Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions in Egypt

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Art & Culture*

Why in News?

Recently, Tamil Brahmi inscriptions found in Egypt's Valley of the Kings reveal ancient Indian–Roman trade and cultural links.

- **Location –** Found in *six tombs of the Theban Necropolis* (Nile Valley, Egypt).
- **Key Discovery – Script** – ***Around 30 inscriptions*** were newly discovered.
- **Language** – Tamil Brahmi, Prakrit and Sanskrit.
- **Chronology** – ***Dated to 1st–3rd Century CE.***
- **Origin of Visitors** – Indians from north-western, western and southern regions of the subcontinent, with visitors from Tamilagam forming the majority.
- **Nature of Inscriptions –** Names and short graffiti carved on walls, corridors and entrances.
- Followed the Greek tradition of leaving names in tombs.
- **Spatial Spread** – Evidence of Indians travelling beyond Red Sea ports into the Nile Valley.
- **Names Identified – Cikai Koṟṟaṉ** – Repeated 8 times across 5 tombs.
  - **Cikai** – Linked to Sanskrit *śikhā* (tuft/crown).
  - **Koṟṟaṉ** – From Tamil *koṟṟam* (victory/slaying); linked to goddess Koṟṟavai.
- **Kopāṉ** – "Kopāṉ came and saw"; name found in Ammankovilpatti, Tamil Nadu.
- **Other Names** – Cātaṉ and Kiraṉ.
- **Historical Linkages –** ***Appears in Sangam corpus (Chera king Piṭṭāṅkoṟṟaṉ***).
- Similar inscriptions at Pugalur (2nd–3rd Century CE).
- **Significance – Trade Linkages** – Confirms Indo-Roman maritime trade involving Tamil merchants.
- **Cultural Continuity –** Links of overseas names to the Sangam corpus and domestic inscriptions.
- **Diaspora** – Evidence of Tamil long-distance mobility and overseas presence.



Reference

TH | New Tamil Brahmi inscriptions in Egypt’s Valley