



SRUJANI: Indian Journal of Innovative Research and Development (SIJIRD)
Volume-5 Issue 3, July-August 2026, Pp. 130-137
Bi-Monthly, Peer-Reviewed, Open Access, Indexed Journal

ISSN: 2583-3510

S I R D F
J O U R N A L S
editor@srujani.in
www.srujani.in

Village Border Conflicts: As Reflected in the Inscriptions of the Chikmagalur Region

Dr. N. G. Prakasha

Associate Professor, Department of History, Government First Grade College, Sulibele,
Hosakote Taluk, Bangalore Rural District

Abstract:

Village boundary disputes were a recurring feature of rural administration in medieval Karnataka, and the inscriptions of the Chikmagalur region provide valuable evidence of such conflicts. This study examines inscriptional records to understand the nature, causes, and resolution of village border disputes. The inscriptions reveal that disagreements over agricultural lands, water resources, forests, and territorial limits were commonly settled through local assemblies, royal authorities, and religious institutions. They also highlight the role of boundary markers, witnesses, and legal procedures in maintaining social order. By analyzing these records, the study demonstrates the efficiency of traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution and local self-governance. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of the socio-political, economic, and legal history of the Chikmagalur region.

Keywords: Chikmagalur Inscriptions, Village Boundary Disputes, Medieval Karnataka, Local Self-Governance, Epigraphical Studies.

Introduction

Inscriptions are among the most reliable primary sources for reconstructing the political, social, economic, and legal history of medieval South India. They provide valuable information not only about kings, dynasties, and religious institutions but also about the everyday lives of rural communities. The Chikmagalur region of Karnataka

preserves a rich corpus of inscriptions that record various aspects of village administration, including disputes over territorial boundaries. Village border conflicts often arose due to disagreements regarding agricultural land, irrigation sources, forests, grazing lands, and tax jurisdictions. These disputes had significant implications for local

Please cite this article as: Prakasha, N. G. (2026). Village Border Conflicts: As Reflected in the Inscriptions of the Chikmagalur Region. *SRUJANI: Indian Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, 5(3), 130–137

governance, revenue collection, and social harmony. The inscriptions reveal that such conflicts were resolved through village assemblies, royal officials, local chiefs, and religious authorities following established legal procedures. Boundary stones, natural landmarks, and written records were frequently used to demarcate village limits and prevent future disputes. The study of these inscriptions provides valuable insights into the functioning of medieval judicial and administrative systems at the grassroots level. Therefore, this paper examines the nature of village border conflicts reflected in the inscriptions of the Chikmagalur region and highlights their historical significance in understanding local governance and conflict resolution in medieval Karnataka.

Review of Literature

The study of South Indian inscriptions has received significant attention from epigraphists and historians, particularly in understanding the administrative, social, and economic history of medieval Karnataka. Scholars such as B. L. Rice, M. H. Krishna, and K. V. Ramesh have demonstrated that inscriptions are invaluable sources for reconstructing village administration, land grants, taxation, and judicial practices. Their works indicate that boundary disputes were generally settled through village assemblies, local officials, and royal intervention.

Research on Karnataka inscriptions further reveals that village boundaries

were identified using natural landmarks, boundary stones, rivers, hills, and trees to avoid territorial disputes. Although several studies have examined land grants and local governance, relatively few have specifically focused on village border conflicts in the Chikmagalur region. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap by analyzing inscriptional evidence related to boundary disputes and their resolution, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the legal and administrative traditions of medieval Karnataka.

Research Gap

Although numerous studies have examined the inscriptions of Karnataka from the perspectives of political history, land grants, temple administration, and local self-governance, limited attention has been given to village border conflicts as reflected in the inscriptions of the Chikmagalur region. Existing research largely focuses on dynastic achievements and administrative institutions, while the legal procedures, causes, and settlement mechanisms of territorial disputes at the village level remain underexplored. Moreover, there is no comprehensive study that systematically analyzes inscriptional evidence relating to boundary disputes in Chikmagalur and evaluates their significance for understanding medieval rural administration and conflict resolution. This study seeks to bridge this gap by providing an inscription-based analysis of village border conflicts and highlighting

their socio-economic, legal, and administrative dimensions in medieval Karnataka.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the nature and causes of village border conflicts as reflected in the inscriptions of the Chikmagalur region during the medieval period.
- To analyze the mechanisms of conflict resolution and boundary administration adopted by village assemblies, local authorities, and royal officials as recorded in the inscriptions

Importance of the Study

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of medieval rural administration, customary legal practices, and the socio-economic significance of land ownership and territorial boundaries. It demonstrates that village boundary conflicts were not merely local disputes but were closely linked to governance, resource management, revenue administration, and the maintenance of social order in the Malnad region. By examining inscriptional evidence, the study reveals the legal and administrative mechanisms employed to resolve such conflicts and maintain stable village boundaries. Furthermore, it highlights the historical importance of inscriptions and hero stones as valuable primary sources for reconstructing the everyday realities, judicial traditions, and agrarian life of medieval society in the Chikmagalur region.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative historical and epigraphical research approach. It is primarily based on published inscriptions from Epigraphia Carnatica, supplemented by published archaeological reports, district gazetteers, and other relevant secondary sources. In addition, selected hero stones (Vīragallu) from the Chikkamagaluru region have been examined to understand the nature and context of village border conflicts. The inscriptional and archaeological evidence has been critically analyzed to identify the causes of boundary disputes, the institutions involved in their settlement, and the methods adopted for conflict resolution. The collected data have been interpreted using historical, epigraphical, and contextual analysis to reconstruct the patterns of rural administration and boundary management in medieval Chikkamagaluru.

Historical Background of the Chikmagalur Region

The Chikmagalur region, situated in the Malnad belt of present-day Karnataka, possesses a rich historical and cultural heritage extending from the early historic period to the Vijayanagara era. Owing to its strategic location amidst the Western Ghats, fertile river valleys, and forested landscape, the region was an important centre of agriculture, trade, religion, and political activity. It was successively ruled by the Kadambas, the Gangas, the Rashtrakutas, the Western Chalukyas, the

Hoysalas, the Vijayanagara rulers, and later the Keladi Nayakas, each of whom contributed to its administrative and cultural development.

The inscriptions discovered in Chikkamagaluru district, particularly those published in *Epigraphia Carnatica*, provide valuable information regarding village administration, land grants, taxation, irrigation, temple management, and judicial practices. These records reveal that villages functioned as well-organized administrative units with clearly defined territorial boundaries, supervised by village assemblies, local chiefs, and royal officials. The demarcation of village boundaries was essential for maintaining agricultural productivity, collecting revenue, regulating the use of forests and water resources, and preserving social harmony.

The Malnad region was characterized by extensive cultivation, dense forests, and abundant natural resources, making the ownership and control of land highly significant. Consequently, disputes over village boundaries, grazing lands, irrigation channels, forests, and revenue rights were not uncommon. Such conflicts occasionally resulted in violence and were resolved through royal orders, local assemblies, arbitration, or judicial procedures. In some instances, hero stones (*Vīragallu*) were erected to commemorate individuals who sacrificed their lives while defending village boundaries or community rights.

Thus, the historical background of the Chikkamagaluru region provides the necessary context for understanding the inscriptional evidence relating to village border conflicts. These records illustrate not only the administrative efficiency of medieval Karnataka but also the importance attached to territorial integrity, customary law, and community-based conflict resolution in rural society.

Selected Examples of Village Border Conflicts

1. Murumanehalli Inscription

One of the earliest references to village boundary administration in the Chikkamagaluru region is found in an inscription discovered at Murumanehalli in the present-day Kote Hobli of Chikkamagaluru district. Dating to the Western Ganga period (c. 10th century CE), this inscription is primarily an administrative record rather than a hero stone. It documents aspects of regional administration, land management, and civil governance under the Ganga rulers. More importantly, it provides valuable evidence regarding the demarcation of village boundaries, regulation of land rights, and the administrative procedures adopted to maintain territorial order and resolve local disputes. The inscription serves as an important source for understanding the legal and institutional framework governing village territories in medieval Karnataka.

2. Border Settlement of Kiriya-Muguli and Piriya-Muguli

One of the earliest inscriptional references to the territorial limits of present-day Chikkamagaluru is recorded in *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI, No. 3. The inscription preserves the ancient names of Chikkamagaluru and Hiremagaluru as Kiriya-Muguli and Piriya-Muguli, respectively. It records an official settlement of a boundary dispute between these neighbouring villages. To prevent recurring conflicts over agricultural land and revenue rights, village elders (Mahājanas), local officials, and administrative authorities established permanent boundaries using a Kalyani (tank) and stone boundary markers (Gadi Kallu) as legally recognized reference points. The inscription illustrates the importance attached to clearly demarcated village boundaries and reflects the role of local institutions in maintaining peace and protecting agrarian interests.

3. Asandi Boundary Skirmish

Asandi was an important Nāḍu (regional administrative unit) in medieval Chikkamagaluru. Because of its strategic location, it frequently witnessed conflicts arising from political rivalry between the Hoysalas and the Seunas (Yadavas of Devagiri). One inscription commemorates a fierce boundary skirmish in which a local commander, Devagoyi Rahuta, lost his life while defending the territorial frontier. The associated Vīragallu (hero stone) records that local warriors resisted

hostile forces attempting to cross the established boundary. The inscription demonstrates that the defence of village and regional frontiers depended not only on royal armies but also on the active participation of local military leaders and village communities.

4. The Boundary Stone Dispute

Another significant inscription from the Chikkamagaluru region records a territorial dispute between Asandi and a neighbouring settlement. The conflict centred on the diversion of a natural stream, an issue closely connected with irrigation rights and agricultural land ownership. According to the inscription, a village guard named Macha defended the newly erected boundary stones (Gadi Kallu) from being removed during the night. Armed with a sword and shield, he sacrificed his life while protecting the established boundary and was later commemorated through a hero stone. This inscription demonstrates that disputes concerning land and water resources frequently resulted in violent confrontations and highlights the important role played by local communities in safeguarding village territories.

5. Kadur Pasture and Tank Encroachments

Hoysala-period inscriptions from the Kadur region provide valuable evidence concerning disputes over grazing lands, irrigation tanks, and agricultural resources. Unlike the forested Malnad

tract, Kadur possesses a comparatively dry environment where access to water and pasture was economically crucial. Consequently, these resources often became the subject of disputes between neighbouring villages. One inscription records a conflict that arose when cattle belonging to one village entered the cultivated fields of another. As the Gavundas (village headmen) were unable to resolve the dispute through customary negotiations, the Mahājanas of the local Agrahara intervened. They conducted a formal survey, re-established the village boundary by erecting Gadi Kallu engraved with sacred symbols such as the Trishula and Vāmana, and imposed monetary penalties on those responsible for the encroachment. This inscription reflects the existence of a well-developed legal and administrative system for protecting communal resources and preserving harmony among neighbouring villages.

6. Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

The inscriptions of the Chikkamagaluru region reveal that medieval Karnataka possessed a well-organized system for resolving village boundary disputes, often without direct intervention by the king. Village assemblies, Mahājanas, Gavundas, and local administrative officers played a central role in administering justice. Disputes were generally heard in village temples or other public places where witnesses were examined, earlier land grants were consulted, and the disputed boundaries were physically inspected.

Boundaries were formally demarcated using natural landmarks such as rivers, streams, hills, forests, and large trees, together with artificial markers including boundary stones (Gadi Kallu), tanks, embankments, and trenches. Many inscriptions conclude with imprecatory clauses warning that anyone who removed or altered the established boundary stones would incur divine punishment or commit a religious sin equivalent to killing a cow or a Brāhmaṇa. Such warnings functioned both as religious deterrents and as legal safeguards protecting village boundaries.

Historical Importance of the Gadi Kalaga Inscriptions

The inscriptions relating to Gadi Kalaga (boundary conflicts) are of considerable historical importance, as they provide valuable insights into the political, social, legal, and administrative life of medieval Karnataka. These inscriptions commemorate warriors who sacrificed their lives while defending village boundaries, communal lands, and other shared resources, reflecting the high value attached to territorial integrity and community rights. They offer important evidence regarding the demarcation of village boundaries, the nature of territorial disputes, and the legal and administrative procedures adopted for their resolution. The records also highlight the significant role played by village assemblies, Mahājanas, Gavundas, and other local institutions in maintaining law and order and administering justice at the grassroots level. Furthermore, they document grants

such as Umbali and Rakta-Kodage bestowed upon the families of fallen heroes, demonstrating both royal patronage and community recognition of their sacrifice. Collectively, these inscriptions contribute significantly to our understanding of rural administration, historical geography, legal traditions, social organization, agrarian relations, and the linguistic and cultural history of medieval Karnataka.

Conclusion

The inscriptions of the Chikkamagaluru region provide valuable evidence for understanding the nature of village border conflicts and the mechanisms adopted for their resolution in medieval Karnataka. They reveal that disputes over land, water resources, grazing grounds, and territorial boundaries were common features of rural life and were closely linked to agricultural production, revenue administration, and local governance. The inscriptional records demonstrate that village assemblies, Mahājanas, Gavundas, and royal officials played a vital role in resolving such disputes through established legal and administrative procedures. The erection of boundary stones (Gadi Kallu), the use of natural landmarks, and the issuance of royal orders ensured the protection of village territories and minimized future conflicts. Hero stones (Vīragallu) further commemorate individuals who sacrificed their lives while defending village boundaries, reflecting the social

importance attached to territorial integrity and community rights. Thus, the study highlights that inscriptions are invaluable primary sources for reconstructing the judicial, administrative, and socio-economic history of medieval Karnataka and provide deeper insights into the functioning of rural society in the Chikkamagaluru region.

References

- Altekar, A. S. (1934). *The Rashtrakutas and their times*. Oriental Book Agency.
- Dikshit, G. S. (1968). *Political history of the Hoysalas*. Kannada Research Institute, Karnatak University.
- Fleet, J. F. (Ed.). (1888–1938). *Epigraphia Indica* (Vols. 1–43). Archaeological Survey of India.
- Kamat, S. U. (2001). *A concise history of Karnataka: From pre-historic times to the present*. Jupiter Books.
- Krishna, M. H. (1937). *South Indian images of gods and goddesses*. University of Mysore.
- Majumdar, R. C. (Ed.). (1960). *The struggle for empire*. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
- Rice, B. L. (1894–1905). *Epigraphia Carnatica* (Vols. 1–12). Mysore Government Central Press.
- Ramesh, K. V. (1984). *Indian epigraphy*. Sundeep Prakashan.

- Sastri, K. A. Nilakanta. (1955). *A history of South India: From prehistoric times to the fall of Vijayanagar* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Settar, S. (1992). *The Hoysalas: A medieval Indian royal family*. Directorate of Archaeology and Museums.
- Sharma, R. S. (2005). *India's ancient past*. Oxford University Press.
- Yazdani, G. (Ed.). (1960). *The early history of the Deccan* (Vols. 1–2). Oxford University Press.
- Chidananda Murthy, M. (n.d.). *Kannada śāsanagāḥ sāmśkr̥tika adhyayana*. Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Karnataka.
- Sastri, K. A. Nilakanta. (1955). *A history of South India: From prehistoric times to the fall of Vijayanagar* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Settar, S. (1992). *The Hoysalas: A medieval Indian royal family*. Directorate of Archaeology and Museums.
- Kamath, S. U. (2001). *A concise history of Karnataka: From pre-historic times to the present*. Jupiter Books