

## 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards, such trade guilds started functioning in a distinct manner.
  - Ayyapozhil Ainnurruvar (The 500 of Aihole)
  - Tisaiaiyirathu 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](#)