Chapter – 6

South Indian Guilds
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The organisation of South Indian local administrative institutions is a very fascinating subject of study. Social life in the past, practically in all its aspects, expressed itself in innumerable groups where the individual did not by any means lack opportunities for self expression. The Nagaram is one type of local assembly, the counterpart of the Paura of Sanskrit literature. It was a primary assembly of merchants functioning as one of the local assemblies in important trade centres, working in co-operation with the Ur or Sabha, and was probably the only assembly in towns populated mainly or mostly by merchants. Caste was no barrier to the admission of members. The Brahmin took the profession of commerce is clear from a record at Ennayirma, a large Vaishnava centre and collegiate town in the modern district of South Arcot.

Almost all the arts and crafts were organised in castes and guilds of their own and the work was done clearly done on a corporate basis. Names of several organisations occur in the epigraphic records all over south India and it is not always easy to identify them and determine their relationship to one another. References to the Ayyavole or Ainnurruvar, Valanjiyar, Nanadesi and Nagarrattar, a part from various other groups like the Manigraman and Anjuvannam. These records ranging from the 8th cen. A.D. to 17th cen. A.D. both in South India and in Sri Lanka. With the exception of Nagarattar, all these terms refer to itinerant merchant bodies. While Ainnurruvar, or the five hundred, figure prominently in most of them, some 46 different groups are noticed in association with them at various centres and in different contexts listing all these groups, K. Indrapala expresses the difficulties in determining the nature of their relationship with the five hundred, and dismisses as untenable the views that the five hundred was a federation of all these bodies, or that the latter was sub-division of the five hundred.

The Nagaram and other merchantile corporation were not constituted exclusively by the natives of South India. There are frequent references to the Tennilangai Valayiyam or trading merchants from South Ceylon. There is a reference

in Hoyasala records\(^3\) of the reign of *Vira Ramantha* to *Parades savasi* merchants, a member of which community bore the name of *Sakala Bhatta*. The *Savasis* or *sahavasis* could be identified with the *saha*, a class of merchant from *Deogiri* (Daultabad) mentioned in Ibn-Batutas memories, whom Fahien at an earlier age referred to as so=po. The term *Valanjiya* (*Bananjika*), so frequently met with is derived from the Sanskrit vanj, and means trader (rather export trader). The *valanjiyar* are therefore traders in general, and belonged to several corporations. They are said to follow the *Bananjudharma* or *Valanjiya samaya* or the code of mercantile conduct. This explanation of *valanjiyar* is borne out in the *Kottayam* plates of *Viraraghava*, which have the expression *Valanjiyattittanic cettum*. The term *Valinjiyar* (*Balanjika*) was later corrupted in to *Bania*. There were also Brahmin merchants in the guilds. Marco Polo calls them *Abraiaman*.\(^4\)

From the late twelfth centuries, there is yet another major organization called *Cittirameli Periya nadu*\(^5\) or the *Padiinenbhumi* or *Visaya* of the seventy nine *Nadus*, appearing jointly with the five hundred in a position of prime importance in the *Prasastis* of the inscriptions recording joint donations of tolles and cerres on merchandise. The pride of place is here given to the *Cittiramali*, and the five hundred a secondary position with their respective emblems, viz. the *sengol* and *Meli* (the staff and the plough) of the first and the *Pasumpai* (money bag) of the second.\(^6\) There can hardly be any doubt as to the commercial and urban context in which these joint donations occur. This is to be seen as a result of the revival of long-distance trade in South India in the 10\(^{th}\) cen. A.D.

There are frequent references to *Kudiraiattis*\(^7\) or dealers in horses, who no doubt imported horses from abroad from Arabia and perhaps from *Pegu* and distributed them among the rulers and nobles. A reference from ancient sculptures and to *pattinappallai* will convince us that the import of war horses began very early even in the early centuries of the Christian era. This trade assumed importance in the period of chola imperial rule when cavalry played an important role in the Chola army and


\(^4\) Sastri: Foreign Notices of South India, pp. 176-7. Also Appadorai: Economic condition in South India I, p. 382. Appadorai identifies the Abraiaman with Banias, but sastri’s identification is the only acceptable one.

\(^5\) *Cittirameli* means the beautiful plough, which was the emblem of this organization.

\(^6\) South Indian Inscription (hereafter SII), vol. VIII, No. 442 (*Pirammalai*).

\(^7\) Sastri: Cholas II, p. 438.
the armies of the other South Indian powers opposed to them. This extensive trade is described by Sulaiman (c. 800 A.D.), Ibne-Rusta (c. 900 A.D.), Abuzaid (c. 950 A.D.) and Marco Polo (c. 1293 A.D.) and Wasaff (in the beginning of the 14th cen. A.D.).

Merchants were generally organised in powerful guilds corporations which often transcended political divisions and were therefore not much affected by the wars and revolutions going on about them. The whole corpus of information of south Indian trade at this time centres mainly round the five hundred, and to a lesser extent, on the Manigramam and Anjuvannam and other such organisations. The Manigramam\textsuperscript{8} a localized merchant body operating within specific regions, as their designations like Uraiyur Manigramam and Kodumbalur Manigramam\textsuperscript{9} would show, although they had inter-regional and long distance trade links. The Anjuvannam refers to an organisation of foreigners who seems to have begun their commercial activities on the west coast, particularly Kerala in 8th and 9th cen. A.D.\textsuperscript{10}

The name Manigramam is generally explained as a corruption of Vanikgramam as association of Merchants’ and this may well be correct. They are mentioned in many early south Indian inscriptions and in Tamil Inscriptions at Takuapa (Siam) of the reign of Nandivarman III Pallava. The fact that this merchant guild had established itself on the opposite coast of the Bay of Bengal with sufficient permanence for it to be put in charge of a Vishnu temple. Initially Anjuvannam seems to have referred to Jewish traders who came to the west coast and acquired settlements. Later, however, it was also used for Arab Muslim traders.\textsuperscript{11}

The Kottayam plates of Sthawe Ravi\textsuperscript{12} and of Viraraghawa\textsuperscript{13} have references to the Manigramam. In Vol. IV of the Epigraphia Indica, the editor wrongly thought that Manigramam was a title conferred upon a done. But later when epigraphist met

\textsuperscript{8}. Trumalai Inscription No. 10 of 1924 in Annual Report on south Indian Epigraphy, 1923-24 (Herafter ARE).
\textsuperscript{9}. SII, XII, No. 28 (Tiruvellarai); 283 of ARE, 1964-65 (Kavilpatti); SII, IV, No. 147 (Salem)
\textsuperscript{10}. M.G.S. Narayanan; Cultural symbiosis in Kerala, 4 and 29. Here the Anjuvannam is taken to be an organization of Jewish traders.
\textsuperscript{11}. In the Kanara districts, a merchant body called the Hayamana or Harjumanna was active from about the 14th cen A.D. was it the same as Anjuvannam? Could Anjuvannam and Hanjumanna be derived from Anjunam? Kaikini inscription (South kanara), Annual report on Kannada Research in Bombay Province, 1939-40, No. 38. See also K.V. Ramesh, History of South Kanara, Dharwad, 1970, 253, where the author suggests that Hanjanara represented Arab Persian Merchants.
\textsuperscript{12}. T.A.S., vol. II.
\textsuperscript{13}. E.I. IV.
with such expressions as Manigramattar and discovered that the term was associated with a number of towns, they easily concluded it referred to a group or corporation of Merchants. In Payynur Pattola, an old Malayalam song, it occurs as the name of a trading corporation. The great commentator Naccinarkiniyar explains it as a Kuluvinpeyar a collective name for a community, and following his lead the author of Neminatham uses the word as an instance of Kutiyarpeyer. The form used by the first commentator namely Vanikgramam, not necessarily a mislection, possibly explains the origin of the word Manigramam which denotes a grama (guild) of merchants. Valaramanikkam, the name of a village in the Pudukkottai state, is a corruption of Vanikar Manigramam. Like the Sanskrit word sreni it is a corporation of men of different castes (jatis) functioning a doing business like men of same jati, nanajatiram eka jatiya karmapajivinam.

The Ainnurruvar, often styled the five hundred sranis of Ayyavolepura (Aihole), were the most celebrated South Indian merchant guild. This guild accused the character of a composite body itinerant traders who came from different parts of Tamil speaking areas. One of the most remarkable inscription, from the point of view of its composition, comes from tirumalai in the Sivaganga taluk of Ramanathapuram district. After the usual prasasti, it provides a list of the people who belonged to the organization and who met at Tirumalai in the Ainnurruvar tirikkavacem of the local Shiva temple. The members hailed from different places and are called by their respective regions, like the Tisai Ahirattu Ainnurrewar Vadakalavalinadu of tirukottiyur Maniyambalam, of Vembarrur of Malaimandam of Alagaimanagaram and many other places. Terms like Ainnrruva Bhattan and names like Ainnurruvan Inban Devancetti would also indicate the heterogenous caste composition of this body. The five hundred svamis was thus, a group of people of ‘disparate origins associating together for a common purpose’ (trade, i.e. of several castes, religions and regions.

Like the great kings of the age, the swamis had a Prasasti of their own which recounted their traditions and achievements. They were the protectors of the Virabananjudaharma i.e. the law of the noble merchants.

14. Nolo of 1924, Tirumalai inscription dated 1233 A.D. The other groups mentioned are Pandimanda Perinirani Tisai Ayirattu Ainnurravar, Kolikkuricci Kadittavira Tisai Ayirattu Ainnurravar etc.
15. That the member came different castes, religions and regions ins indicated not only by the Tamil inscriptions, but also by the Kannada and Telugu inscriptions of Karanataka and Andhra – see Abrahan, Two Medieval Merchant guild, chapter III.
‘The five hundred’ were the protectors of Valnjiyar.\(^\text{16}\) They also called themselves Citramelisa\(^\text{17}\) or the “lords of the Citrameli corporations”. They supported the different groups of artisans. In one word they found a federation as it were controlling all the chambers of commerce in the Deccan and South India carrying immense banking business and controlling prediction and industries but chiefly engaged in their distribution. Bananju being obviously derived from Sanskrit Vaniya, merchant. They had the picture of a bull on their flag and were noted throughout the world’ for their daring and enterprise. They were the followers of the creeds of Vishnu, Maheshvara and Jina. Among the countries the visited were chera, chola, Pandya, Naleyia, Magadha, Kausala, Saurashtra, Dhanushtra, Kurunba, Kambhoja, Gauilla, Lata, Barvvara, Parasa (Persia) and Nepala. They traded in elephants, bloodstock, sapphires, moonstones, pearls, rubies, diamonds, lapis lazuli, onyx, topaz, carbuncles, emeralds and other precious articles; cardamoms, cloves, bdellium, sandal, camphor, musk, saffron, malegaja and other species and perfumes. They paid the sunka regularly and filled the royal treasury with gold and jewels and replenished the kings armoury; they bestowed gifts on pandits and sages versed in the four samayas and six darsanas.

Their (500 hundred svamis) charities were numerous. They built places of worship and made liberal endowments to temple irrespective of religion or sect. They constructed assembly halls and maintained irrigation works. They imposed taxes amongst their members and were inserted with authority to collect taxes in cities which belonged to them. A Travancore inscription refers to the right, of guild to collect customs and to punish defaulters. They exercised the right to collect tolls, and instances are on record of their endowing such collections for the maintenance of charities. Cities, streets and temples were named after one or other of the surnames of ‘the 500’. We hear of Desiyuyantapattinam, Ainnuruuanallur, Ainnuruva, Mangalam and Ainnuruvarartaru.

In the period of cholas in late 12\(^{th}\) century A.D., we noticed a phenomenal increase in the activities of the five hundred, with a clear tendency to expand its sphere of influence and to show less reliance on royal support and patronage, although many of the guild inscriptions are still dated in the reign period of the chola and

\(^{16}\) A.R.E. 259 of 12.  
\(^{17}\) A.R.E. 154 of 03.
Pandya rulers. In the later centuries, it would appear that merchant bodies, particularly the five hundred, had on no occasion the authority to levy and grant such ffs, except in conjunction with the Cittrameli or the Pandiyan visaya\(^\text{18}\) which refer to organizations of agriculturists and local elite groups controlling production of agricultural and other groups. Presumably in the assignment of brokerage and monopoly to individuals or groups of trades on certain items of trade, the five hundred exercised its authority jointly with the local nadu, nagram members and the larger agricultural organization of 18 visaya or cittiрамели.\(^\text{19}\)

Dominant agricultural organizations jointly mentioned in the guild’ inscriptions, probably had commercial transactions with the Five Hundred, exchanging agricultural products for exotic and nonagricultural items. The growth in the power of landowing classes is a marked development of the 12\(^{th}\) century AD, both in South India and Sri Lanka. The links that development between the merchant guild and associations of agriculturists were mainly due to the increase in the importance of agricultural commodities in trade from the twelfth century onwards. The urban development of this period, and the growing food needs of urban settlements, enhanced the influence of the agricultural classes.

The Saliyas and Kaikkolas, two waver communities of South India came to be classified among the Right and left Hand caste division\(^\text{20}\), which arose in Tamil Nadu in the 12\(^{th}\) century AD as a paradigmatic division, to determine the social and caste status of the artisans and craftsman apart from new ethnic and economic groups. Craft groups other than the weavers also came to be organized largely under this division. With the urbanization of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, urban social stratification invariably tended to use the three categories of brahmana, Velala and the right and left hand castes. With the increase in organized commerce and itinerant trade and the demand for textiles and other products, the artisan communities also obtained special privileges, either from local chiefs or temple authorities, and sometimes also through the good offices of the merchant organizations.

In a slightly different context, the dependence of the craftsmen of the merchant organizations is underlined as seen in the role of the merchants providing

\(^{18}\) Chanpaklakshmi, see Chapter 4, Table VI.
\(^{19}\) PSI No. 125; 103 of ARE 1932-3.
\(^{20}\) Vijaya Ramaswamy, 1985, 55, 58-9 and 107-8.
asylum to the craftsman in Erode as early as the 11th century AD. The merchant body sometimes framed rules for the Valangai (Right Hand) and Idangai (Left Hand), or granted them privileges, emphasising the interdependence of these two sections of the commercial world, especially in areas where the merchants assumed control and management of temples and acted as protectors patrons of artisanal groups, as in the Kongu region. The artisan community is seen to be coming into its own after twelfth century AD, i.e. in the late Cola and Pandya periods. In the predominantly agrarian set-up Tamil Nadu, the artisans were more often attached to the locality i.e. to the temple, the land-owning brahmanas and Velalas through inter-dependent land tenures. However, changes in the agrarian organization, in the pattern of land ownership and the introduction of an economy based on inter-regional trade, the demand for their services both by local landed groups and by the itinerant merchant organizations. In the late twelfth century, the anuloma rathakaras in Punjai had special privileges conferred on them.

Craft production was perhaps more intensive in the Kongu region, where the 12th to 16th century inscriptions refer to large-scale artisan activity and their participation in important civic duties, for which special privileges were conferred on them. Privileges were collectively granted to the Kanmalar communities in Kancikkuvalnadu.

Thus, organized commerce by Nagarams, manigramam and long-distance trade through itinerant merchant bodies, accelerated the process of urban development, crafts organization, a tripartite social stratification in an urban context in multi-temple centres and single large temple centres, some of which became pilgrimage centres, and also in administrative centres. Many of these newly emerging socio-economic groups were accommodated in the Tirumalai vilagam of the temple centres.

The dominant role of the Five Hundred in inter-regional trade and commerce in South India is established beyond doubt by the continuous occurrence of guild records in the three major regions, i.e. Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Furthermore, their participation in overseas trade is also attested to by the presence of

22. Punjai Inscription-198 of 1925 (ARE, 1925-6)
23. SII, VI, 258 (Manimangalam); SII, XII, 154 (Chidambram).
guild inscriptions in northern Sri Lanka, Siam (South Thailand), Sumatra and Burma.\textsuperscript{24} One of these inscriptions, which is found in Barus (Loboe Toewa), Sumatra, is particularly significant, as it refers to Barus as Varoca in Tamil, and describes it as matangari Vallava Desi Uyyakkonda Pattinam and Velapuram as a part of that pattinam, in which the Five Hundred made arrangements in AD 1088-89, for a regular income or gift in gold to the local chiefs of merchants, to be paid by the Marakkala nayakan and others from South India who came to that port.\textsuperscript{25} This inscription points to the importance of the Southeastern trade in the 11\textsuperscript{th} century A.D., in which the Five Hundred not only played a dominant role, but even had control of port towns.

Many other commodities mentioned in the Tirumalai and other Tamil inscriptions, as well as the Chintapalle inscription of about 1240 cen. A.D. from Andhra\textsuperscript{26}, refer to agricultural products like paddy, sesame, pulses, betel-nuts and leaves, salt and raw materials like cotton. Metals like copper, zinc, lead and iron also figure among the items of trade. In fact, the only manufactured good requiring technological skill and organized production was textile (local cloth), and it is for South Indian textiles that there was an ever-growing demand. Hence, the weaver community gradually acquired a position of great social and economic importance. This is attested to by the references to Kaikkolas and Saliya Nagarattar, who not only controlled production and marketing of cloth, but participated in temple services, donations, conduct of festivals, administration and management.\textsuperscript{27} There is also a noticeable change in the pattern of land ownership, both weavers and merchants becoming important land-owning communities and wielding considerable influence in the localities where they hailed from.

If the presence of the guild inscriptions with their prasastis and lists of items of trade may be taken as a direct indication of distribution centres, most of them may be located in the Pudukkottai, Ramanathapuram districts and along the trade routes where Erivirappattanas were established. The guild inscriptions often refer to the 17 pattanas, 32 Vila (or Velar) purams, 64 Kadigai-i-tavalams from where the traders

\textsuperscript{26} 277 of ARE, 1934-5.
\textsuperscript{27} 196 of ARE, 1912, SII, VI, 252 and 257; see also Ramaswamy, Textiles and Weavers, 41-6 and 54-5.
Though it would be difficult to identify and locate all of them, it is quite likely that some of the major centres with guild inscriptions and the ports constantly used by traders are included among them, such as Vancimanagaram (Karur), Kodumbalur, Kulasekharappattinam, Alagaimangaram, Narrtamilai, Tondi and Piranmalai. There also emerged a series of coastal towns starting from Tiruppalaivanam (Pulicat), the northernmost point in Tamil Nadu, down to Korkai and Kayal in the mouth of the Tamraparni, marking a coastal route with halting stations and distribution points used by the itinerant traders, Kovalam, Sadras and Tranquebar were some of these towns which emerged into prominence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries AD.  

The towns of Tamil Nadu, including the ones with guild activities, differed in their administrative organization from those of Karnataka. The latter had their pattanasvamis, who were heads of towns and who presided over or participated in the meetings of the merchant bodies and other local groups (Shikarpur). No such ‘Lords’ of towns are known to have presided over the nagarams or market centres or towns with guild inscriptions in Tamil Nadu. There are, however, references to pattanasvami, who along with members of the Padinen Visaya, levied cesses on merchandise as in Piranmalai. The nagarams of Tamil Nadu were administered by the nagaram members with the help. The merchant bodies were subject to the common rules framed by the nadu, nagaram padinenbhumi and cittirameli organizations, acting jointly in the form of an institutionalized forum, exercising authority through levying cesses and tolls and controlling the distribution of goods.

Localized groups like Manigramam and Nagaram were powerful bodies, which diversified their activities by marketing special items, as for example by forming sub-nagarams like vaniya nagaram, Sankarappadi nagaram, saliya nagaram and sattum parisatta nagaram dealing in oil and cloth respectively at various centres like Valikandapuram, Sengalipuram, Tirukkoyilur and other places. The Paraganagaram or sea-faring merchants were active in the region of Salem (Pulolur)
even as early as the early Cola period.\footnote{Pullur Inscriptions-325 and 372 of 1939-40.} Kudirai Cettis from \textit{Malaimandalam} or Kerala were horse dealers, who catered to the needs of the Cola kingdom from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries.\footnote{Champakalakshmi. See Chapter 6, 331.}

The \textit{Vaniya nagaram} organized itself into a supra-local body called the \textit{Vaniya nagaram} of several regions or \textit{Padinen Visaya},\footnote{Valikandapuram Inscription-264 of ARE, 1943-4; Vengalam Inscription-141 of ARE, 1974-5.} somewhat like the \textit{Telikis} of Andhra. Individual traders sometimes used the title of Cakravarti, indicating the emergence of merchant princes, as seen in the thirteenth and fourteenth century inscriptions of \textit{Muttam} (in Perur, Coimbatore). Among the signatories to the Piranmalai guild inscription, mention is made of a \textit{Samaya Chakravarti}.\footnote{Piranmalai Inscription-SII, VII, 442. Also in Ikkarai-Boluvampatti Inscription-415 and 418 of 1958-9; Sivayam Inscription-48 of 1913, ARE, 1912-13.} Political stability disappeared with the decline of Chola power in the late 12\textsuperscript{th} century AD. References to \textit{Viradalam} and \textit{Suradalam} in the guild inscriptions of this period\footnote{For Suradalam see Valikandapuram Inscription, 264 of ARE, 1943-4. For Viradalam see Valaramanikkam Inscription-Inscriptions of the Dudukkottai State (IPS), 1022.} probably indicate the usurpation of authority by powerful merchants and local chiefs, taking advantage of the declining Cola power and the relatively weaker Pandya power of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in order to protect themselves and their newly gained wealth and status from other rivals for power and position. At any rate, the fourteenth century would seem to mark the end of the powerful merchant organizations in Tamil Nadu, although a temporary revival was brought about under Vijayanagar in Karnataka and Andhra regions.

So much for the merchant guilds; and now to the craft guilds. In the Mitaksara, Vimanesuara defined a Sreni as a guild of persons earning their livelihood by the same kind of labour, whether belonging to the same caste or to different castes. In the early centuries the bond of union in the guild was adherence by the members to the same occupation though they might otherwise belong to different castes, but later the guilds became rather stereotyped, and birth in the same jati counted as the only unifying factor in the guild. Sulaiman, a careful observer, states that in all the kingdoms that he had seen the profession never went out of caste, \textit{Barbosa} remarks that sons of washermen perforce followed their father’s trade. An inscription of the
The reign of an unidentified Kulottunga\textsuperscript{38} tells us that the occupation of the Rathakaras went by heredity. Sometimes however the same craft was pursued by men of different castes, and such guilds included every member following the profession without strict reference to caste; in such cases there was also a caste guild distinct from the craft guild.

The Kottayam plates of Sthanu Ravi and of Viraraghava and the Cochin Plates of Bhaskara Ravi Varman\textsuperscript{39} were probably the earliest records which drew the attention of scholars to the meaning of Anjuvannam. Some scholars thought it to be a Tamilised form of the arabic word Anjuman meaning an association, while others took it to refer to the Jews or the early Christian merchants who settled in the west coast. Discovery of epigraphs in the interior where there were no such Jewish or Christian settlements made it clear that an indigenous corporation was referred to by this term. It is now clear that the term Anjuvannam, means the ‘five artisan classes’; the same as Hanjama in a Basrur record\textsuperscript{40}, Pancahanaravdu or Pancilavdu in the Telugu, and Pancalattar in the Tamil Inscriptions. Two records\textsuperscript{41}, one from Elavanasur, and the other from Tiruvanaikovil (Trichinopoly) clinch the point when they describe it as the Anjuvanni Pancalattar. A Krisnapatnam record\textsuperscript{42} mentions a street by name Anjuvnatteru, where the artisans of this corporation lived. These artisan classes should have had a corporate existence from very early times since even the earliest records that mention them indicate that they were taxed collectively and acted in their corporate capacity when they made grants often in association with one or other of the trading and mercantile corporations.

Apart from this combination of artisan classes, distinct groups of artisans are also mentioned in inscriptions such as carpenters, blacksmiths, weavers, oilmongers, kaikkolar, gardeners, stone cutters, braziers, rope makers, jewellers, shoe makers, drawers and tailors. Goldsmiths including coiners blacksmiths, carpenters and masons designated themselves Virapancalattar.

To capture the popular imagination these organised industrial communities invented mythological origins for themselves.\textsuperscript{42} The Vlapahcala, for example, traced

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{38}. A.R.E. 479 of 08.
\textsuperscript{39}. E.I. III.
\textsuperscript{40}. ARE, 406 of 28; also ARE 1928 paragraph 36.
\textsuperscript{41}. ARE, 493 of 38, and 46 of 38.
\textsuperscript{42}. See Appadorai, op.cit. for more examples.
\end{footnotesize}
their origin to Visvakarma. Legends soon grew round them, and to this day, these legends constitute an interesting field of study for the students of Social Anthropology.

We may next consider the producers - the cultivators of the soil. The Silappadikrdam speaks of the old flourishing villages peopled by the Vellalar men, who by their tillage relieved the wants of beggars and contributed to the prosperity of kings. The Vellalas were an honoured community, and their leaders were honoured with such titles as kdviti and enddi. Vellala nobles married their daughters to princes and enjoyed special privileges at court. The Sangam works refer to local Vallar chieftains those of Milalai and of Kodumbalur and the Ayvelirs. The commentary on Tolkappiam states that Agastyaya brought with him 18 sections of Vellalar, who long before the Christian era expelled the Kurum bar from the fertile regions of the South, and established themselves as nilattarasu or’ rulers of the soil’ to distinguish them from the ndttarasw or’ rulers of the nadu’.

They were practically independent save for the general control of the king. Vellala, means ‘he who rules the vellam or floods’ one class of them constituted the Karelia Vellalar’ the rulers of the har or clouds’. They cleared the jungles, brought the land thus cleared under the plough, built dams and anicuts, excavated tanks to collect the precious drops of rain, and channels by which the tanks could be fed by rivers. They had the faculty amounting almost to an instinct of tracing the existence of underground springs, and were thus able to dig wells with a perennial supply of water. There were frequent streams of migration of these communities until about the 8th or the 9th Century when they settled into nadus all over the south. Tamil classics always associate the Vellalar with lordship over the artisan castes, whom they largely supported.

These Vellalanattars and others engaged in tillage constituted themselves into a corporation called Citrameli. (meli in Tamil means ‘ploughshare’). They worshipped the ploughshare which was also their standard. They enjoyed special privileges granted to them under royal charters called the citrameli sasanam. A Vehgur record describes them as bhumiputtirar and ndttamakkal. A Vira Pandya (unidentified) had this surname as he was a patron of this community. This

43. ARE, 209 of 37.
44. ARE, 75 of 03.
corporation of tillers bore the name of *citrameliperiyandtta*.

Members of other castes associated with the Citrameli corporation or were supported by them also bore their name or one or other of their surnames. We hear of a goldsmith\(^{45}\) named *Citrameli*, of a dancing girl\(^{46}\) named *Citramelinangai*, of a Brahmīn of the Kasyapagotra\(^{47}\), *Citrameli-Battan* and of a district administrator\(^{48}\) *Citrameli-malaiaarayan*. Groups of villages under this organisation were called *Citrameli-periyandtdu*\(^{49}\) for instance Tirumuruganpundi, Tittagudi and Tirupukkuli. Pahcarai Tiru-nallar was known as *Citramelinallur*\(^{50}\). Visnu temples at Nellore\(^{51}\), Valarpuram\(^{52}\), Vijayamahagalam\(^{53}\), Tiruvidaikai\(^{54}\), Sendamangalam\(^{55}\) (in Pudukkottai), Tirukkoilur\(^{56}\) and Ambil\(^{57}\) were called *Citramelivinnagaram*; the idol of Siva at Kodungalur\(^{58}\) (North Arcot) *Citramelivitankar*, and another at Tirupukkuli\(^{59}\) *Citrameli-nayandr*. Brahmīn villages under the protection of the Citrameli corporation were called *Citrameli Caturvedimangalam*\(^{60}\). We have chosen these places at random, and the list is by no means exhaustive. The Citrameli organisation is indeed a grand attempt at organising production in the districts (*Citrameliperiyanddu*) and villages (*Citramelinallur*) under the preview of this corporation and consolidating holdings to facilitate cultivation and the pooling and selling of the produce, so as to ensure large scale production and good profits for the members.

Overshadowing all these guilds by its organisation, influence and authority was the corporation called the *Nanddesiya Tisaipayyirattu Ainnurruvar*. The most satisfactory rendering in English of the name of this guild is that of Prof. Nilakanta Sastri of Madras “The Five Hundred of the Thousand directions in all countries”. The

\(^{45}\) ARE, 16 of 11.
\(^{46}\) ARE, 215 of 30.
\(^{47}\) ARE, 6, 8 and 31 of 23.
\(^{48}\) cf. ARE, 211 of 30.
\(^{49}\) cf. ARE, 21 of 03; 177 of 00; 209 of 37.
\(^{50}\) ARE, 421 of 22.
\(^{51}\) ARE, 197 of 94.
\(^{52}\) ARE, 28 of 11.
\(^{53}\) ARE, 547 of 05.
\(^{54}\) ARE, 117 of 90.
\(^{55}\) PSI, 171.
\(^{56}\) ARE, 117 of 00.
\(^{57}\) ARE, 122 of 00.
\(^{58}\) ARE, 139 of 24.
\(^{59}\) ARE, 182 of 16.
\(^{60}\) cf. ARE, 100 of 33.
earliest known records relating to this guild are a Kannada inscription\textsuperscript{61} in characters of the early 8th Century in the \textit{Ladhkhan} temple at \textit{Aihole}, and two Tamil inscriptions\textsuperscript{62} at \textit{Munasandai}, a village in the Pudukkottai State, one dated in the reign of \textit{Para-kesari Vijayalaya} and the other in that of the \textit{Parakesari Parantaka} (9th century A.D.). This league comprised indigenous (\textit{svadesi}), foreign (\textit{paradesi}) both (\textit{ubhaya}) and itinerant (\textit{nanadesi}) members. An inscription from \textit{Piranmalai}\textsuperscript{63} gives a detailed account of the \textit{Ainnurruvar}. They claimed to be the children of the gods Vasudeva and Mulabhadra or Virabhadra, and worshipped the goddess Bhagavati called in the Tamil inscriptions \textit{Aimpolil Paramesvari} or \textit{Aiyapoli Nacciyar}, also referred to as Kandali (the supreme one according to the \textit{Tolhdpipiyam}), \textit{Padmavati} or \textit{Paramesvari}.

They had many sub-divisions coming from the ‘1000 districts’ of the ‘4 quarters’ (\textit{Ndnddesatisaiydyirattu}) the ‘18 districts’ (\textit{padinenbhumi}) or (\textit{padinenvisayam}), the ‘32 prosperous coastal cities’ (\textit{valarpurams}), the 18 \textit{pattinams}, the 64 trade assemblies (\textit{ghatikaitavalam}), etc. They visited all the countries in India from Cera, Cola, and Pandya in the South to Nepala in the north, and by land and sea penetrated into the six continents (cf, the Tamil Inscriptions at \textit{Taku-apa} in Siam, at \textit{Labae Toewa} in Sumatra, at \textit{Pagan} in Burma, and in Ceylon). They were praised in 50 \textit{virsasanas} (\textit{pancasat virasasana}). They were extolled as the lords of Aihole (\textit{Ahichhatttra-Bijapur} district), from where they emigrated all over the Deccan (\textit{Ahiccatra vinirgatarum-Aiydvalepura paramesvararum}). Their biruda speaks of them as ‘the 500’ renowned over the whole earth, possessing truthfulness, pure conduct, agreeable behaviour, policy, courtesy and intelligence, pure in the maintenance of the \textit{Vtrabalanja} code (\textit{dharma}), of which they were the protectors, shining with the banner of a hill, exalted for their valour, embraced by fame, their breasts the dwelling place of the goddess of victory, lofty in prowess, and the scions of the race of \textit{Vasudeva}, \textit{Kandali} and \textit{Mulabhadra}. They were the merchants of the four dialects (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam), who were wedded to the pursuit of Dharma, Artha, and Kama by the sale and purchase of articles, whose sole delight was the distribution of food to the needy, the orphans, “and suppliant beggars, who looked upon others’ wives as their mothers, etc.

\begin{flushright}
61 . IA, VI, p. 138n.
62 . PSI, 61 and 67.
63 . ARE, 154 of 03.
\end{flushright}
The articles in which they traded, included salt, paddy and rice, beans, red gram, green gram, castor seed, arecanut, pepper, turmeric, ginger, onions, cumin, mustard, gingelly, iron, raw cotton, yarn, cloth, wax, honey, gunny bags, silk goods and yarn, yaktails, camphor oil, perfumes, cattle, horses, and elephants. Another record\textsuperscript{64} adds to this list musk, saffron, beads, tiger skin, lead and tin. Obviously such a list indicates an advanced state of commercial progress and economic prosperity. The 500 maintained mercenary armies, the leaders of which resembled the condictotteri of the medieval Italian City States. They were designated munaivirar (mummudidanda), erivirar etc. A Kudumiyalalai inscription\textsuperscript{65} refers to the Paliyili ainnurruvar 'the flawless 500 battalion'. The guild included Gavaras, Gatugas, Settis, Settiguttas, Ankakaras, Settiputras, Viravanigar, Nanadesis, Nadu, Nagara, Erivirar, Munaivirar, Ilanjingavirar, Kohgavalar, Kandalis, Gavun-das, Valangai castes, etc. They carried their goods on packbulls, asses or horses. They conferred special privileges upon some of the cities in which their members resided. Two instances may be cited here. They converted the village of 6iraval\textsuperscript{36} into a nanadestya dasamudi erivirapattinam, probably a fortified mart with a regiment. At a meeting of the members at Mylapore\textsuperscript{37} they converted Ayyapulakatture into a Virapattinam.

South Indian guilds were very powerful guilds. When we comparing the south Indian guilds with North Indian guilds we noticed so many things which are different. The first thing is about the number of guilds existed in both the places, the guilds had different names. One more thing about guilds were mostly South Indian guilds were merchants guilds but in North India we have less number of merchant guilds and large number of crafts or artisan’s guilds. In South India during early medieval period we find evidence about brisk internal trade in some sorts goods. Spinning and weaving formed a major industry which occupied considerable numbers, and guilds of weavers were generally in a flourishing and took an active part in many local concerns. The North Indian guilds also had same organisation of weavers but we don’t have any evidence which proves that spinning and weaving became a big industry during early medieval times.

The export of the finer varieties of cloth from various parts of the country is proved by records during the entire period. Warangal specialized in the manufacture

\textsuperscript{64} ARE of 15 and 16 of 17.  
\textsuperscript{65} PSI, 35 of III, 125.
of carpets but as compared to North India the guilds had no relationship with other countries and they had sold and manufacture their products only for the local grounds. This proved how these South Indian guilds were developed in those days and had foreign relations. Marco Polo, a foreign visitor and some other visitors also attracted by an industry in the Gulf of Mannar. We also have records of individual artists like architects, sculptors and painters. Some important names are Sri-Gundan Anivaritachari, the builder of Lokeshwara temple (now called Virupaksha) Sri Gundan is said to have been an expert in planning cities, constructing palaces, vehicles, thrones and bedsheets. The most famous names among them being Malitamma, Baicoja, Caudaya, Nanjaya and Bama but in North India we don’t have any name of these type of specialists, we have references about shilpasasra and also about the schools of learning for shilpashastra but never have seen records of names, so we can say that the south Indian guilds had strong background, regulations in comparison to North Indian guilds. North Indian guilds had lost their power and glory because of some reasons like the de-urbanisation, feudalism and foreign rulers.