Pilippatti Merchant Guild Inscription

Why in News?

Recently, the epigraphy division of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) deciphered a Chola-period merchant guild inscription found at Pilippatti village in Pudukkottai district in Tamilnadu.

- The team copied the inscription on ***maplitho paper*** using the estampage method.

> ***Estampage*** *is used in order to get an exact copy of an inscription. It is typically derived by applying wet paper onto the rock face, over which any ink material is wiped.*

- **Time period** – It dates back to the *10th century*.
- **Installation** – It was probably installed during the *reign of either Parantaka Chola or Uttama Chola*.
- **Features** – It has various symbols including Ankush (sharp pointed hook then used to control elephants), Trishul and lamps.



- **Trade groups** – It mentions trade groups of various territorial divisions, including
  - Ainurruvars of Mangala Nadu, Puramalai Nadu, Poongundra Nadu, Manalur

Nadu
    - Virapattinam of Kodumbalur

*ASI team has also copied nearly 10 inscriptions from the walls of **Pilavaneswarar temple in Virachilai in Tirumayam** taluk. These 11th century inscriptions of Sundarapandiyan and Veerapandiyan mention donations given to the temple.*

Trade guilds

***Guilds or Shreni**, in Ancient India, was an association of traders, merchants, and artisans. Generally, a separate shreni existed for a particular group of persons engaged in the same vocation or activity.*

- Traders founded guilds and called themselves as *sudesi, nanadesi, ainurruvar* and others.
- Several trade guilds flourished during the Chola period.
- Members of the trade guilds convened their meetings to make decisions and engraved them as inscriptions and installed them in public places.

Regional Trade Guilds in Tamil Landscape
• **Regional Trade guilds** – There are some stray occurrences like Vellarai Nigamaththor in the Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions. • **Autonomous functioning** – From 9th century onwards, such trade guilds started functioning in a distinct manner. - Ayyapozhil Ainnurruvar (The 500 of Aihole) - Tisaiayirathu Ainnurruvar (The 500 of the 1000 directions) - Nanadesi (those of various countries) - Valanjiyar (Balijas or Banajigas) - Pathinenvishayaththar - Manigramathar

References

1. The Hindu| Copying of Chola Trade Guild Inscriptions
2. Government of Tamil Nadu| Guild Inscriptions

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