



Three Old Marāṭhī Inscriptions from Pune District

ATHARVA S. PINGALE AND ANIL DUDHANE

Independent Researcher, Pune-411030, Maharashtra, India.

E-mails: pingaleatharva@gmail.com; dudhane.anil@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper presents three previously unpublished Old Marāṭhī inscriptions from Pune district, palaeographically datable between the 11th and 14th centuries CE. The inscriptions originate from the Bārāmāṭī, Junnar and Purandar talukas respectively. Of the three, the first two are undated, while the third bears a clear chronological attribution. The earliest record, from Loṇī Bhāpkar (probably late 11th century), documents a contribution intended for the decoration of the local temple of *Someśvara*. The second inscription, from Shiravalī Khurd (probably early 13th century), records a land donation by the Yādava ruler Siṅghaṇadeva II, whose reign witnessed the rigorous implementation of Marāṭhī in official documentation, reflecting its consolidation as an administrative language under royal patronage. The Jawaḷārjun inscription (1347 CE) mentions a local ruler, Rāghava, son of Mahādeva; who dedicated land and funds for the maintenance of the temple of *Pāṇḍaveśvara*. The cultic affiliation of all the temples referenced in these inscriptions is Śaiva, each being dedicated to Lord Śiva. These records collectively illuminate aspects of temple management and the broader dynamics of local religious economy, as well as the vitality of Old Marāṭhī epigraphic practice during the early Islamic period in Mahārāṣṭra. Together, they offer important insights into regional governance, linguistic policy and the enduring traditions of local devotion as well as administration across the Yādava rule and the transitional period that followed their decline.

Keywords: Epigraphy, History of Maharashtra, Marathi inscriptions, Temples, Yadavas of Devagiri

Received : 14 May 2026

Revised : 12 June 2026

Accepted : 16 June 2026

Published : 30 June 2026

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Atharva S. Pingale & Anil Dudhane (2026). Three Old Marāṭhī Inscriptions from Pune District. *Journal of Studies in South Asia*, 2: 1, pp. 141-148.

Introduction

The three Old Marāṭhī inscriptions offer a vivid picture of linguistic patronage and religious economy during the Yādava and early Islamic periods. They attest to the increasing state patronage of Marāṭhī as an administrative and epigraphic medium under the Yādavas and their successors, marking its firm establishment in public record while also documenting a range of royal and local endowments granted for temple maintenance. References to cultivable land dedicated for ritual upkeep, tax-free monetary allocations and administrative arrangements for daily worship reveal

the organized management of temple finances and the functioning of local religious economy. Overall, these records highlight the close relationship between governance, regional language policy and devotional institutions in medieval Mahārāshṭra.

1. Loṇī Bhāpkar inscription (undated)

The inscription is located in the ancient *Someśvara Mahādeva* temple at Loṇī Bhāpkar village in Bārāmātī taluka of Puṇe district. It is engraved on a horizontal beam (*raṅgaśiḷā*) of the main *sabhā mandapa*, positioned prominently at the centre. The inscribed panel measures approximately 29 cm in length and 9 cm in breadth.

At the top of the inscription appear symbolic depictions of the sun and the moon, carved respectively. On the right side of the slab is an abraded figure of an ass in copulation with a woman. This represents the well-known ‘ass-curse,’ a motif frequently encountered in Old Marāṭhī inscriptions. It functions as an imprecatory device and is widely recognised in the Marāṭhī cultural milieu as the *Gadhegāl* or *Gaddhegāl*.

The characters of the inscription belong to the Nāgarī script, specifically exhibiting features of the Deccan variety. Although the record is undated, its palaeographic traits allow for a reasonably secure chronological placement. The forms of certain characters—notably *ḍa*, *ga*, *gha* and *u*—display distinctly archaic shapes, closely resembling their counterparts in inscriptions of the 10th and early 11th centuries. These early features, however, appear alongside elements indicative of a slightly later stage of development. Taken together, the overall script style suggests that the inscription may be assigned to the late 11th or early 12th century CE and more precisely, it may be placed within the latter half of the 11th century, when such transitional Nāgarī forms were in use. The purport of the inscription is arranged in three lines, of which the first two are aligned uniformly, while the third begins slightly to the left, breaking the parallel alignment and indicating a less careful execution in layout. The main content states that every member of the congregation is obliged to pay one *dāma* for the embellishment of the temple. The concluding portion contains an imprecatory statement, declaring that whoever fails to make this payment, his mother will be violated by his father in the form of a donkey.

Although the record does not mention the name of any king or administrative officer, its form and contextual characteristics align it with the period of the early Yādavas of Seunadeśa, who during the second half of the 11th century governed the tract north of present-day Puṇe district and had even extended their authority into the southern parts of the Marāṭhwāḍā region.¹ It is, indeed, quite likely that their authority extended over the region in and around the Puṇe district. Notably, some of the earliest Yādava stone inscriptions are composed in Old Marāṭhī,² clearly attesting to the emerging state patronage of the language during this formative phase. Taking these considerations together—script style, regional context and linguistic usage—the present inscription may plausibly be assigned to the period of Yādava Airamadeva (r. 1080-1105 CE). Owing to the nature of the record, it understandably contains no toponyms.

Text

1. svastī srī ughaḍe³ sum(ka) dāmu
2. asoṇī jo hām nedī teyacīe⁴
3. mae gaḍho⁵ bāpu

2. Shiravalī Khurd inscription of Yādava Siṅhaṇadeva II (undated)

The inscription is located at Shiravalī Khurd village, also known as Thorālī Shiravalī, in Junnar taluka of Puṇe district. It is engraved on a stone slab measuring approximately 84 cm in length and 21 cm in breadth. The stone is presently housed in a small temple situated within the compound of a local resident's home, near the Junnar–Ozar road.

The upper portion of the slab bears figural depictions of the moon, the *kalaśa* and the sun. This is followed by an inscription in three lines, of which the third line is badly damaged, with only the last two letters being distinctly visible. The characters belong to the Nāgarī script, palaeographically datable to the 13th century CE. The language of the record is Old Marāṭhī. At the bottom is an eroded yet recognisable depiction of the ass-curse motif.

The inscription is undated, but it records a donation made by Siṅhaṇadeva. Although no titles are ascribed to this Siṅhaṇadeva, he evidently belonged to the Yādavas of Devagiri. Three rulers bearing this name are known from that dynasty. Of these, this record can hardly be ascribed to the first, since its palaeography and stylistic features differ moderately from those of his period and instead reflect a later phase of development. The overall character and execution of the inscription, however, point to the time of Siṅhaṇadeva II (r. 1199–1247 CE); the most prominent ruler of the line. While an argument could also be made in favour of Siṅhaṇadeva III, the last known ruler of the dynasty, this possibility appears less convincing. It seems more appropriate to attribute the record to Siṅhaṇadeva II, who appears to be the likelier candidate in all respects.⁶

The record appears to be of a highly private nature, which explains the absence of royal titles or epithets. The purport of the inscription conveys that Siṅhaṇadeva donated a cultivable land (*kammatha* i.e. *kāmata*) to an unidentified recipient and secured for himself one-sixth of its total produce, referred to as *saṭī*, which can be taken to denote *ṣaḍbhāga*. The term *ṣaḍbhāga*, literally meaning ‘one-sixth part’, signifies the customary royal share of agricultural produce—either as a tax or as grain collected in kind.⁷ The practice of levying this sixth portion of agricultural yield is of considerable antiquity and is repeatedly mentioned in the *Arthaśāstra*⁸ and other early sources. Unfortunately, the inscription provides no place names or geographic boundaries of the donated land, although it must have been situated near the site where the record has been discovered. The last line indirectly underscores the observance of the duty of offering the prescribed royal share mentioned above. Instead of the regular imprecatory section, the record concludes with the depiction of the ass-curse motif.

Text

1. śrī Siṅhaṇadeve data kam-
2. mathācī saṭī sustu
3. — — sī⁹ jo¹⁰ na pālī

3. Jawaḷārjun inscription of Śaka 1269

The inscription is located in the Bhairavnāth temple at Jawaḷārjun village, Purandar taluka. It is engraved on a stone slab measuring approximately 122 cm in length and 48 cm in breadth. At the top of the slab are symbolic depictions of the sun and the moon and below them is an engraving of a *liṅga*. At the bottom appears a carved representation of the ass-curse motif, while the inscription occupies the space between these figures. The record is written in nine lines, the

characters belonging to the local variety of the Nāgarī script. The language of the inscription is Old Marāṭhī. The text exhibits several orthographic and grammatical inaccuracies, with certain letters inadvertently omitted or carelessly engraved by the scribe.

The inscription bears the date Śaka 1269, Sarvajit Saṁvatsara, which corresponds to 1347 CE. It mentions a ruler named *Raghorāo*, the Marāṭhī rendering of ‘Rāghavarāja’ i.e. Rāghava, who is described as the son of *Mahādeva*. This Rāghava is styled as a *Maṇḍalika*, meaning the governor of a region (maṇḍala), a term that eventually became synonymous with a feudatory ruler. The purport of the record states that Rāghava endowed a farmland to the temple of *Pamḍavesvara* as a continuous source for its subsistence. He further arranged ten non-taxable *rukās* permanently for the management of that temple. The *Rukā* was a type of coin current in medieval Mahārāshṭra.¹¹ The word for ‘expenditure,’ *ṣarachu* (Pers. *xarč* < Ar. *ḵarj*), occurring in the inscription, deserves special attention, as it represents the earliest known instance of a Perso-Arabic administrative term in the epigraphy of Mahārāshṭra, excluding the Koṅkaṇ region.

This inscription reveals for the first time the name of a local ruler who governed a region of western Mahārāshṭra after the establishment of the Delhī Sultanate’s dominion in the region. Unfortunately, no further details about this Rāghava are available. His lineage too remains unknown. It is also noteworthy that the inscription dates to the very year of the establishment of the Bahmanī Sultanate. Within the formative stage of the Bahmanī Sultanate, its founder *Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥasan Bahman Shāh* primarily concentrated on firmly consolidating his rule over the border regions of present-day Mahārāshṭra and Karnāṭaka and later extended his authority into Marāṭhwāḍa.¹² Hence, it is unlikely that Rāghava was his subordinate. However, it appears clear that at an earlier stage, Rāghava and his father must have been feudatories of the Delhī Sultanate. The absence of any reference to an overlord in Rāghava’s inscription points to the essentially nominal character of the Delhī Sultanate’s suzerainty in this area, while also indicating that local rulers appear to have exercised considerable independence whenever conditions allowed. In this connection, valuable information is provided by the contemporary Mahānubhāva work *Smṛtisthaḷa*, which describes the existence of a local ruler in the areas of Purandar and Chandan-Vandan.¹³ Though his name is not mentioned, it is very likely that he was connected with the family of Rāghava and may be identified with his father, Mahādeva; however, in the absence of any solid evidence, this identification cannot be ascertained. It also seems quite probable that their ancestors had served as feudatories under the Yādavas. Some Yādava feudatories associated with the Puṇe region are attested in the epigraphic records of the period. The earliest record, dated 1285 CE and belonging to the reign of Rāmacandradeva, is generally ascribed to Pūr in Purandar taluka, though its provenance remains uncertain owing to the existence of another village named Pūr in Junnar taluka.¹⁴ The record mentions a certain *Prabhudevāṇa Nāyaka*,¹⁵ whose connection, if any, with Rāghava remains entirely unknown. The second record, dated 1313 CE and likewise issued in the reign of Rāmacandradeva—marking his latest known date—comes from Taḷegāon Ḍhamḍhere in Shirūr taluka.¹⁶ The inscription describes *Dudhavaḍī Deśa*, its subdivision *Pāranera* and a place called *Talegāu* associated with that division, identifiable with the village where the record has been discovered. This *Dudhavaḍī Deśa* was most probably a region adjoining the Purandar area, with its headquarters centered at Dudhoḍī—a village in Karjat taluka of Ahmednagar district—which appears to be the source of the name of that region. It

cannot be ascertained whether Purandar itself formed a part of this territory. It is equally plausible that Purandar constituted a separate region situated to the south of Dudhavaḍī Deśa. Its precise administrative status, however, remains uncertain owing to the absence of contemporary sources. If it was indeed a separate administrative unit, the Bhīmā river must have served as the boundary between it and Dudhavaḍī Deśa. A *Sāmarasa* is mentioned in Taḷegāon Dhamḍhere inscription as a *Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara* governing Dudhavaḍī Deśa under the Yādavas. A subordinate of his, *Dāī Nāyaka*, is further mentioned as the administrator of the Pāranera territory. It is in no way known what relation, if any, Rāghava had with Sāmarasa or Dāī Nāyaka. However, it appears most likely that they were unrelated. Rāghava's family seems to have constituted a distinct and independent line of local rulers governing the Purandar region—either since the late Yādava period or perhaps emerging to prominence shortly after the dynasty's decline. Accordingly, on the basis of the extant evidence, the genealogy of this ruling family may provisionally be outlined as: ? → Mahādeva (c. 1310–1340 CE) → Rāghavarāja (c. 1340–1350/55 CE). The advent of the Bahmanī Sultanate may have marked the end of this local dynasty.

The inscription also provides valuable evidence concerning the temple's original name, recorded as 'Paṇḍavesvara' (Pāṇḍaveśvara)—whereof Pāṇḍeshwar is the modern phonetic rendering—and situated very close to the findspot of this inscription. This indicates that the name is ancient and has remained in continuous use since the 14th century, or possibly even earlier. The inscription preserves no information regarding localities.

Text

1. svasti śrī saku
2. 1269 sarvajit saṁ(va)cha-
3. re śrī maṇḍālika¹⁷ (Ra)gho-
4. rao¹⁸ Mahādeo¹⁹ tāṁna²⁰
5. Paṇḍavesvaraceyā²¹ kāmā
6. sotrā karunu ru²² sāmḍijala²³
7. malā 1 ṣarachu²⁴ muṣya ka-
8. ruvi²⁵ akarī aṁka ruke
9. nīta 10

Glossary

1. Akarī – tax-free.
2. Asonī (aksonī) – congregation.
3. Kāma – use.
4. Malā (maḷā) – farmland.
5. Nīta – always, constantly.
6. Pāḷaṇe (pāḷaṇe) – to follow, to obey.
7. Sāmḍijaṇe – to leave.
8. Saṭī – sixth part.
9. Sotrā – continuous flow of income.

10. Surṅka – duty, toll.

11. Ughaḍa (ughāḍa) – decoration, embellishment.



Fig. 1: Loni Bhapkar inscription



Fig. 2: Shiravali Khurd inscription



Fig. 3: Jawaḷārjun inscription

Acknowledgments

We are thankful to Udaysingh Bhapkar, Vinod Khatke, Manoj Kumbhar, Amol Punde, Yash Maskare, Saurabh Mandlik and prof. Abhijit Dandekar for their general help.

Notes

1. Deshpande 2013: 44-57
2. Deshpande 2013: 16, 44-55
3. Read ughāḍe
4. Read teyācīe
5. Read gāḍhau
6. A similar style of writing and phrasing is observed in an inscription of Siṅhaṇadeva II found in the Māṅkeshwar temple at Dhārāshiv (Osmanabad) district. (See Deshpande 1976: 102–4)
7. Monier-Williams 1986: 1109
8. Shamasastri 1967: 89, 101-2
9. The damaged portion may be plausibly restored as *dharmā*.

10. This reading is tentative.
11. This coin was also known by another rendering, *Ruvā*. The denomination of this currency was such that four *Rukās* equalled one *Dāma*. (See Belvalkar 2009: 168-9)
12. Sherwani 1953: 48-55.
13. Avalgaonkar 2015: 337-8. The narrative mentioned here can be assigned to a period preceding the close of the first half of the 14th century. Moreover, certain descriptions preceding the said narrative clearly allude to Muḥammad bin Tughluq, who at that time appears to have been ruling from his relocated capital at Devagiri. (See Avalgaonkar 2015: 330)
14. Tulpule 1963: 209
15. Tulpule 1963: 211
16. This record is a stone inscription in Old Marāṭhī, presently being prepared for publication elsewhere and is therefore represented here only by the relevant extract.
17. Read *maṇḍalika*.
18. Read *rāo*. The orthography of *o* closely resembles that of the auspicious sign *om* as attested in 13th–14th-century inscriptions.
19. This is an ungrammatical construction, clearly intended for *Mahādevāce*, the correct genitive form in Old Marāṭhī.
20. Read *tāmnnī*.
21. Read *paṇḍavesvarāceyā*.
22. This seems to be an extraneous letter engraved inadvertently.
23. Read *sāṃḍijalā*.
24. This word can also be read as *ṣaracu*. However, we prefer to read its final letter as *cha*, since the orthography of *ca* attested elsewhere in the inscription differs—the stroke of its beak is elongated and either the upper or lower portion appears slightly slanted. The form of *cha* resembles its counterpart elsewhere in the inscription, although another occurrence of *cha* appears with larger loops.
25. The intended phrase seems to be *karavi*, fut. 3 sg. of the verb *karaviṇe* (to get done).

References

- Avalgaonkar, Ramesh (ed.) (2015) *Smṛtisthaḷa*. Pune: Chandrakala Prakashan.
- Belvalkar, Suman (2009) *Līlācaritrātīl samājadarśana*. Pune: Popular Prakashan. Deshpande, Brahmanand (1976) *Śodhamudrā*. Aurangabad: Alakananda Prakashan.
- (2013) *Devagirīce Yādava*. Pune: Aprant Prakashan.
- Monier-Williams (1986) *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Shamasastri, R. (1967) *Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra*. Mysore: Mysore Printing and Publishing House.
- Sherwani, H. K. (1953) *The Bahmanis of the Deccan: An Objective Study*. Hyderabad: The Manager of Publications.
- Tulpule, S. G. (1963) *Prācīna Marāṭhī korīv lekha*. Pune: Pune University.