhyayi, is assigned to 4th cent B.C., while Panini's original treatise belongs to 6th cent B.C. Further, Kathyayana is believed to have hailed from South India. While quoting examples for Panini's grammar mention is made of Pandya, Chola and Chera in his Vartika.⁵ This information could be considered to prove that the three monarchs of Tamilnadu namely Chera, Chola and Pandya were well known to Kathyayana who was living during 4th cent. B.C. It can also be assumed that there were some grammar works in Tamilnadu which helped him to gather useful information for his work.

c) Arthasasthra of Kautilya

Kautilya was living during Mauryan rule in North India. He was the guiding spirit behind the able and efficient administration of Mauryas. He had produced the noteworthy and monumental work on political administration *i.e.*, Arthasasthra. While dealing with commercial activities of his country he gives an account of various precious stones, shawls and cotton textiles that were purchased from Kapatapuram, Guruna and Madura.⁶

d) Sangam Literature

There are references in Sangam literature about Nandas and Mauryas who had ruled from fifth cent. B.C. to Third cent. B.C. A poem written by Mamoolanar refers to the treasure of Nandas hidden under the river bed of Ganga.⁷ Another

poem written by the same poet speaks about Kosar a feudatory of Tamilnadu who had conquered all his enemies except one of Mohur who challenged his sovereignty. Thereupon Kosar is said to have approached Mauryas for help. Mauryas had sent an army under the command of one Vaduka to assist Kosar in fighting the feudatory of Mohur.⁸ "Mauryas" are referred to as "Vambamoriyar" in the poem meaning the Mauryas who emerged recently. On the basis of this reference we may conclude that Mamoolanar had been contemporaneous with the Nandas and Mauryas. There-fore he should have lived either in fourth or third cent. B.C. and the poems of him may be assigned to the same period.

e) Silappadikaram

In this remarkable long poem the author Ilango Adigal re-fers, in Kadukan kathai, to the great deluge which submerged the Kumarikodu continent.⁹ Adiyarkunallar who had written a commentary on this work had described the event elaborately furnishing the names of Nadus that formed part of Kumarikandam during that period.¹⁰ The fact that there was a huge part of land known as Kumarikodu to the south of India beyond Cape Comerin which was swallowed by sea is also corroborated by other mate-rial evidences provided by scholars of their disciplines who term the place as Lemuria. Thus the entire body of literature that might have been produced during the first and second Tamil Acad-emies had disappeared in the sea and is lost for ever.

f) Iralyanar Kalavlyal Commentary

Though this work is assignable to 7th cent. A.D., the com-mentator of the work Nakkirar refers to the history of Muchchangam i.e. the three Tamil Academies.¹¹

Epigraphs

a) Asoka Incriptions

The Edicts of Asoka, that are found at Shabasgarha and Gimar¹² make mention of the neighbouring countries such as Chola, Pandiya, Satyaputo and Kedalaputo. This reference to such places is interpreted by scholars that Asoka had cordia relationship with Cholas, Pandyas, Satyaputras and Keralaputra.

Who were the rulers of the border areas of his domain during the period. This irrefutably concludes that the four equally significant kingdoms of the Tamil country were contemporary to Asoka. From this we can deduce that during their prosperous reign many noteworthy works of literature could have been produced. Some of such pieces of literature which might have originated during Asokan period may form part of Sangam collection.

b) Hatikumbha inscription of Kharavela

In the inscription of Kharavela¹³ found at Hatikumbha near Bhuvaneshwar it has been mentioned that during the eleventh year of his reign, Kharavela marched towards the south and his armies sacked Pitumba, which is believed to be the same Pitundra referred to by Ptolemy. He is also stated to have broken up the confederacy of Tamil countries (Dominica) of 113 years old. In the foot note the editors of this inscription stated that they took "Terasa-vaso-sotikam to mean 113 years not 1300 old in conformity with the interpretation of ti-vasa-tasa above 130 Pandyan King is said to have sent tribute of pearls to Kharavel's king. This epigraph is assigned to second century BC.

c) Archaic Tamil Inscriptions

Archaic Tamil inscriptions engraved on the brows of natural caverns and on the slopes of rocks shed light on the antiquity of Tamil and Tamils and their relation with the northern rulers. The epigraph found on the hillock of Manglulam¹⁴ is the earliest so far discovered in Tamilnadu according to L. Mahadevan. It refers to the endowment made by Neduncheshyan to an astrologer cum teacher named 'Nanda'. Nanda appears to have been a Jain monk. His name 'Nanda' leads one to surmise that he could have migrated from Magada or so named due to close ties between Tamils and Nandas during the period. L. Mahadevan attributes this inscription to third-second century BC. But on the basis of paleoepigraphical study, it can be dated to pre Asokan period as the script and the style of writing appear in the rudimentary form.

Another inscription found in Jambai,¹⁵ near Tirukkoyilur, the capital of Malayamans of Sangam age, refers to Adiya king Neduman Anji as 'Satiyaputo'.

Satiyaputo is the Prakrit form of Satyaputra of Sanskrit. According to K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, Satyaputra is the Sanskrit equivalent to Atiyaman of Tamil. Since the term Satyaputo is found mentioned in Asokan epigraph also, the Jambai inscription could be considered to be a contemporary record of Asokan period and the poems written eulogizing Adiyaman's valour by Avvaiyar and other poets could also be dated to third century B.C.

Conclusion

From the number of above evidences, one can positively conclude that some poems of Sangam literature should have belonged to the period before third cent B.C. while yet other poems may be of later years. The source that could be tapped usefully in this regard or enlisted the Sangam literature.

References

1. V.R.R.Dikshitar, Studies in the Tamil Literature and History, P.21
2. lhf;lh ,uh.ehfrhkp jkpo;kzp (jpdkzp thu jo;).
3. K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, Colas, (Madras Reprint 1955), p.3.
4. fp~;fpe;jh fhz;lk; 41, 2.
5. Astadhyayi, IV I, 168, K.A.N., History of South India, (Pub. 1966), pp.69-70.
6. mh;j;jrh];jpuk; 262, 26, 30, 26, 119.
7. mfk; 265: 4-7.
8. mfk; 281: 8-9, Gwk; 175.
9. rpyk;G 11 : 18-22.
10. mbahHf;F ey;yhH ciu, cNtrg gjpg;G, gh.228
11. ,iwadhH fstpay;, ef;fPuH ciu.
12. D.C. Sircar, Select inscriptions Vol.I, p.17
13. J.B.O.R.S., Vol.IV, 401.
- 13.a. kh. fe;jrhkp, jkpoj; njhd;ikAk; rpwg;Gk; (2003), gf;fk; 59.
14. I. Mahadevan, Corpus of the Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions. Seminar on inscriptions, Ed. By R. Nagaswamy, p.60-61.
15. Dr.R. Nagaswamy, Indian Express, (1981); Dinamani, Tamil Daily, 12.10.1981.