

The Administrative System of Mewar and Traditional Historical Sources

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2026.1307000264>

Received: 10 July 2026; Accepted: 16 July 2026; Published: 13 August 2026

ABSTRACT

The administrative and political reforms implemented in the princely state of Mewar are highlighted in this conceptual study. Over time, an area shapes itself and adapts to both endogenous and exogenous events. Since ancient times, the Mewar region has experienced the turbulent political history of both India and itself, particularly the sociopolitical events of the Mughal era. The fundamental issue with Mewar's history is its shifting borders or command area under various governmental systems, which entails locating the historic sites that still serve as reminders of the past. The actual documented history of the area begins with the Mughal era in Delhi and Rana era in Mewar mark the beginning of the region's actual documented history. Throughout the region's history, civil administration has generally been more significant than socioeconomic growth, as this relative terrain cognita describes. Together, the aforementioned facts have defined Mewar's identity as a region and highlighted the general backwardness of its tradition-bound regional structure. Therefore, the current research paper goes into great detail about several reforms in Mewar.

Keywords: Administration, Civil, Judiciary, Princely State, Revenue, Political Alliances, Mewar.

INTRODUCTION

Mewar was one of the largest princely states of Rajasthan, and one of the largest in the medieval and early modern history of India. Its southern portion of present-day Rajasthan earned its reputation for its defense against foreign invasions, as well as its Rajput ethics of honour and independence. The Sisodia dynasty of Mewar founded a dynasty with the means of a functioning administration and system of survival amidst political and military upheaval, toiling and transformative socioeconomic conditions (Gehlot and Prashar, 2017).

Mewar's administrative organization, including the division of civil, criminal, and military power, is a reflection of Rajput social and ethnic rules, values, and processes. Rajput Kings has been recognized as protectors of dharma and their subjects and as having authority over military matters, the possession of power, and organization of the state. Dharmic and Rajput ritual authority also accords to village community, local chiefs, and feudal aristocrats. Social dharmas of the Rajput are also significant for the administration of the state (Singh, 1985).

The extensive array of historical sources makes possible the systematic outline of Mewar's administrative history. Sources of these documents are inscriptions on temples and monuments, manuscripts and other documents preserved in the Royal Archives, the bardic literatures of the Charans and Bhats, Persian documents of the Mughal era, and writings of European travelers. These sources serve historical justice to modern conceptualization and are a wealth of information on administrative systems, military organization, and socio-cultural life and relations of the region (Newman, 2022). The administrative structures, systems, stratifications, and practices of the state of Mewar are the focal points of study for the appraisal of the richness of Rajput historical literature which as a sub-discipline also encompasses its political, military, judicial, and fiscal structures and practices (Fazl, 1907).

The present study seeks to analyze the administrative system of medieval Mewar under the Sisodia dynasty through a critical examination of traditional historical sources. It aims to identify the principal institutions of governance, including revenue administration, military organization, judicial mechanisms, and feudal structures, while evaluating the historical reliability of inscriptions, bardic literature, Persian chronicles, temple records, traveler accounts, and royal manuscripts. The study also examines how these diverse sources contribute to reconstructing the political and administrative history of Mewar despite their individual limitations and biases. It focuses on the following -

- What were the principal administrative institutions of medieval Mewar under the Sisodia rulers?
- How reliable are traditional historical sources in reconstructing the administrative history of Mewar?
- What are the strengths and limitations of inscriptions, bardic literature, Persian chronicles, temple records, and royal manuscripts as historical evidence?
- How does the administrative structure of Mewar compare with broader patterns of medieval Indian state formation?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative and descriptive historical research methodology based entirely on secondary sources. It relies upon epigraphic evidence, royal manuscripts, temple records, Persian chronicles, bardic literature, archaeological reports, and published historical scholarship. A comparative source-analysis approach has been employed to evaluate the credibility, context, and limitations of each category of evidence rather than accepting traditional narratives at face value. Wherever possible, interpretations from modern historians have been compared with contemporary documentary evidence to minimize historical bias and improve the reliability of administrative reconstruction.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MEWAR

Mewar has a rich, widespread documented history extending to ancient India, but the establishment of the temporary ruling dynasty made a more coherent history possible. Originating from the dynasty Guhilas governing from the 8th century, the dynasty of Sisodias, according to legends, is the founder of the Mewar dynasty, who is attributed to the consolidation of power and sovereignty of Mewar, as well as his military endeavours in regional history (Tuescher, 2005).

Mewar faced several challenges throughout history, including continuous invasion and shifting political dynamics. The Mewar Kingdom rose to defend their sovereignty multiple times against the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal Empire. Sovereigns such as Rana Kumbha, Rana Sanga, and Maharana Pratap strengthened their defenses to prolong Mewar's remaining sovereignty. Rana Kumbha's military and administrative reforms added to his record of cultural sponsorship. Under his reign, Mewar constructed forts, temples, and buildings to show the wealth and prosperity of Mewar. Rana Sanga continued the legacy of his predecessor and became one of the most formidable Rajput examples of North India (Kumari and Bhat, 2024).

After the Battle of Haldighati, Maharana Pratap became the figurehead of the continued Mughal resistance. Haldighati became the symbol of Mewar's political perseverance, of which this battle added to the importance of Mewar's history and many Indian Wars of resistance. Haldighati exemplified the determination to maintain sovereignty. Mewar's historical accounts of warfare and political strife shaped and influenced the administration system of Mewar to include military policy, decentralized order, and a strong feudality (Raczek et. al., 2015).

The response to Mewar's military governance and declining order across the region now influenced the court and military response to the shifting order of Mewar's governance. Traditional sources of Mewar add to the insights concerning the shifting conditions across the region. The study of Mewar's governance system heavily relies on these sources as they lay the foundation to the political, social, and economic order of the kingdom (Sharma, 1970).

The administrative history of Mewar has generated diverse interpretations among historians. Early colonial

scholars such as James Tod portrayed Mewar as an ideal Rajput polity characterized by honour, feudal loyalty, and heroic resistance. Although Tod's work remains valuable for documenting regional traditions, later historians criticized his romanticized portrayal and dependence on bardic narratives. G. H. Ojha and K. S. Shyamaldas relied more extensively on inscriptions and archival material, thereby providing a stronger empirical foundation for reconstructing Mewar's political institutions. Modern historians, such as R.S. Sharma have interpreted Rajput administration within the broader framework of Indian feudalism, emphasizing decentralized authority, land grants, and relationship between military obligations and political power. More recent scholarship integrates epigraphy, archaeology, and spatial history to demonstrate that Mewar's administration evolved through continuous interaction with changing political, military, and economic circumstances rather than remaining a static feudal order. These differing interpretations illustrate that the study of Mewar is not merely descriptive but forms part of larger debates concerning medieval state formation, regional governance, and historical methodology.

Inscriptions

The study of Mewar requires historians to describe their highest forms of evidence: inscriptions. Temple and fort inscriptions, as well as those on public buildings and walls, help identify grants and taxes, building, and military and administrative activities and orders and laws. The inscriptions of Chittorgarh and Kumbhalgarh provide references to kingly and administrative governance. The Kumbhalgarh inscriptions of Rana Kumbha state the accomplishments of the king and continuation, or strengthening, of the kingdom. Such inscriptions give evidence to the connection of religious and kingly governance (Tripathi, 2023).

Bardic Literature

The preservation of Mewar history by the Charans and Bhats of Rajasthan has aptly preserved Mewar's history. Famous for their poems, ballads, and genealogies of Rajput kings, i.e. Vir Vinod, and numerous regional ballads, help us to appreciate the political ideals and practices of a kingdom. Bardic literature is critical to the analysis of Mewar's history because it documents and records the exaggerations, as well as the political and cultural history of Mewar (Ojha, 1999).

Persian Chronicles

The formal history of Mewar cannot be qualified without the Persian historians chronicling the Mughals. One of the more prominent chroniclers, Abul Fazl, composing the Akbarnama, provides us with a description of the Mughals and Rajput state. The reign of Akbar with respect to Mewar and reign of Maharana Pratap is well documented in Persian Literature, especially during the Mughal and Mewar. Here we have references to the many advancements undertaken, as well as the military campaigns and diplomatic efforts of the time (Thelen, 2023).

Historical Source	Nature of Source	Information Provided About Mewar Administration	Historical Importance
Inscriptions	Stone and copper plate records issued by rulers	Details regarding land grants, taxation, military victories, and construction activities	Considered reliable primary evidence for reconstructing political and administrative history
Bardic Literature	Poems, ballads, and genealogies composed by Charans and Bhats	Descriptions of Rajput ideals, heroic rulers, feudal relations, and governance traditions	Preserved cultural memory and political traditions of Mewar
Persian Chronicles	Court histories written during the Mughal period	Information about diplomatic relations, wars, and administrative practices	Helped compare Mughal and Rajput systems of governance
Temple Records	Documents maintained by temples and religious institutions	Records of donations, revenue assignments, and local administration	Show the relationship between religion and political authority

Traveller Accounts	Observations written by foreign travellers and colonial writers	Accounts of social life, military organization, trade, and administration	Provide external perspectives on the functioning of Mewar
Royal Manuscripts	Official records and state correspondence	Administrative orders, succession details, and governance mechanisms	Useful for understanding institutional functioning and royal policies

Although traditional historical sources provide valuable insights into Mewar’s administrative system, each has inherent limitations. Royal inscriptions often glorify rulers, bardic literature tends to exaggerate heroic traditions, and Persian chronicles reflect the Mughal imperial perspective. Similarly, temple records primarily document religious and land-related matters, while traveler accounts are shaped by personal observations and cultural biases. Therefore, reconstructing Mewar’s administrative history requires a comparative analysis of multiple sources, with cross-verification enhancing the reliability and accuracy of historical interpretations.

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

Revenue administration underpinned the Mewar state. Agriculture was the principal means of livelihood, and land revenue was the principal source of palace revenue. The government collected taxes from the agrarian population based on land’s productivity. Revenue was usually collected as an annual share of the produce. Village-level personnel were paramount in the determination of land and revenue. The Patwari was the master of land and agricultural records, as village headmen commonly assisted revenue collection (Shyamaldas, 1886).

Mewar rulers were considerate of the farmers’ plight in revenue. Tax relief was perhaps granted in times of famine and other kinds of disasters. Under the Jagir system, a sizable number of lands was bestowed on the nobles and military officers. Jagirdars were obliged to the state to perform military services. Mewar’s Jagir system was a means of maintaining its military, but it also played a role in the shaping of Mewar’s feudalism. Along with the agrarian wealth, the state levied taxes on commerce, trade, and even means of transportation. Mewar’s position was favorable for trade with the other states of Gujarat, Malwa, and North India. The revenue from commerce was directed to finance the military and other construction works (infrastructure) of the state (Tod, 1920).

MEWAR’S ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM - AN OVERVIEW

The region of Mewar, thanks to its administrative system, achieved both political stability and cultural advancement. Mewar’s kingdom maintained its military and territorial ability due to its decentralized feudal system. This system also empowered community participation in administration by encouraging local governance. Additionally, the separation of religious and political power created a sense of unity (Vashishtha, 2022).

Mewar’s Mewar rulers promoted the art, architecture, and literature of the region. The splendor of the palaces, forts, and temples constructed during this time continue to highlight the rich cultural legacy of Rajasthan. The Rajput states in the surrounding areas of Rajasthan were influenced by Mewar’s administration, and it became a part of the political traditions in the region (Chandra, 2007).

Administrative Aspect	Description	Important Institutions	Officials/
Central Administration	The Maharana acted as the supreme authority responsible for governance, military affairs, and justice.	Maharana	
Council of Ministers	Assisted the ruler in policy formulation and administration.	Diwan, Bakshi, Purohit	
Feudal Administration	Local nobles governed territories and provided military assistance.	Jagirdars, Thikanedars	
Revenue Administration	Land revenue formed the major source of state income (Sarkar, 1960).	Patwari, Village Headman	

Judicial Administration	Justice was administered according to customary and Hindu legal principles.	Panchayats, Maharana
Military Organization	Strong military structure based on Rajput warrior traditions.	Cavalry, Infantry, Fort Commanders
Trade and Commerce	Commercial taxes were imposed on markets and trade routes.	Market Officials
Religious Institutions	Temples functioned as socio-economic and cultural centres.	Priests, Temple Authorities
Historical Sources	Information regarding administration derived from inscriptions and chronicles (Dashora, 1987).	Bardic Literature, Persian Chronicles

The evidence suggests that Mewar's administrative system cannot be understood merely as an isolated regional model but rather as part of the wider evolution of medieval Indian governance. Revenue administration, military organization, judicial institutions, and feudal relationships were closely interconnected and adapted continuously in response to changing political circumstances. The combination of indigenous administrative traditions with responses to Mughal expansion demonstrates the dynamic character of Rajput governance. Furthermore, comparison of multiple historical sources reveals that administrative institutions were neither uniform nor static but evolved according to regional needs, political pressures, and economic conditions. This analytical perspective extends beyond descriptive institutional history and contributes to broader scholarly debates regarding medieval state formation and governance in India.

CONCLUSION

The administrative system of medieval Mewar demonstrates the complexity of regional governance within the broader political landscape of medieval India. Rather than representing a purely feudal polity, Mewar developed a flexible administrative structure that combined central royal authority with decentralized local institutions capable of responding to military, economic, and political challenges. A critical examination of inscriptions, bardic literature, Persian chronicles, temple records, royal manuscripts, and archaeological evidence reveals that each source contributes distinct insights while simultaneously reflecting its own limitations and historical biases. Accordingly, reconstructing Mewar's administrative history requires an interdisciplinary and comparative approach that integrates multiple categories of evidence instead of relying upon a single historical tradition. By situating Mewar within wider historiographical debates on Rajput governance, Indian feudalism, and medieval state formation, the study contributes not only to regional history but also to broader discussions concerning political institutions and historical methodology in pre-modern South Asia.

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