

Coinage Studies of Medieval Mewar (9th–16th Century): Trends and Gaps in Historical Research

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Abstract: *The coinage of Medieval Mewar has drawn consistent attention from numismatists and regional historians, yet the overall direction and development of this scholarship has not been critically reviewed in a consolidated manner. This review paper examines the major trends in historical research on Mewar's coinage between the ninth and sixteenth centuries and evaluates how interpretations, methods and priorities have changed over time. It surveys key strands of writing such as early cataloguing efforts, typological and legend-based classifications, symbol and authority readings, and attempts to relate coinage with political structure and regional economy. The purpose is not to restudy coin types or produce a catalogue, but to map the intellectual landscape of existing research. By grouping previous works thematically and methodologically, the paper highlights what has been studied in detail and what remains underexplored. It identifies recurring patterns in approach, points to areas of scholarly disagreement, and draws attention to gaps such as mint organisation, circulation mapping, and integrated source analysis. The study argues that future coinage research on Mewar will benefit from closer interdisciplinary linkage and clearer contextual framing.*

Keywords: *Coinage, Historiography, Medieval, Museum, Numismatics etc.*

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Introduction

Coins are among the most dependable material sources for reconstructing the political and economic history of early and medieval India. In regions where narrative chronicles are limited or composed much later, coinage often provides direct and contemporary evidence of authority, titulature, symbols and monetary practice. In the case of Mewar, coin finds and

Coinage Studies of Medieval Mewar (9th–16th Century): Trends and Gaps in Historical Research

coin types have long been used by historians and numismatists to trace ruling lineages, regional assertion and patterns of exchange. Over time, a substantial body of writing has emerged on this material, but it remains dispersed across catalogues, regional histories, museum reports and specialised numismatic studies. A focused review of this scholarship is therefore necessary.¹

The present paper examines how coinage studies relating to Medieval Mewar between the ninth and sixteenth centuries have developed as a field of historical inquiry. It does not attempt to introduce new coin data or reclassify types. Instead, it studies the literature itself: the questions scholars have asked, the categories they have used, and the conclusions they have drawn. Such a historiographical approach helps in understanding how knowledge about Mewar's coinage has been constructed.

This period covers important phases of state formation and political interaction in the region, reflected in variations of metal, legend, script and iconography. By organising previous research into major thematic and methodological trends, this review highlights both established insights and neglected areas. It also prepares the ground for more integrated and context-based future work on regional coinage history.

Early Coinage Scholarship on Mewar

The earliest phase of coinage scholarship relating to Mewar emerged largely through cataloguing and descriptive efforts rather than analytical historical inquiry. Antiquarian scholars and early numismatists focused on collecting, classifying and publishing coin specimens found in western India, often placing Mewar issues within broader regional series. Their work laid an important documentary base, even though historical interpretation remained limited. These early catalogues typically organised coins by ruler name, legend style, metal and visible symbol, creating the first reference frameworks for later researchers.²

Museum catalogues and princely state collection reports also played a significant role in shaping the initial knowledge structure. Coins preserved in regional and imperial collections were listed with brief notes on script, weight and motif. While these records were not always supported by archaeological context, they preserved visual and metrological data that continues to be cited. In many cases, attribution to specific rulers of Mewar was tentative and based mainly on legend reading or symbol comparison.³

Coinage Studies of Medieval Mewar (9th–16th Century): Trends and Gaps in Historical Research

A second layer of early scholarship came from regional historians who used coin references to support dynastic narratives. In such works, coins were treated as confirmatory evidence for reign titles or territorial control rather than as an independent analytical source. Methodologically, the approach remained descriptive and authority-centered. Questions of circulation, mint structure or monetary economy were rarely addressed in depth.⁴

Despite these limits, early scholarship performed a foundational function. It stabilised basic typologies, identified recurring symbols and legends, and preserved scattered material in published form. Later thematic and interpretive studies of Mewar's coinage have depended heavily on this preliminary documentary groundwork, even when they moved beyond its descriptive boundaries.

Major Research Trends in Coinage Studies

Subsequent scholarship on the coinage of Medieval Mewar moved beyond simple cataloguing and began to develop clearer thematic directions. One major trend has been typological and classificatory analysis. Scholars working with expanded coin samples attempted to refine earlier groupings by closely examining fabric, weight standards, legend formulae and recurring motifs. This phase produced more systematic coin series and tentative chronological ordering. Typology-based studies helped distinguish local issues from influenced or imitative types and improved ruler attribution, though dating often remained approximate.⁵

A second important line of research has focused on legends and scripts. With closer epigraphic reading, historians examined Nagari and Persian legends appearing on regional coins and connected them with titulature, political claims and external influence. These studies treated coins as short formal texts and compared their formulae with inscriptional usage. The presence of multilingual or script-shift patterns attracted particular attention, as they were seen as indicators of political contact and administrative adaptation. However, interpretations sometimes varied depending on reading method and specimen quality.⁶

Symbolic and iconographic interpretation forms another visible trend. Researchers analysed recurring emblems, religious marks and dynastic symbols on Mewar coinage and linked them with ideas of sovereignty, legitimacy and sacred association. In this strand, coins are read not only as monetary objects but also as carriers of political messaging. While such readings

Coinage Studies of Medieval Mewar (9th–16th Century): Trends and Gaps in Historical Research

opened productive cultural perspectives, critics have noted that symbolic interpretation can become overstretched when not supported by corroborating textual or inscriptional evidence.⁷

More recent work shows a gradual shift toward contextual approaches. Instead of treating coins in isolation, some scholars have tried to relate coinage with regional economy, exchange networks and patterns of circulation. These studies consider hoard evidence, metal availability and inter-regional comparison. Even so, full circulation mapping and quantitative monetary analysis remain limited for Mewar compared to some other regions.⁸

Taken together, these trends show a movement from description toward interpretation and context. Yet the field is still uneven. Certain themes such as typology and symbols are heavily discussed, while others like mint organisation and distribution zones receive relatively less sustained attention.

Methods and Approaches Used by Scholars

The study of Mewar's medieval coinage has drawn on multiple but unevenly applied methods. The most dominant approach remains classical numismatic analysis, which focuses on physical features such as metal, weight, fabric, die style and legend form. Using these criteria, scholars classify coin types, suggest ruler attribution and propose relative chronology. This method has proved effective for organising material, but when used alone it often produces descriptive results without wider historical linkage.⁹

A second approach integrates epigraphic comparison. Here, coin legends and symbols are read alongside inscriptions, royal titles and dated records to improve identification and contextual accuracy. This cross-reading has helped correct earlier misattributions and clarified titulature patterns. However, such integration is still selective, and not all coin studies consistently use inscriptional parallels.¹⁰

Archaeological context has been used more sparingly. Hoard reports and excavation finds sometimes inform discussion of circulation and period usage, yet many published coin specimens lack secure provenance data. As a result, conclusions about distribution and monetary reach are often cautious. Where hoard analysis is available, it has significantly strengthened chronological and regional interpretation.¹¹

Coinage Studies of Medieval Mewar (9th–16th Century): Trends and Gaps in Historical Research

In recent years, a limited interdisciplinary tendency is visible, combining numismatics with economic history and regional trade studies. These works attempt to place coinage within exchange systems rather than viewing it purely as dynastic output. Still, technical methods such as metallurgical testing, statistical sampling and spatial mapping remain underused in Mewar-focused studies.¹²

Key Debates in Interpretation

Interpretation of Medieval Mewar coinage has generated several recurring debates within historical and numismatic scholarship. One central issue concerns ruler attribution and dating. Because many coins carry brief or formulaic legends, scholars sometimes differ in assigning them to specific reigns. Variations in legend style, orthography and symbol placement have led to competing chronological sequences. Some researchers prefer conservative attribution based only on clearly readable legends, while others accept broader stylistic grouping as sufficient evidence.¹³

A second debate relates to the meaning of symbols and religious marks appearing on coins. Interpretive studies often read these symbols as deliberate assertions of dynastic identity and sacred legitimacy. Others caution that not every recurring mark should be treated as ideological messaging, since mint convention, die engraver habit or inherited design may also explain continuity. The disagreement here is less about the presence of symbols and more about the degree of political intention behind them.¹⁴

The appearance of Persian legends or stylistic influence associated with wider Indo-Islamic monetary culture has also produced differing interpretations. Some historians view such features as signs of political pressure or accommodation, while others interpret them as pragmatic adaptations to circulating monetary norms and interregional trade. The same coin feature is thus read either as evidence of subordination or as an indicator of transactional flexibility.¹⁵

Another discussion concerns the economic role of regional coinage. While a number of studies link coin output with market expansion and revenue needs, others warn that mint volume cannot be directly equated with commercial intensity without hoard and circulation data. This debate highlights the limits of inference when coin evidence is not supported by quantitative context.¹⁶

Coinage Studies of Medieval Mewar (9th–16th Century): Trends and Gaps in Historical Research

Research Gaps and Future Directions

Despite steady scholarly attention, several important gaps remain in the study of Medieval Mewar's coinage. A major limitation is the continued dominance of specimen-based description over context-based analysis. Many studies classify and interpret coin types but do not sufficiently connect them with mint organisation, revenue structure or regional exchange mechanisms. Focused work on mint locations, production control and administrative process is still limited and often based on indirect inference rather than coordinated source study.¹⁷

Circulation analysis is another underdeveloped area. Hoard reports are cited, but systematic spatial mapping of finds across zones of Mewar and its neighbouring regions is rare. Without such mapping, conclusions about monetary reach and exchange networks remain tentative. Quantitative and statistical approaches to coin distribution would significantly refine present understanding.¹⁸

Technical examination also offers future scope. Metallurgical testing, die-link analysis and digital image comparison are widely used in other numismatic fields but only selectively applied here. Their broader adoption could clarify chronology and production patterns.¹⁹

There is also room for stronger interdisciplinary integration. Closer correlation of coin data with inscriptions, market records and trade-route studies would move the field beyond isolated object study. Future research that combines material, textual and spatial evidence can produce a more grounded monetary history of Mewar.

Conclusion

The study of coinage in Medieval Mewar has progressed from early descriptive cataloguing to more thematic and interpretive scholarship, yet its development remains uneven. Typological classification, legend study and symbolic interpretation have received sustained attention, while questions of mint structure, circulation pattern and production context are comparatively less explored. A review of the literature shows that scholars have built a valuable foundation of identification and attribution, but broader economic and institutional linkage is still emerging.²⁰

This historiographical survey makes clear that future progress depends on methodological expansion as much as on new discoveries. Closer integration of numismatic evidence with

Coinage Studies of Medieval Mewar (9th–16th Century): Trends and Gaps in Historical Research

epigraphic, archaeological and regional economic data will strengthen interpretation. Technical and spatial tools can also refine chronology and distribution analysis. By identifying trends and gaps together, coinage studies of Mewar can move toward a more context-rich and analytically balanced monetary history.

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