



THE
CURRENCIES OF THE HINDU
STATES OF RÁJPUTÁNA

WILLIAM WILFRID WEBB M.B

SURGEON CAPTAIN INDIAN MEDICAL SERVICE
* BENGAL ARMY

*Illustrated by a Map and by Twelve Plates of Coins after drawings made by
the author from specimens in his collection*

Westminster

ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE, AND CO

PUBLISHERS TO THE INDIA OFFICE

14 PARLIAMENT STREET S.W

1893

V. KALYANASWAMI IYER & CO.,
BOOK-SELLERS, MADRAS.

HERTFORD
PRINTED BY STEPHEN AUSTIN AND SONS

X61; z: 2.28.19

C3

63267

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
Preface - - - - -	vi
Index - - - - -	xvii
Mewár Currencies - - - - -	1
Partábgarh " - - - - -	21
Dúngárpur " - - - - -	27
Bánswára " - - - - -	31
Márwár " - - - - -	35
Bíkaner " - - - - -	53
Kishangarh " - - - - -	65
Jaipur " - - - - -	69
Búndí " - - - - -	83
Kotah " - - - - -	89
Jháláwár " - - - - -	95
Jaisalmer " - - - - -	101
Alwar " - - - - -	107
Karauli " - - - - -	117
Bhartpur " - - - - -	123
Dholpur " - - - - -	131

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

Symbols used on the Plates.

N = gold.

R = silver.

Æ = copper.

PLATE I. - - - - -	Mewár - - -	<i>facings page</i>	3
PLATE II. - - - - -	Mewár - - -	"	8
PLATE III. {	(Salúmba, Bhínda, Sháh-pura) -	"	16
	- - - - - Dúngárpur - - -	"	
	- - - - - Partábgarh - - -	"	
PLATE IV. {	- - - - - Bánswára - - -	"	
	- - - - - Jodhpur - - -	"	37
	(and other types)		
PLATE V. - - - - -	Jodhpur - - -	"	41
PLATE VI. - - - - -	Bíkaner - - -	"	55
PLATE VII. - - - - -	Jaipur - - -	"	71
PLATE VIII. - - - - -	Búndí, Kotah -	"	85
PLATE IX. - - - - -	Jháláwár, Jaisalmer	"	97
PLATE X. - - - - -	Alwar - - -	"	109
PLATE XI. - - - - -	Karauli - - -	"	119
PLATE XII. - - - - -	Bhartpur, Dholpur-	"	125

PREFACE

IN my leisure time, during the years spent on duty at the Courts of Ūdaipur and Bikaner, I devoted my attention to the subject of the coinage in the Native States of Rájputána. The information (derived from personal observation, from the study of my unique collection of coins of the Province, from correspondence with brother-officers serving under the Indian Foreign Office, and with many friends among the Princes and the officials at their Courts) I have during my furlough embodied into the following work, which I now venture to offer to Government as, perhaps, a more perfect representation of the questions involved than is at present possessed, and in the hope that a further consideration of the points to which I have endeavoured to call attention may be productive of good to the inhabitants of the large tract of country, the circulating mediums of which are here considered. I may add that the country in which the coins here treated of are circulating, has an area of about 126,000 square miles. In 1891 it had a population of nearly 12,000,000, and at the present rate of exchange the revenues of its Princes alone amount to over two millions sterling.

It must be evident to those who consider the matter that the subjects of the Native Princes are at present labouring under great disadvantages in regard to the currency question,

when compared with the people of India who are living directly under the rule of the Queen-Empress. The following Table shows the present state of the coinage in the Hindu Princédoms of Rájputána. It will be seen that there are now circulating no less than 12 gold muhrs of different values (besides fractional gold pieces), 6 of which are now being yearly issued; 59 rupees (in most cases fractional coins to correspond), most of which are of different worths, and 16 of which are now being issued every year; and 41 different copper coins, of which 16 are struck each year, or almost every year.

The average yearly amount of issue for five recent years in the Márwár State is as follows:—of gold-muhrs, 19,757; of rupees, 311,427; and of copper coins, 175,455. These numbers for one of the richer States will allow of some idea being formed of the yearly issue of coin in Rájputána; for supposing that a proportional amount to its income be coined by each State, then the yearly issue of rupees alone amounts to considerably over two millions.

The amount of local coin circulating in the Rájput States is very large, and is, in most cases, the collection of a century or longer. I have been unable to discover that at present any systems exist for the recall of light coin. In many States coins of great age are still accepted in payment.

The coins of the Native States are fashioned in a rude way with the hammer and anvil, and have plain, unmilled edges. Stamping is carried out in a similarly rough manner—one workman holding the piece of metal between the two dies, whilst a second, with a blow from a heavy hammer, completes the coin. With very few exceptions, the coins bear only portions of the inscriptions carried by the dies.

TABLE OF COINS AT PRESENT IN CIRCULATION IN THE
RAJPUT STATES

State	Now being coined										Old coins in circulation to a considerable amount			
	Gold				Silver					Copper	Gold	Silver	Copper	
	Muhre	½ muhre	¼ muhre	⅓ muhre	Rupree	8 anna	4 anna	3 anna	1 anna		Muhre	Rupree		
Mewár . .	2				2	2	2	2	2	2			3	1
Salúmba . .										1				
Bhínda . .										1				
Sháh-pura .											1		1	1
Partábgarh					1	1	1	1		1			1*	1
Dángárpur										1				
Bánawára .					1	1	1			1				1
Márwár . .	1	1	1		1	1	1			1	2		7	3
Kúchawan .					1	1	1						1	
Bikaner . .					1	1	1	1		1			6	6
Kishangarh	1				1								1	1
Jaipur . . .	1				1	1	1	1		1	2		2	3
Khetri . .													1	
Bóndí . . .					1					1			4	1
Kotah . . .					1	1	1	1		1			2	1
Jhaláwár .					1	1	1	1		1			1	1
Alwar . . .					†								4	4
Karauli . .					1	1	1			1			2	2
Jaisalmer .	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1			1	
Bhartpur .					1	1	1	1		1			4	
Dholpur . .					1	1							3	
	6	2	2	1	16	14	13	9	2	16	6		43	26

* Several issues of this coin with different values.
† Milled rupee issued for the Mahárájá from the Calcutta mint. *

Some years ago, after the institution of an enquiry into the condition of the coinage, the Government of India issued the following order:— (Foreign Department No. 402, F, dated October 6th, 1870, No. 25, Resolution 3). “His Excellency in Council thinks it right to declare that where mints have been suppressed altogether, or have not been in active use within the last five years, their revival or opening cannot be permitted.” In spite of this resolution, as will be seen by examination of the following pages, mints for both silver and gold have been re-opened in some States.

In 1870 a recommendation was made, by the Agent to the Governor-General for Rájputána, to the Government of India that certain rupees then being coined in the Province should be spared, and permission given for the continuation of their issue. The ground of the recommendation was that they were much used on the occasions of marriage ceremonies; being of less value than other rupees circulating a considerable saving was thus effected, and by using them the gift or expenditure was magnified, and the good name for liberality maintained. I beg to point out that the need for the retention of these rupees no longer exists now that the amounts to be spent on marriage ceremonies have been regulated and determined upon by the Rájputs, under the guiding hand of Colonel C. K. M. Walter, C.S.I.

The composition of the coins in an issue of these States is in most cases variable. This is to be expected, as the pay of the mint officials is poor, and consequently there is a temptation to issue coins of an inferior quality to the authorised standards.

The circulation of a large number of coins of different values, and in most cases very badly stamped and rudely fashioned, re-acts in the following harmful ways:—

1. Great trouble is given to the merchants residing in Rájputána in the keeping of and in the adjustment of their accounts.

2. The question of exchange leads to continual gambling, not only amongst the merchants and bankers, but also among the native youths, for the exchange rate of the Imperial and Native currencies is continually fluctuating, due to the fraudulent schemes of the native money-lenders.

3. Distress and inconvenience fall on the agricultural and poorer classes, the members of which are continually mulcted of small sums by dishonest merchants, who represent the exchange rate as being different from that which it is in reality.

4. The multiplicity of badly executed coins facilitates the work of the coiner. As the coins of most of the Native States are very badly struck, it is a comparatively easy matter to counterfeit them, hence the amount of base coin in circulation is considerable. Even if the stamping of the pieces were to be improved upon it would not, in my opinion, much effect this evil, for the Native Chiefs will not exercise the same surveillance over their currencies as is exercised in British India to prevent the counterfeiting of the coin of the Queen-Empress. If the Imperial coins were alone current in the Native States, sufficient influence might be brought to bear on the Ráj officials to oblige the protection of the currency, and the much greater difficulty which exists in forging the Imperial milled coin would act as an additional safeguard.

5. The issue of coin by the Native Princes is a loss to the revenue of the Government of India, for were these coins suppressed an equivalent amount of Imperial coin would be required.

6. In some of the States the silver pieces are made from the

Imperial coin, which is melted down for the purpose. This practice leads to a great destruction of the Queen's currency and to its degradation. This statement would I know be indignantly denied by the native officials, but from careful enquiries which I have made through friends at the Native Courts, I can vouch for its correctness.

From the consideration of the above-mentioned circumstances, and knowing that the only Rájput States which have accepted the invitation made to the Native Princes, in the Government Resolution (Financial Department), No. 2227, dated 30th of September, 1872, are the States of Alwar and Bikaner, in the case of each of which the issue of special coin, minted for the State at Calcutta, has been introduced during a minority, and under the orders of the British Political Agent, acting as President of the Council of Regency; knowing also the improbability of any of the Chiefs or the Councils of the States in future accepting the invitation, or of their allowing the introduction of Imperial coin, as the sole currency, except under pressure or during future minorities, I beg, with diffidence, to submit the following points with a view to opening up a discussion on the means of rectifying the existing evils:—

1. Whether the privilege of coining, at present exercised by the Native Princes, shall be indefinitely retained?
2. Whether it may not be possible to impose certain restrictions under which the continuation of the privilege can alone be exercised?

With reference to the first query, I wish to observe that if the Government desired to pass an order abolishing the privilege, no hardship could really be complained of by the Rájput Princes. For although Colonel Sutherland, Agent to the Governor-General

for the States of Rájputána, wrote to the Under-Secretary to the Government of India, on the 23rd of January, 1847, as follows: "The time is yet far distant, I fear, when we can hope to make the Company's rupee the circulating medium of these Countries, for the right of coinage is, in the estimation of the Native States, one of the emblems of Sovereignty," yet I beg to submit that Colonel Sutherland magnified the importance of the point, for I have failed to discover that for centuries the ancestors of any of these Princes exercised the power of coining. No coins can now be produced which can with certainty be accredited to any of the existing Native States between the 12th and the end of the 17th or beginning of the 18th century (Mewár excepted). Certainly from the days of the Mughal supremacy the power of coining, if it were then being exercised, was taken away. The present mints only date from the decline of the Muhammadan power, and the practice of coining was only assumed in consequence of the weakness of the suzerain at Dehlí, and in most cases for the purpose of making revenue by the circulation of debased coin, which was supported at an enhanced nominal value through the introduction of the purer standards of neighbouring districts. When the present mints were opened sanads of permission were obtained by purchase or extortion from the Dehlí Court, and the Princes placed on their coins the Emperor's name and superscription as a titular avowal of Dehlí supremacy.

As regards the second query, it appears to me that if the continuation of coining be permitted indefinitely, one of the following methods of procedure may perhaps be arranged:—

1. That the Imperial Government coins be issued for each State from the Calcutta or Bombay mint, under the regulations laid

down in the Despatch No. 2227 from the Government of India in the Financial Department, dated Simla, 30th of September, 1872.

2. That the Imperial Government provide dies and machinery for the coining of money for each Native State (charging the actual cost of the dies and machinery), and give distinct orders as to the purity and weight of the coins to be issued, providing trained mint-officers for the service of the Durbars, and making the Political Officers accredited to the Courts responsible to see that the orders of Government be duly observed and carried out. This latter would be an expensive if a workable way of getting over the difficulty, and I believe that if the matter were laid before the different Native Princes, and the necessity of a uniformity in the coinage again demonstrated, a number of them would without further trouble accede to the offer made to them by Government in the Despatch above quoted from.

I desire to offer my best thanks to Professor Cecil Bendall, M.A., to Mr. E. J. Rapson, M.A., and Mr. H. A. Grueber, F.S.A., the former of the Department of Oriental MSS., and the two latter of the Coin Department in the British Museum, for their kindness in revising the proofs and for many valuable suggestions, and also to Mr. Archibald Constable for thoughtful help and for the great care which he has taken in bringing out this monograph. It is also a pleasant duty to render thanks to Sir Joseph Fayrer, K.C.S.I., Sir George Birdwood, K.C.I.E., Colonel P. W. Powlett, C.S.I., Captain C. Herbert, and to many friends, European and Native, dwelling in Rájputána for the aid and support which they have given to me. I wish also to acknowledge my indebtedness to many works on Indian history and antiquities which have been consulted and made use of during the preparation of this volume, and especially to James Prinsep's

"Essays on Indian Antiquities," edited by Edward Thomas; Lieutenant-Colonel James Tod's "Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'hán"; "The Gazetteer of India," by Sir W. W. Hunter, K.C.S.I., C.I.E.; Colonel G. B. Malleon's "Historical Sketch of the Native States of India," and to Mr. Stanley Lane-Poole's works—"The Coins of the Sultáns of Dehli," and "The Coins of the Muhammadan States of India."

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2, PROBY SQUARE,
BLACKROCK, DUBLIN,
May 10th, 1893.

INDEX

- Abár, ancient capital in Mewár, p. 4.
 Ahária, name of, p. 4.
 Ajit of Márwár, coins of, p. 40.
 Ajmere, p. 38, 40.
 Akbar the Great, p. 38, 40, 55.
 " Chitor coin of, p. 7, 8.
 Akolá, town in Mewár, p. 14.
 Alwar currencies, p. 107-115.
 " State, area of, population of,
 revenue of, p. 109
 Alwar State, copper coins of the
 p. 114-115.
 Alwar State, copper coins of Bakhtáwar
 Singh, p. 114.
 Alwar State, copper coins of Bani
 Singh, p. 114.
 Alwar State, copper coins of Mangal
 Singh, p. 115.
 Alwar State, copper coins of Pratáp
 Singh, p. 114.
 Alwar State, copper coins of Sheodan
 Singh, p. 115.
 Alwar State, history of the p. 109.
 " list of the Chiefs of the p. 110.
 " mint of the p. 110.
 " silver coins of Bani Singh,
 p. 111.
 Alwar State, silver coins of Mangal
 Singh, p. 112, 113.
 Alwar State, silver coins of Pratáp
 Singh, p. 111.
 Alwar State, silver coins of Sheodan
 Singh, p. 112.
 Ambér, old capital of Jaipur, p. 71, 72.
 Amir Sháhí, copper coin, Márwár, p. 48.
 Aravalli hills, p. 38.
 Aurangzeb, the Emperor, p. 40, 73.

 Bahrán, the Persian monarch, p. 5.
 Bajrangah rupee, p. 24.
 Baulí of Mewár, coins of, p. 6.
 Báuśwára currencies, p. 31-34.
 " State, area of, population of,
 revenue of, p. 33.
 Báuśwára State, copper coinage of the
 p. 34.

 Báuśwára State, mint of the, p. 33.
 " silver coinage of the
 p. 33, 34.
 Bappa Ráwul, p. 3.
 Baylay, Political Agent, Colonel, p. 13.
 Bayley, C.S., Political Agent, Bikaner,
 p. 60.
 Bhártpur currencies, p. 123-129.
 " copper coinage, p. 128, 129.
 " , Díg rupee, p. 128, 127.
 " rupee struck in A.D. 1856,
 p. 128.
 Bhártpur currencies, rupee struck in
 the name of Akbar 2nd, p. 127.
 Bhártpur currencies, rupee struck in
 the name of Shah 'Alam, p. 127.
 Bhártpur State, area of, population of,
 revenue of, p. 125.
 Bhártpur State, history of the p. 125.
 " list of the Chiefs of
 the p. 125.
 Bhártpur State, mint of the p. 126.
 " silver coinage of the
 p. 126-128.
 Bhártpur State, table showing amount
 of copper coined 1884-1891, p. 129.
 Bhílwára, Mewár, mint at p. 9.
 " modern paisá, p. 15.
 " old mint mark, p. 9.
 " old paisá, p. 14.
 " old rupee, p. 12, 13.
 Bhím Sháhí, copper coins, Márwár,
 p. 47, 48.
 Bhínda, Mewár feudatory, p. 16, 17.
 Bhíndrya paisá, Mewar, p. 17.
 Bijy Sháhí, copper coin, Márwár, p. 47.
 " Singh's gold muhr, Márwár, p. 43.
 " Singh of Márwár, p. 38.
 " Singh's silver coins, Márwár, p. 40,
 44, 45.
 Bikaner currencies, p. 53-63.
 " State, copper coins of the
 p. 63, 63.
 Bikaner State, history of the p. 55, 56.
 " list of the Chiefs of the
 p. 56.

- Bikaner State, mint of the p. 56-60.
 " population of, area of,
 " revenue of, p. 55.
 Bikaner State, silver coins of the
 p. 60-62.
 Bikaner State, table showing amount
 of silver struck, p. 63.
 Bull and horseman coins, p. 6.
 Búndi, copper coinage, p. 88.
 " currencies, p. 83-88.
 " State, area of, population of,
 revenue of, p. 85.
 Búndi State, history of the p. 85.
 " mint of the p. 85, 86.
 " silver coinage, rupee struck
 in name of Akbar 2nd, p. 87.
 Búndi State, silver coinage, Gárah
 sanah rupee, p. 87.
 Búndi State, silver coinage, Katár Sáhi
 rupee, p. 87.
 Búndi State, silver coinage, old háli
 rupee, p. 86.
 Búndi State, silver coinage, Rám Sháhi,
 p. 87.
 Búrhanpúr, battle of p. 91.
 Byás Bishen Rám, p. 39.
- Carlisle, on Mewár coins, p. 6.
 Caulfield, Major J., Political Agent in
 Haráoti, p. 92.
 Chandimpura, in Mewár, p. 5.
 Chandori coins of Bhím Singh of
 Mewár, p. 11.
 Chandori mahr, Mewár, p. 9.
 " rupee, Kishangari State, p. 68.
 " coins of Swarúp Singh of
 Mewár, p. 12.
 Chitor coin of Akbar the Great, p. 7, 8.
 " mint, p. 8.
 " old capital of Mewár, p. 3.
 " old mint marks, p. 9.
 Chitor coins, silver, Mewár, p. 10.
 Chohans, lord of the p. 37.
 Chohan prince, Prithiraj, p. 37.
 Company, East India p. 39.
 Cunningham, Major-General Sir Alex-
 ander, p. 6, 7.
- Deora prince (Chohan), p. 48.
 Dhabú Sáhi, Márwár copper coin,
 p. 47, 48.
 Dhar, Chief of p. 33.
 Dhinglá paisá, Mewár, p. 13, 14.
 " , Saldmba, Mewar, p. 16.
 Dholpur currencies, p. 131-135.
 " State, area of, population of,
 revenue of p. 133.
 Dholpur State, history of the p. 133.
- Dholpur State, mint of the p. 133.
 " silver coinage of the
 p. 133-135.
 Dhúndar or Jaipur, p. 71.
 Dodia, copper coin of Jaisalmer, p. 106.
 Dúnga Singh's copper coin, Bikaner
 State, p. 63.
 Dúnga Singh's silver coins, Bikaner
 State, p. 62.
 Dúngárpur, p. 4, 29-30, 33.
 Dúngárpur State, area of, population
 of, revenue of p. 29.
 Dúngárpur State coinage, p. 29.
 " copper, p. 30.
 " , Maháráwul of p. 29.
- East India Company, Treaty with
 Márwár, p. 39.
- Gadhia coins, p. 5.
 Gaj Singh's copper coins, Bikaner State,
 p. 62.
 Gaj Singh's silver coins, Bikaner State,
 p. 60.
 Ganga Singh's copper coins, Bikaner
 State, p. 63.
 Ganga Singh's silver coins, Bikaner
 State, p. 62.
 Gángroun, p. 91.
 Gehlot, p. 3.
 Gohad, State of Dholpur, p. 133, 135.
 Guhil, Ráwul of Mewár, coins of p. 6.
- Herbert, Capt. C., Political Agent,
 p. 120.
 Humáyún, the Emperor, p. 72.
- Impey, Capt., Political Agent, p. 113.
 Indo-Sassanian coins, p. 4.
 Isvari Singh of Jaipur, silver coins of
 p. 76.
- Jai Singh II, Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur,
 p. 72.
 Jaipur currencies, p. 69-80.
 Jaipur feudatories, p. 81, 82.
 Jaipur State, copper coins, p. 79, 80.
 " , gold coinage of the p. 74-76.
 " , history of the p. 71-73.
 " , list of Chiefs of the p. 73.
 " , mints of the p. 74.
 " , silver coinage of the
 p. 76-79.
 Jaisalmer currencies, p. 101-106.
 Jaisalmer State, area of, population of,
 revenue of p. 103.
 Jaisalmer State, copper coinage of the
 p. 106.

- Jaisalmer State, gold coinage of the p. 104.
 Jaisalmer State, history of the p. 103.
 Jaisalmer State, list of the Chiefs of the p. 103.
 Jaisalmer State, mint of the p. 104.
 Jaisalmer State, silver coinage of the p. 105, 106.
 Jaisalmer State, silver coins struck in the name of Muhammad Shah, p. 105.
 Jaisalmer State, silver coins struck in the name of the Queen, p. 105, 106.
 Jaswant Singh, Mahārāja of Jodhpur, gold muhr of p. 44.
 Jaya Sinha of Kanauj, p. 37.
 Jaychand of Kanauj, coins of p. 39.
 Jehāngir, the Emperor, p. 72, 91.
 Jhālāwār currencies, p. 95-100.
 Jhālāwār State, copper coinage of the p. 100.
 Jhālāwār State, history of the p. 97.
 " mint of the p. 97.
 " silver coinage of the p. 98-100.
 Jhālāwār State, silver coinage, new Madan shāhī, p. 99, 100.
 Jhālāwār State, silver coinage, old Madan shāhī, p. 99.
 Jhāra Pātan, p. 91, 97.
 Jhārāhī, old Jaipur copper coins, p. 79.
 Jodgir, p. 38.
 Jodha of Mārwar, p. 38.
 Jodh Bai, Queen of Akbar, p. 38.
 Jodhpur, see Mārwar, p. 37, 38.
 " mint, p. 41, 42.
 " State, table showing the quantities of gold, silver, and copper coined, 1684-1691, p. 49.
 Jagat Singh of Jaipur, silver coin of p. 57.
 o
 Kanauj, p. 37, 39.
 Karauli currencies, p. 117-122.
 Karauli State, area of, population of, revenue of p. 119.
 Karauli State, copper coinage of the p. 122.
 Karauli State, list of the Chiefs of the p. 119.
 Karauli State, mint of the p. 119, 120.
 Karauli State, silver coinage of the p. 120-122.
 Karauli State, silver coin of Arjan Pāl, p. 121.
 Karauli State, silver coin of Bhanwar Pāl, p. 121.
 Karauli State, silver coin of Madan Pāl, p. 121.
 Karauli State, silver coin of Manak Pāl, p. 120.
 Karauli State, statement showing the amount of silver and copper issued, 1885-1890, p. 122.
 Keari Singh, Takhur of Jaisalmer, p. 104.
 Khetri State, p. 81, 82.
 Khetri State, copper coinage of the p. 82.
 Khetri State, history of the p. 81.
 " mint of the p. 81.
 " silver coinage of the p. 81, 82.
 Khumbo, Rānā of Mewār, coins of p. 6.
 Kishangarh currencies, p. 65-68.
 Kishangarh State, gold coinage of the p. 67.
 Kishangarh State, history of the p. 67.
 " mint of the p. 67.
 " silver coinage of the p. 67, 68.
 Kotah currencies, p. 89-94.
 Kotah State, area of, population of, revenue of p. 91.
 Kotah State, copper coinage of the p. 94.
 Kotah State, gold coinage of the p. 92, 93.
 Kotah State, history of the p. 91.
 " mint of the p. 91, 92.
 " silver coin struck in the name of Muhammad Bīdār Bakht, p. 93.
 Kotah State, silver coin struck in the name of Shah 'Ālam, p. 93.
 Kotah State, silver coin struck in the name of the Queen, p. 93, 94.
 Kūchawan State, p. 49-52.
 " history of the p. 49.
 " list of Takhurs of the p. 50.
 Kūchawan State, silver coins, new, p. 51, 52.
 Kūchawan State, silver coins, old, p. 50, 51.
 Lechman Shāhī, copper coin, Bānswāra State, p. 34.
 Lechman Shāhī, silver coins, Bānswāra State, p. 33.
 Lodorva, ancient capital of the Yadus of Jaisalmer, p. 103.
 Lullūlās rupees, Mārwar, p. 41, 45.
 Macdonald, Mr. A., p. 24.

- Mádhó Sháhí, copper coins, Sháh-pura, Mewár, p. 19.
- Mádhó Singh of Jaipur, copper coin of p. 80.
- Mádhó Singh of Jaipur, muhr of, p. 76.
- " " silver coins of p. 78.
- Mádhú Singh of Jaipur, silver coins of p. 77.
- Mahmád Khán of Málwáh, p. 6.
- Maldeo, Chief of Márwár, p. 38.
- Maráthás, p. 4, 33, 39.
- Martelli, Political Agent, Lieut.-Colonel p. 126.
- Márwár, area of, population of, revenue of p. 37.
- Márwár State, copper coins of the p. 47, 49.
- Márwár State currencies, p. 35-49.
- " gold coinage of the P₄ 43, 44.
- Márwár State, list of the Chiefs of the p. 39.
- Márwár State, mints of the p. 41-43.
- " silver coinage of the p. 44-47.
- Márwár State, silver coins of 1858 and 1863, p. 45.
- Márwár State, silver coins of 1869, p. 46.
- " 1878-1881, p. 47.
- Mewár State, ancient coins of the p. 4-8.
- Mewár State, area of, population of, revenue of p. 3.
- Mewár State, copper coinage of the p. 13-15.
- Mewár State feudatories, p. 16-19.
- " , gold coinage of the p. 9, 10.
- " , history of the p. 3, 4.
- " , list of the Chiefs of the p. 15.
- " , mints of the p. 8, 9.
- " , paisá (trisúdíá), p. 14.
- " , silver coinage of the p. 10-13.
- Muhammad Sháh, copper coin struck in the name of, Jaipur, p. 79.
- Muhammad Sháh, the Emperor, p. 40.
- Mól Ráj of Jaisalmer, p. 103, 104.
- Mundore, p. 38.
- Nadole, p. 38.
- Nagore, p. 38.
- Nagore mint, Márwár, p. 41.
- Narwár, p. 71, 72, 73.
- Nayana Pála, Conqueror of Kanauj, p. 37.
- Nixon, Resident in Mewár, Colonel p. 29, 33.
- Padam Sháhí copper coin, Salúmba, Mewár, p. 16.
- Palí mint, Márwár, p. 41, 42.
- Partábgarh currencies, p. 23-26.
- Partábgarh State, area of, population of, revenue of p. 23.
- Partábgarh State, copper coinage of the p. 26.
- Partábgarh State, mint of the p. 23.
- " old mint marks, p. 23.
- " silver coins of the p. 25.
- Prinsep, James, quoted, p. 6, 24, 49, 51, 57, 76, 82, 86, 92, 114, 121, 122, 127, 128, 129.
- Prithiráj, Chohan prince, p. 37.
- Purihar race, prince of the p. 38.
- Pushpavati, Queen of Siládirya, p. 3.
- Putreserees rupee, Dungárpur State, p. 29.
- Ráhtor race, history of the p. 37-40.
- Rám Singh of Jaipur, copper coin of p. 80.
- Rám Singh of Jaipur, muhr of p. 75.
- " silver coins of p. 77, 78.
- Ratan Singh's copper coins, Bikaner State, p. 63.
- Ratan Singh's silver coins, Bikaner State, p. 61.
- Rururís rupee, Márwár, p. 46.
- Saitrám, grandson of Jaychand, Ráhtor, p. 38.
- Sálim Sháhí rupees, Partábgarh, p. 24, 25, 34.
- Salúmba, copper coin, p. 16.
- " Mewár feudatory, p. 16.
- Sangráam Singh of Mewár, coins of p. 6, 7.
- Seoji, Ráhtor, grandson of Jaychand, p. 38.
- Sesodíá, name of, p. 4.
- Shah 'Alam, the Emperor, p. 40, 43.
- Sháh Jehán, the Emperor, p. 91.
- Sháh-pura, Mewár feudatory, p. 17.
- Sháh-pura State, copper coinage of the p. 19.
- Sháh-pura State, gold coinage of the p. 18.
- Sháh-pura State, list of the Chiefs of the p. 17.
- Sháh-pura State, mint of the p. 17, 18.
- Sháh-pura State, Nahar Singh, present Chief of the p. 18.
- Sháh-pura State, silver coinage of the p. 19.
- Shaikhjí, ancestor of the Shaikawuts, p. 81.

- Sirdar Singh's copper coins, Bikaner State, p. 63.
- Sirdar Singh's silver coins, Bikaner State, p. 61, 62.
- Strobl, astronomer, Father Andreas p. 72.
- Sújat mint, Márwár, p. 41.
- Súrat Singh's copper coins, Bikaner State, p. 62.
- Súrat Singh's silver coins, Bikaner State, p. 61.
- Swarúp Sháhí muhr, Mewar, p. 9, 10.
" silver coins, Mewar, p. 12.
- Takhat Singh of Márwár, p. 42.
" first gold muhr of p. 43.
- Takhat Singh of Márwár, gold muhr of 1869, p. 44.
- Tamachá coins, Dholpur, p. 133-135.
- Tod, Major, p. 5, 38, 85.
- Tod's *Rájast'han*, quoted on early Márwár coins, p. 40.
- Tristúlia paisá, Mewar, p. 14.
- Tunnote, ancient capital of the Yadus of Jaisalmer, p. 103.
- Turscolea rupee, Dúngárpur, p. 29.
- Udaipur, capital of Mewar, p. 3.
" coins, silver, p. 10, 11.
" mint at, p. 8, 9.
" old mint marks, p. 9.
- Udaya Sinha, founder of Udaipur, p. 3.
- Vallabhípara, capital in Sauráshtra, p. 3, 5, 6.
- Vañavira of Mewar, coins of p. 7.
- Vikramáditya, coins of p. 7.
- Walter, Colonel, C.K.M., C.S.I., p. 52.
- Wilder, Mr., Political Superintendent of Ajmere, p. 39, 86, 92.
- Yádu race, p. 103.
- Yavanaswa, p. 37.
- Yodhagiri, p. 38.