

## HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE OF EARLY TAMILS

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**Abstract:** The earliest poetic literature in Tamil has been for the last two thousand five hundred years, classified as "Sangam literature". The western world and its admirers, proud of the great, which prescribed and upheld literary standards, may be surprised to learn through this word "Sangam" or academy, that, more than two thousand years before, there was an academy in the southern corner of India. Tamil poet would not be satisfied with any simile in general; poet would want a historical simile. He would rather refer to the water-lilies growing in the region of a particular king or chief. This topical and specific setting served a double purpose, namely to praise the region, or its ruler, as well as to say that the flowers in the particular region would be lovelier because of the goodness and righteousness of the persons associated with it. The Sangam classics, comprising the extent literary works of the early Tamils, contain extraordinary abundant data of historical value. They throw a light on the political, and still more on the social and religious conditions of the early Tamils. But the determination of the historical data from the vast mass of miscellaneous material on the other is by no means easy. The origin of the Sangam, the celebrated literary academy, is itself enshrouded in mystery. Thus, evaluating the literary sources for the political history, it is found that though details are known about the achievements of several monarchs in each dynasty, the material is not adequate enough to help a systematic reconstruction of history. It is concerning social life that an amazing wealth of material is provided by literature. True, the matter is available but indirectly. Incidental to the description of personalities or events there appear details of social habits, customs, religious institutions, practices and development of arts and education. As a source of social history the early poems have their shortcomings. They do not touch upon all aspects of social life. Nor do they afford a connected picture of the past, throwing light on the changes which occurred from time to time. Historical averaging, which inevitably contains inaccuracies may be the result; it may provide an unreal appearance of flat uniformity and absence of change. A fusion, particularly marked in the sphere of religion, was taking place between the Tamilan ideas and practices and this fusion become more and more marked.

**Keywords:** Early Tamils, Historical Knowledge, Tamil Poetry, Sangam Literature.

### Introduction

The earliest poetic literature in Tamil has been for the past 2500 years, classified as "Sangam literature". The western world and its admirers, proud of the great, which prescribed and upheld literary standards, may be surprised to learn through this word "Sangam" or academy, that,