

## Comparative Study of Mewar, Marwar and Gujarat Coinage Systems (9th–16th Century)

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### Abstract

This study examines how the coinage systems of Mewar, Marwar, and Gujarat developed between the ninth and the sixteenth century. Although the three regions shared a broad cultural setting, their monetary habits grew in different directions because their economies rested on different kinds of trade. Mewar worked with a mostly local market structure, where copper coins met the needs of temple towns, fairs, and rural exchange. Marwar operated along long caravan routes that connected Rajasthan with Sindh and the Punjab, which produced a mixed currency environment shaped by many incoming coin types. Gujarat, supported by busy ports and steady overseas trade, built a strong silver-based system that became widely trusted across western India.

The paper compares the three regions through their metals, weight standards, minting methods, legends, and circulation patterns. The aim is to understand how geography, trade networks, and political stability influenced monetary choices. The findings show that Gujarat achieved the highest degree of uniformity and technical refinement, while Mewar preserved older cultural symbols and Marwar remained a flexible, mixed monetary zone. Together, these differences explain why western India never formed a single monetary system but developed several distinct traditions shaped by local needs and wider exchanges.

**Keywords:** Mewar coinage, Marwar currency, Gujarat Sultanate, medieval India, numismatics, minting practices, regional trade, Rajasthan history.

### 1. Introduction

The study of medieval coinage offers a close view of how different regions organised their economy and expressed political authority. Coins were never just pieces of metal. Their weight, metal, and the symbols placed on them reveal the structure of markets, the reach of rulers, and the kinds of exchanges that kept a region active. Scholars working on Rajasthan and western India have often pointed out that monetary habits changed slowly, and usually in response to local needs rather than sudden policy shifts (Hooja, 2006, p. 408). When we place Mewar, Marwar, and Gujarat side by side, the differences in their economic character become clear, even though they belonged to the same broad cultural zone.

Mewar developed in the shelter of the Aravalli hills, where life centred on agriculture, temples, and small local markets. The region's geography created narrow passes and valley routes, and these shaped how goods moved. Early circulation depended largely on copper, which suited everyday trade. Even when silver began to appear more frequently, the currency stayed tied to local rhythms of exchange. Historical accounts note that Mewar's markets remained grounded in customary practices for a long time, and these habits influenced what kinds of coins people preferred and trusted (Sharma, 1959, p. 236).

Marwar followed a different pattern. Spread across open plains and desert routes, it became part of the caravan networks that linked Rajasthan with Sindh and Multan. Traders crossing these routes used coins issued by many different states, and Marwar absorbed this diversity into its daily commerce. Because of this, the region rarely developed a rigid, uniform currency of its own. Singh writes that Marwar's monetary life reflected movement rather than tight administrative control, which explains why weighing scales and mixed-metal coins

remained common well into the fifteenth century (Singh, 1993, p. 90). The region's political shifts added to this variety, and no single tradition fully replaced the others.

Gujarat grew in yet another setting. Its coastline connected it with merchants from Arabia and the Persian Gulf, and the ports of Khambhat and later Ahmedabad became busy centres of long-distance trade. This commercial world demanded a stable supply of silver and a predictable set of weight standards. The Gujarat Sultanate strengthened these trends, and its mints became known for clear calligraphy and consistent purity. Asher notes that Gujarat's silver tankas travelled far beyond its political borders because merchants trusted the accuracy of their weight and the quality of their metal (Asher, 1992, p. 54). This level of consistency gave Gujarat an advantage that neither Mewar nor Marwar could match.

Although all three regions used coins for similar purposes, their monetary systems were shaped by their economies, their connections with other states, and the kind of authority their rulers exercised. Mewar preserved older motifs and worked with local needs. Marwar operated through mixed and mobile networks. Gujarat developed the most regulated and technically refined system, supported by ports and steady bullion imports. These contrasts form the basis of the comparative study that follows, and they help explain how western India developed several distinct monetary traditions within a shared cultural landscape.

## **2. Regional Background**

A clear sense of the three regions—Mewar, Marwar, and Gujarat—helps explain why their coinage systems developed in different ways. Their geography, political history, and economic habits shaped what kinds of coins people used and how widely those coins travelled.

### **(a) Mewar**

Mewar's landscape is defined by the Aravalli hills, scattered valleys, and strong natural defenses. These features shaped both political life and trade. Settlements often grew around temples, water sources, and hill routes, creating a network of small markets rather than large commercial centers. This environment encouraged a slow and steady economic rhythm. Historian Reema Hooja notes that Mewar's early economy leaned heavily on agriculture, craft production, and temple-linked exchange, which suited the use of copper for most transactions (Hooja, 2006, p. 192).

Political authority in Mewar developed through local chiefs and lineage-based power, and over time Chittor became the main center of the state. The region's connection to the Eklingji tradition also shaped its cultural identity, influencing both administrative symbols and social life. Sharma observes that Mewar's political consolidation, especially after the fourteenth century, expanded the scale of administration and created a greater need for regulated currency, though the underlying trade structure still remained mostly regional (Sharma, 1959, pp. 233–235). Even in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when rulers like Kumbha and Sanga strengthened the state, Mewar's markets continued to function within a largely internal framework.

### **(b) Marwar**

Marwar's setting is very different. It lies across the dry plains and desert tracts of western Rajasthan. Towns and settlements here grew along caravan paths rather than agricultural belts. These routes connected Marwar with Sindh, Multan, and the wider northwest, making movement a major part of everyday economic life. Because of this mobility, the region was exposed to a range of coin types and weight systems brought in by traders from different regions (Singh, 1993, p. 87).

Politically, Marwar saw frequent changes in authority—from early Chauhan and Paramara lines to the rise of the Rathores. These shifts produced a landscape where local chiefs held power at different moments, and stability came in phases. This pattern affected monetary habits. Hooja notes that Marwar absorbed outside influences more quickly than Mewar because its trade routes drew in coins from multiple states, making it a naturally mixed currency environment (Hooja, 2006, p. 387). Even after the Rathores gained strength in the fifteenth century, the region continued to function within this open, multi-coin economy.

### **(c) Gujarat**

Gujarat formed the most commercially active zone among the three. Its long coastline and river systems encouraged the growth of ports and market towns. From an early period, places like Khambhat and later Ahmedabad became important centres of textile production and overseas trade. These economic advantages helped Gujarat develop a strong urban network supported by artisans, merchants, bankers, and guilds. Asher points out that Gujarat's towns thrived on a level of long-distance exchange that required reliable currency and stable standards (Asher, 1992, pp. 52–53).

The rise of the Gujarat Sultanate in the fifteenth century strengthened these trends. With a steady inflow of silver from maritime exchange and active control over trade routes, the sultanate had both the resources and the administrative structure to regulate its mints. Siddiqi notes that the political stability of the sultanate, combined with strong commercial links, created favourable conditions for producing high-quality silver coins (Siddiqi, 1989, p. 118). This environment made Gujarat a dominant monetary power in western India.

## **3. Metals, Weight Standards, and Minting Practices**

Coins reflect not only economic needs but also the strengths and limits of a state. The choice of metal, the consistency of weight, and the level of control over minting show how rulers managed trade and what kind of resources they had access to. When we compare Mewar, Marwar, and Gujarat, their monetary habits point toward three different economic worlds shaped by geography and long-term political conditions.

### **(a) Metals Used**

#### **• Mewar**

Mewar relied mainly on copper for everyday transactions. Its early markets were small and locally oriented, and copper suited the scale of exchange in temple towns, fairs, and rural centres. Silver appeared slowly, usually when political stability created more administrative demand. Hooja notes that even in the fifteenth century, silver circulated but not in the volume seen in more commercial regions (Hooja, 2006, p. 415). Mewar's limited exposure to long-distance trade explains why copper remained dominant for so long.

#### **• Marwar**

Marwar worked with a mixed-metal environment. Copper and billon circulated widely, and traders coming through caravan routes brought coins from Sindh, Multan, and Delhi. This created a situation where no single metal or standard dominated. Singh writes that Marwar's monetary world was shaped by movement rather than local mint strength, which kept metal composition varied and often unpredictable (Singh, 1993, p. 88). Silver did circulate, but usually in small quantities because the region lacked steady access to bullion.

#### **• Gujarat**

Gujarat built its currency around silver. Its coastline connected it to merchants from the Gulf, and this maritime network brought a steady inflow of bullion. The Gujarat Sultanate used this advantage to issue large quantities of high-quality silver coins. Siddiqi describes how imported silver formed the backbone of the sultanate's monetary strength, allowing its mints to maintain high purity (Siddiqi, 1989, p. 118). Copper was used too, but silver remained central to both urban and rural markets.

**(b) Weight Standards**

- **Mewar**

Weight standards in Mewar improved gradually. Early coins show variation, which matched the region's decentralised economic structure. As political authority strengthened under rulers like Kumbha, weights became more consistent, though not uniformly strict. Sharma notes that Mewar's weight system reflected a balance between local tradition and administrative needs (Sharma, 1959, p. 241).

- **Marwar**

Marwar never developed tight weight regulation. Because traders relied heavily on weighing scales and handled many kinds of coins, exact uniformity was not expected. Hooja points out that desert markets often handled mixed coins from different regions, making flexibility more practical than strict enforcement (Hooja, 2006, p. 389). As a result, Marwar's weight standards remained loose throughout the medieval period.

- **Gujarat**

Gujarat maintained strict and reliable weight standards. The sultanate needed predictable currency for large-scale trade, and merchants trusted the consistency of silver tankas. Bhandare notes that Gujarat's weight regularity was one of the reasons its coins travelled so widely across western India (Bhandare, 2011, p. 23). This level of uniformity set Gujarat apart from its neighbours.

**(c) Minting Practices and Technical Skill**

- **Mewar**

Mewar produced coins using simple die-striking methods. Early pieces were small and modest, and although clarity improved under later rulers, the region never reached the technical refinement seen in Gujarat. Sharma observes that Mewar's minting reflected its modest economic scale rather than a lack of skill (Sharma, 1959, p. 242).

- **Marwar**

Marwar's minting quality varied noticeably. Some issues show clear Rajput motifs, while others appear crude or hastily made. This unevenness reflects both political instability and the region's mixed monetary environment. Since many coins came from outside, Marwar's own mint output rarely dominated local circulation (Singh, 1993, p. 91).

- **Gujarat**

Gujarat achieved the highest level of minting refinement. Coins show sharp borders, clean calligraphy, and consistent dies. Asher highlights that Gujarat's technical precision was linked to its commercial world, where trusted coinage helped maintain strong international connections (Asher, 1992, p. 54). This precision made Gujarat's currency a preferred medium in inland and overseas trade.

#### 4. Iconography and Legends

Coins carry messages that rulers wanted people to recognise—sometimes openly, sometimes subtly. The choice of symbols and scripts tells us what a state valued and how it wanted to present itself to its subjects and neighbours. When we compare Mewar, Marwar, and Gujarat, their visual choices show three distinct identities shaped by culture, religion, and political aims.

- **Mewar**

Mewar's coinage remained deeply tied to its Rajput identity and to the religious world around Eklingji. Nagari script appears regularly on its coins, reflecting both the administrative language of the region and its cultural roots. On many early copper issues, the designs are simple—geometric forms, short legends, or marks that linked coins to local authority. Hooja notes that Mewar's political life drew heavily on temple networks and lineage traditions, and this continuity appears clearly in its coinage (Hooja, 2006, p. 414).

Even when silver became more common in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the visual style did not shift dramatically. Symbols remained modest, and legends continued to rely on familiar scripts. Sharma points out that despite political expansion under Kumbha and Sanga, Mewar did not seek to redesign its currency in a way that broke from its older visual language (Sharma, 1959, p. 239). This consistency helped reinforce the idea that the ruling house represented a stable, culturally rooted authority.

- **Marwar**

Marwar's coinage carried a more mixed visual style because the region itself lived in a world of mixed influences. Early Rajput issues show motifs similar to other parts of Rajasthan—Nagari legends, simple symbolic marks, and occasional clan-linked designs. But because Marwar sat along caravan routes that connected it to Sindh and Multan, many outside coin types entered its markets. These influences left their mark on local coinage as well. Singh writes that Marwar often adjusted its coin legends and symbols to match the needs of circulating currencies, especially during periods of close contact with Delhi Sultanate forces or traders (Singh, 1993, p. 89).

At some points, Marwar's coins show hints of Islamic-style calligraphy, though these were never fully adopted. Local issues continued to rely on Rajput motifs, but the region accepted outside visual norms when political or trade pressures made them useful. Hooja remarks that this blend of styles reflected Marwar's shifting alliances and its open economic environment, which brought the region into contact with several monetary traditions at once (Hooja, 2006, p. 388).

- **Gujarat**

Gujarat's iconography developed along a very different line. With the rise of the Gujarat Sultanate, Islamic epigraphy became the defining feature of its coinage. Coins carried clear Arabic legends naming the ruler, often the mint, and sometimes the date. The visual emphasis was on precision rather than imagery. Asher explains that Gujarat's calligraphy and sharp minting were part of the sultanate's attempt to project authority and reliability in both local and overseas markets (Asher, 1992, p. 53).

Unlike Mewar and Marwar, Gujarat did not use figurative symbols. Its coins relied fully on script, purity, and formal design. This approach suited a region where merchants from Arabia, Persia, and East Africa expected predictable, clearly marked coins. Siddiqi notes that this formal and consistent epigraphic style helped Gujarat's

currency spread widely across western India, giving it a strong reputation for trustworthiness (Siddiqi, 1989, p. 121).

## 5. Circulation Patterns and Trade Networks

How coins moved across markets tells us as much about a region as the coins themselves. Circulation depended on routes, market structure, political stability, and the kind of trade a region relied on. When Mewar, Marwar, and Gujarat are compared through this lens, their differences become even clearer.

- **Mewar**

Mewar's circulation was mostly local for a large part of the medieval period. Its landscape of hill passes, small valleys, and fortified towns shaped movement within a limited radius. Markets grew around agriculture, temples, and local fairs, and these settings relied on copper coins suitable for frequent, low-value transactions. Hooja notes that the rhythm of life in Mewar's early period remained tied to internal networks where small denominations served most needs (Hooja, 2006, p. 412).

Even when the political situation stabilised under rulers like Kumbha and Sanga, trade remained largely regional. Silver coins began to circulate more in administrative spaces—especially for military payments and royal expenditure—but they did not travel far outside the kingdom. Sharma records that Mewar's currency rarely dominated trade in neighbouring regions, partly because its markets were not built around long-distance routes (Sharma, 1959, p. 236). The region's circulation system therefore reflected local identities and internal exchange more than external movement.

- **Marwar**

Marwar's circulation patterns were shaped by caravan trade and desert routes. Traders moving between Sindh, Multan, and northern Rajasthan brought coins from multiple regions, and Marwar absorbed them into daily exchange. Because the region relied heavily on mobile commerce, it became normal for several coin types to circulate side by side (Singh, 1993, p. 90).

This mobility reduced the importance of a single dominant currency. Local markets often used weighing scales to handle mixed coins of different metals and standards. Hooja explains that western Rajasthan's desert markets functioned through bargaining, weight-based exchange, and trust in the movement of goods, rather than strict currency uniformity (Hooja, 2006, p. 389). As a result, Marwar's currency moved in many directions, but its own coins rarely achieved a strong presence outside the region. Its monetary world remained open, flexible, and shaped by external influences.

- **Gujarat**

Gujarat experienced the widest and strongest circulation among the three regions. Its ports connected it with the Arabian Sea routes, and inland routes linked it to Rajasthan, Malwa, and the Deccan. Large volumes of goods passed through its markets, and this required a stable and predictable currency. Gujarat's silver tankas were trusted for their weight and purity, which helped them spread far beyond the sultanate's territory (Asher, 1992, p. 54).

Siddiqi notes that merchants often preferred Gujarat's coins even in places where local currencies existed because Gujarat maintained tighter control over weight standards and mint quality (Siddiqi, 1989, p. 121). As a result, its currency circulated across long stretches of western and central India. Unlike Mewar and Marwar,

Gujarat did not rely on several currency systems at once; instead, its consistent silver-based system became a common medium of exchange in regional and interregional trade.

## 6. Conclusion

The comparison of Mewar, Marwar, and Gujarat shows how closely coinage followed the character of each region's economy and the routes that tied its markets together. Although the three regions belonged to the same broad cultural world, their monetary habits grew in different directions because their political settings, trade connections, and access to bullion were not the same.

Mewar's coinage reveals a system shaped mainly by local needs. Its markets were small, centred on agriculture, temple networks, and regional fairs, and these rhythms encouraged the long use of copper. Even when silver began to circulate more regularly in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, it remained part of a system still rooted in local exchange. Hooja notes that Mewar's political and economic continuity left its currency closely tied to its internal world rather than the wider commercial routes around it (Hooja, 2006, p. 415). Sharma makes a similar point in showing how Mewar's circulation rarely pushed far beyond its borders, even under strong rulers like Kumbha and Sanga (Sharma, 1959, p. 236).

Marwar developed a different pattern. Because it lived along desert caravan routes, Marwar constantly received coins from Sindh, Multan, Gujarat, and the Delhi region. This produced a mixed and mobile monetary environment. Singh describes Marwar as a region where several coin types commonly circulated at once, leaving the state with less control over uniform standards (Singh, 1993, p. 90). Hooja also notes that the region's dependence on movement, bargaining, and weight-based exchange made flexibility more important than strict mint regulation (Hooja, 2006, p. 389). As a result, Marwar's currency remained open to outside influences, even when the Rathores established stronger political authority.

Gujarat stood apart because of its strong commercial base and steady inflow of silver through maritime trade. Its ports supported long-distance exchange, and the Gujarat Sultanate used this advantage to create a well-regulated currency marked by clear legends and strict weight standards. Asher observes that Gujarat's silver tankas were trusted across western India because their purity and weight remained consistent (Asher, 1992, p. 54). Siddiqi explains that this consistency was one of the main reasons Gujarat's coins travelled farther and were preferred by merchants in inland as well as coastal markets (Siddiqi, 1989, p. 121).

Taken together, these differences show that the coinage of western India did not form a single pattern from the ninth to the sixteenth century. Instead, each region shaped its currency according to its own economic conditions. Mewar preserved a steady, local system tied to its cultural identity. Marwar adapted to a world of mixed and moving exchanges. Gujarat built a stable silver-based system suited to large commercial networks. The broader picture is one of diversity rather than uniformity, and this diversity reflects the distinct political and economic landscapes that defined medieval western India.

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