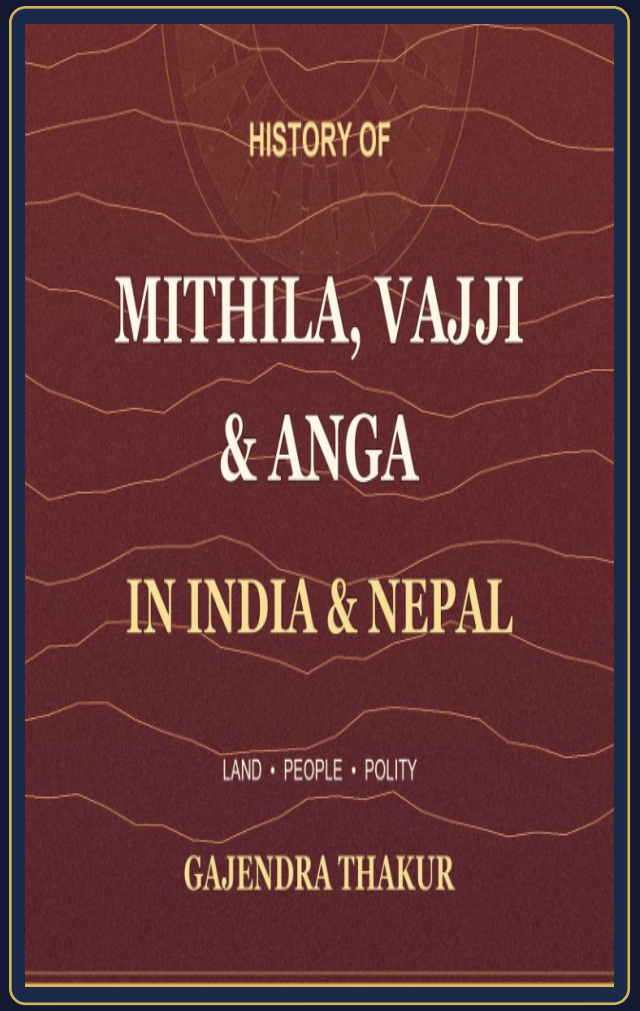



CHAPTER 01

# Region, rivers, names, and method

A source-controlled history · prehistory & protohistory

Gajendra Thakur | Videha



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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–5 — **A historical region, not a timeless border**

02 §6–10 — **Periodization without sharp walls**

03 §11–15 — **Avulsion and the instability of apparently fixed geography**

04 §16–20 — **Vajji and Anga are not subdivisions of one timeless…**

05 §21–25 — **Asynchronous change and the problem of period labels**

25 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 1–3

# A historical region, not a timeless border

### A historical region, not a timeless border

Mithila, Vajji, and Anga belong to different kinds of historical geography.

### Water as archive and agent

The Himalayan rivers that cross the Tarai and north Bihar deposit silt, abandon channels, flood settlements, and erase or bury archaeological surfaces.

### Rules of evidence

Archaeological strata establish material sequences, not ethnic labels.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Archaeological strata establish material sequences, not ethnic labels.



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# Three spatial scales

### Three spatial scales

The narrative moves among three scales that should not be confused.

### Names as historical evidence

A place name is evidence, but it is never self-interpreting.

### Periodization without sharp walls

The five-volume division is an editorial instrument, not a claim that social life changed everywhere at one date.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The five-volume division is an editorial instrument, not a claim that social life changed everywhere at one date.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# The modern border as an analytical problem

### The modern border as an analytical problem

The India-Nepal boundary is indispensable for the history of modern sovereignty, citizenship, law, censuses, and infrastructure.

### A source-controlled research practice

No single class of source can carry this regional history. Archaeological reports require attention to trenches, layers, sampling, and later disturbance.

### The Himalayan foreland as a historical problem

The north Bihar plain and the adjoining Nepal Tarai form part of the Himalayan foreland, a zone in which relief, sediment supply, monsoon discharge, and low downstream…

SOURCE INSIGHT

For the history developed in this book, the Himalayan foreland therefore has to be treated simultaneously as terrain, archive, and agent.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# River types, megafans, and interfan plains

**River types, megafans, and interfan plains**

The distinction between mountain-fed and smaller foothill- or plains-fed rivers is especially important for avoiding a generic history of “the flood.” Large Himalayan…

**Avulsion and the instability of apparently fixed geography**

Channel avulsion—the abandonment of one course in favour of another—is not a marginal exception in the north Bihar plains.

**Alluvium, site formation, and archaeological visibility**

Alluvial landscapes complicate the relation between where people lived and where archaeologists can now see them.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The implication is particularly important for attempts to map ancient Mithila, Vajji, or Anga from selected excavated places.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 13–15

# Historical geography is a reconstruction, not a recovered political map

**Historical geography is a reconstruction, not a recovered political map**

Historical geography combines topography, texts, archaeology, epigraphy, routes, settlement distributions, and later records in order to reconstruct spatial relationships…

**Modern orientation without retrospective boundaries**

Readers need modern geographical reference points even when the object of study predates modern states.

**Videha, Mithila, Tirabhukti, and Tirhut: related names with different histories**

The names Videha, Mithila, Tirabhukti, and Tirhut are connected in regional historical writing, but the connection should not be flattened into permanent synonymy.

SOURCE INSIGHT

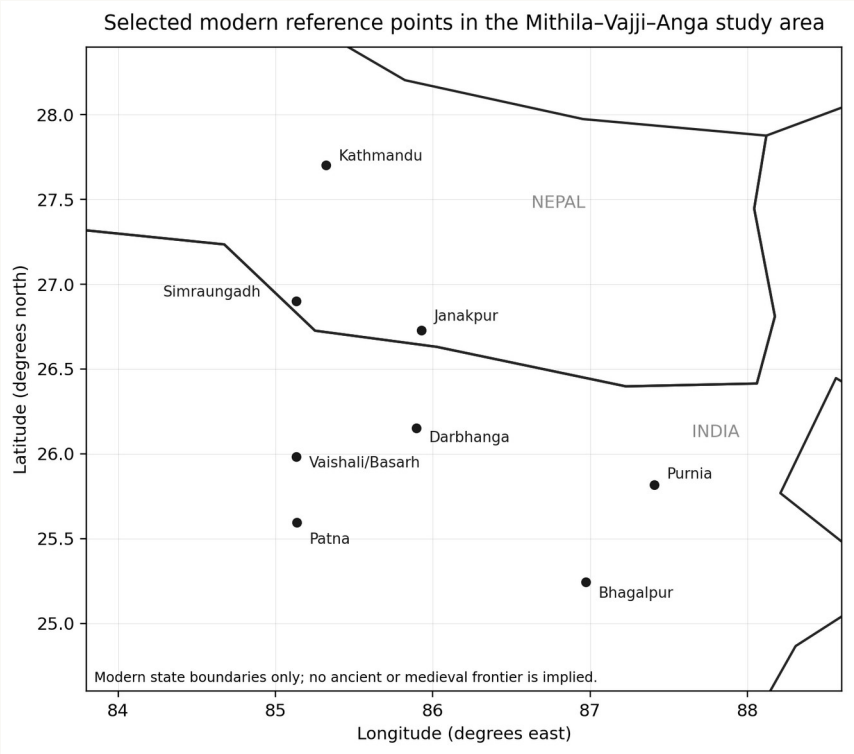
For this reason the book uses each term where the source warrants it.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Map 1. Selected present-day reference points used for orientation in this book. Modern state boundaries are…




FROM THE BOOK

Map 1. Selected present-day reference points used for orientation in this book. Modern state boundaries are shown only to locate places; no frontier of Videha, Vajji, Anga, Mithila, or Tirhut is implied.

Editorial map prepared for this book, 2026. Underlying country polygons: Natural Earth 1:110m public-domain cultural vectors; selected point locations checked against…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# Vajji and Anga are not subdivisions of one timeless Mithila

**Vajji and Anga are not subdivisions of one timeless Mithila**

Vajji and Anga enter the record through different political and textual histories.

**Routes, crossings, and nodal places**

Political boundaries alone are poor guides to regional connectivity.

**The modern border after Sugauli**

The international boundary between India and Nepal has a history that must be dated rather than projected backward.

SOURCE INSIGHT

For earlier centuries, that line is anachronistic.



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# Colonial and archaeological maps are historical arguments

### Colonial and archaeological maps are historical arguments

Maps made under colonial rule or early archaeological survey are invaluable sources, but they are not transparent windows onto ancient geography.

### The three spatial scales, supplemented by corridor and borderland

The three spatial scales defined above—site, historical region, and state—remain the book's basic hierarchy.

### Asynchronous change and the problem of period labels

The volume divisions used in this book organize a large manuscript; they are not claims that all institutions changed simultaneously.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This is particularly important at transitions conventionally called ancient-medieval, medieval-early modern, colonial-modern, and postcolonial-contemporary.



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# Uneven archives on the two sides of a modern border

**Uneven archives on the two sides of a modern border**

The evidentiary record is institutionally uneven.

**Evidence hierarchy without a single privileged source**

The governing principle of this book is source control, but source control does not mean that one class of evidence is always superior.

**Rules for maps and spatial claims in this book**

Four cartographic rules follow from the method. First, every map must state its date or the date-range of the evidence from which it is reconstructed.

SOURCE INSIGHT

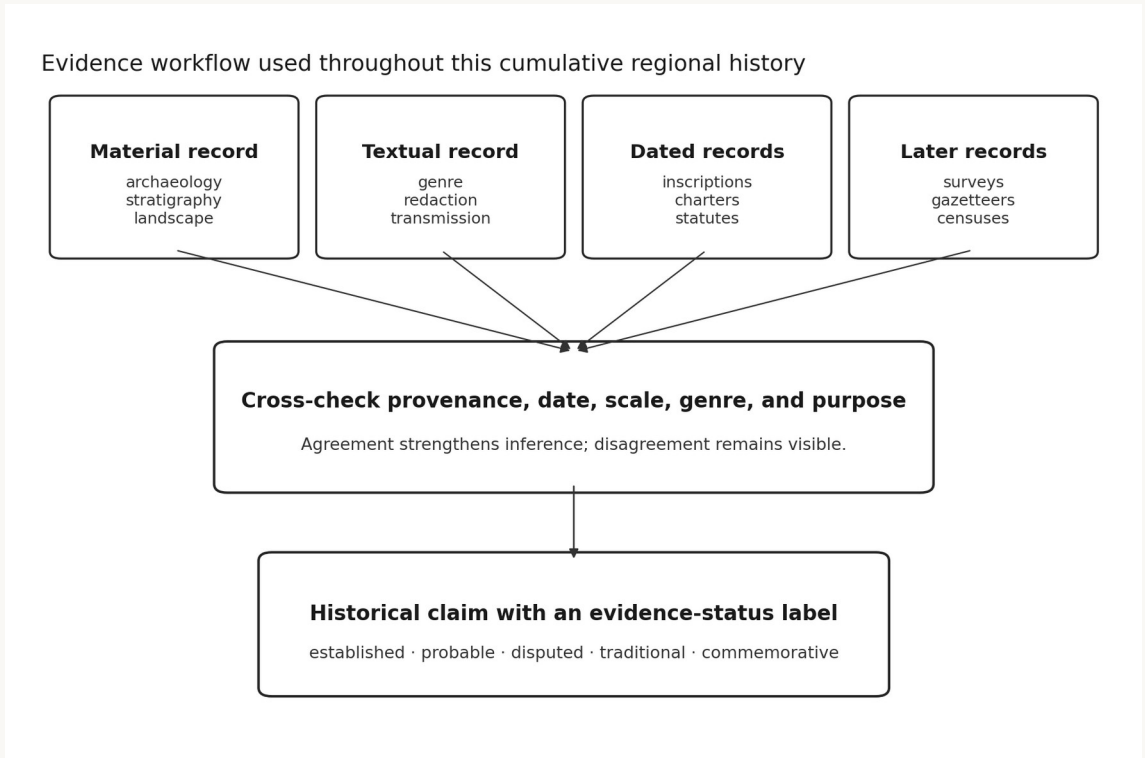
A related rule concerns names. Where historical sources use variant forms—Vesali/Vaishali, Campa/Champa, Tirabhukti/Tirhut, Koshi/Kosi—the map and caption should indicate the convention being…



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 1. Evidence-status sequence used throughout the book.




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 1. Evidence-status sequence used throughout the book.

Original editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026. It summarizes the source-control method stated in this chapter; it is not itself...



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# Questions carried forward into the remaining volumes

**Questions carried forward into the remaining volumes**

This opening chapter establishes the questions that the rest of the book repeatedly asks.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The cumulative approach means that these questions are not settled once and forgotten.



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# What this chapter establishes

### Evidence hierarchy without a single privileged source

The governing principle of this book is source control, but source control does not mean that one class of evidence is always superior.

### Rules for maps and spatial claims in this book

Four cartographic rules follow from the method. First, every map must state its date or the date-range of the evidence from which it is reconstructed.

### Questions carried forward into the remaining volumes

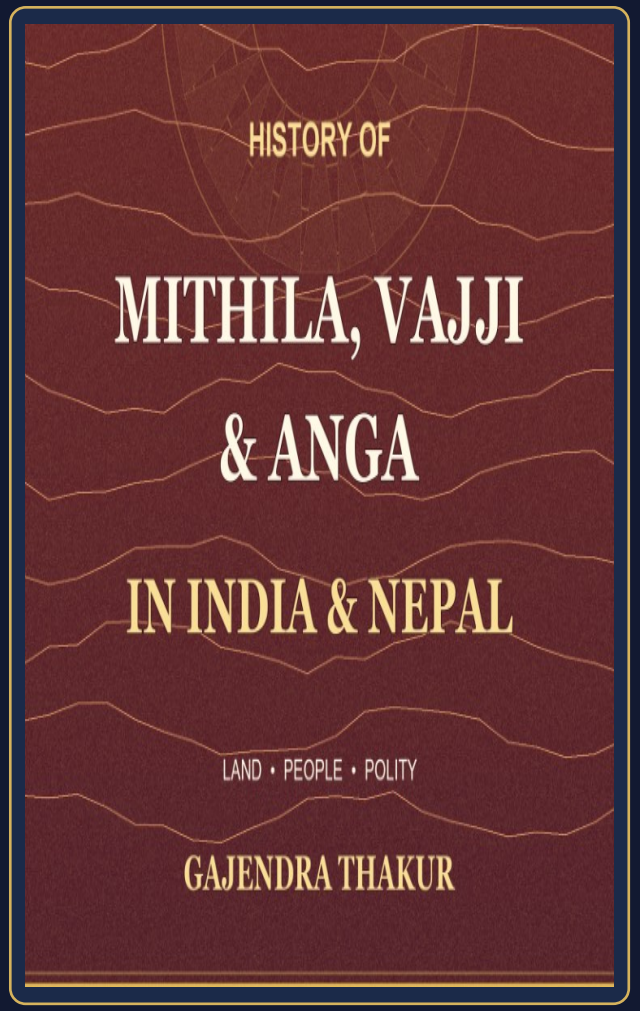
This opening chapter establishes the questions that the rest of the book repeatedly asks.

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 02

# Archaeology and early food production

A source-controlled history · prehistory & protohistory

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–4 **Regional evidence and its limits**

02 §5–9 **Chirand in regional comparison**

03 §10–14 **A confluence-zone site and a problem of modern river…**

04 §15–19 **Plant remains: what is directly established**

05 §20–24 **From “agricultural revolution” to overlapping lifeways**

24 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# Regional evidence and its limits

### Regional evidence and its limits

The prehistory of the wider middle Gangetic plain is reconstructed from unevenly investigated sites, ceramics, plant and animal remains, lithic industries, and…

### Food production without a single origin story

The archaeological record supports changing combinations of cultivation, herding, fishing, hunting, and gathering.

### From objects to social history

Pottery types and tool assemblages help establish sequence and exchange, but social hierarchy, language, and political identity require independent evidence.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Pottery types and tool assemblages help establish sequence and exchange, but social hierarchy, language, and political identity require independent evidence.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 4–6

# How archaeological deposits are made

### How archaeological deposits are made

An archaeological layer is the outcome of occupation, rebuilding, refuse disposal, erosion, flooding, burrowing, cultivation, and later construction.

### Chirand in regional comparison

Chirand should be treated as a major regional sequence rather than as a solitary origin point.

### Plants, animals, and household economies

Plant remains provide direct evidence for species present in an archaeological context, but they do not by themselves reveal the proportion of diet, the ownership of…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Plant remains provide direct evidence for species present in an archaeological context, but they do not by themselves reveal the proportion of diet, the ownership of…



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# Chronology as a range

### Chronology as a range

Archaeological chronology is strongest when stratigraphic order, diagnostic artefacts, and several scientific dates converge.

### What early farming does not establish

Evidence for cultivation does not establish the language, ethnicity, or later political allegiance of the cultivators.

### Excavation history is part of the evidence

Chirand became a foundational site for the archaeology of the middle Gangetic plain through repeated excavation rather than through a single discovery event.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

That publication history matters because observations appeared at different stages of investigation.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# A confluence-zone site and a problem of modern river description

### A confluence-zone site and a problem of modern river description

Even the site's modern river description illustrates why Chapter 1's geographical method is necessary.

### The five-period sequence and the meaning of “Neolithic”

The 1970-71 Archaeological Survey review reported five cultural periods at Chirand and identified Period I as Neolithic.

### Bone and antler as a major technological archive

Verma's preliminary publication emphasized the exceptional range of bone and antler working at Chirand.

SOURCE INSIGHT

From such an assemblage it is reasonable to infer skilled production and repeated knowledge transmission.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 13–15

# Ceramics, stone, and the danger of reading identity from artefact style

### Ceramics, stone, and the danger of reading identity from artefact style

The Neolithic deposits also contained ceramic and lithic evidence.

### A combined evidence inventory rather than a reconstructed village scene

The strongest social history emerges when material classes are compared in context rather than converted into an illustrative village tableau.

### Plant remains: what is directly established

Vishnu-Mittre's archaeobotanical study reported food-plant remains from the Neolithic horizon at Chirand including rice, barley, lentil, and field pea (Pisum arvense)...

SOURCE INSIGHT

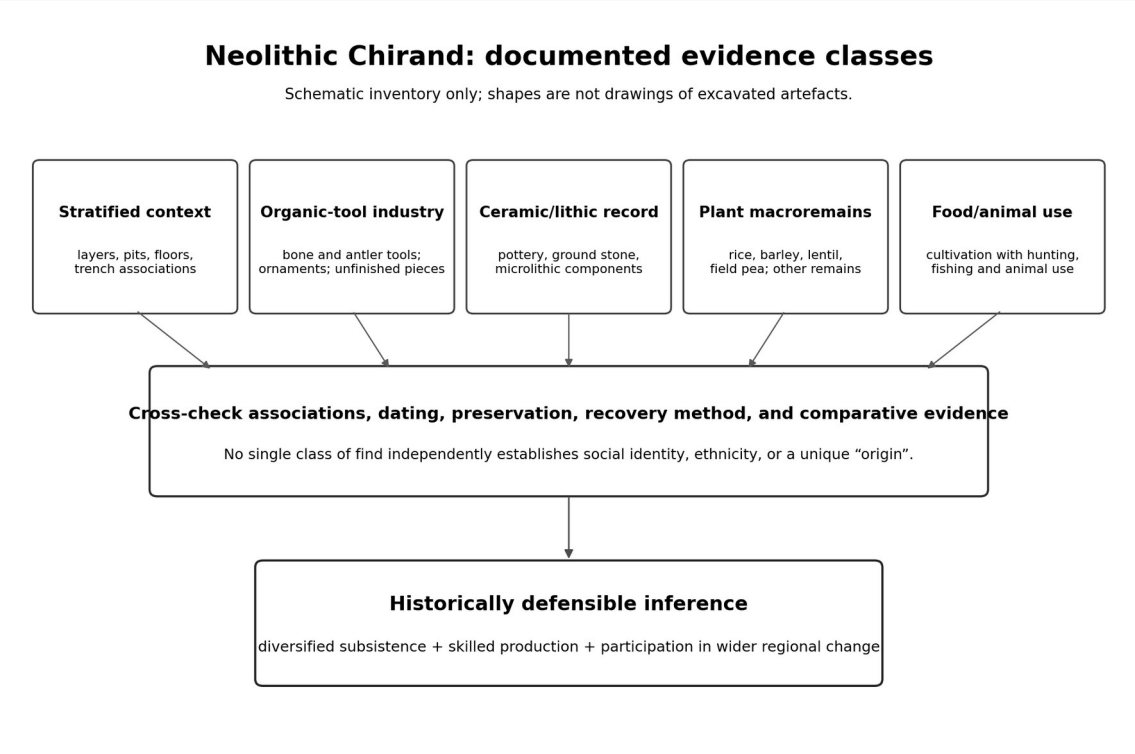
Plant identification, however, does not automatically determine field size, yield, ownership, the proportion of each crop in the diet, or the gender of the people who cultivated and processed it.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 2. Evidence classes used to reconstruct Neolithic Chirand. This is an analytical schematic, not a…




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 2. Evidence classes used to reconstruct Neolithic Chirand. This is an analytical schematic, not a reconstruction of a prehistoric village or a drawing of recovered objects.

Original editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026. Evidence categories summarized from Verma, Vishnu-Mittre, and related excavation…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# Rice cultivation, domestication, and the wider Ganga debate

**Rice cultivation, domestication, and the wider Ganga debate**

Rice occupies a central place in debates about early food production in the Ganga plain, but three propositions must be separated: gathering wild rice, cultivating rice…

**The radiocarbon series: measurement, inversion, and legacy conventions**

The early Tata Institute date list is indispensable because it publishes sample identifiers, trench and layer information, depths, measured conventional radiocarbon ages…

**Why the old BC numbers are not modern calibrated dates**

The 1973 Radiocarbon paper states that its listed BP ages used the Libby half-life of 5,568 years and a 1950 reference point for the accompanying BC/AD conversions; the…

SOURCE INSIGHT

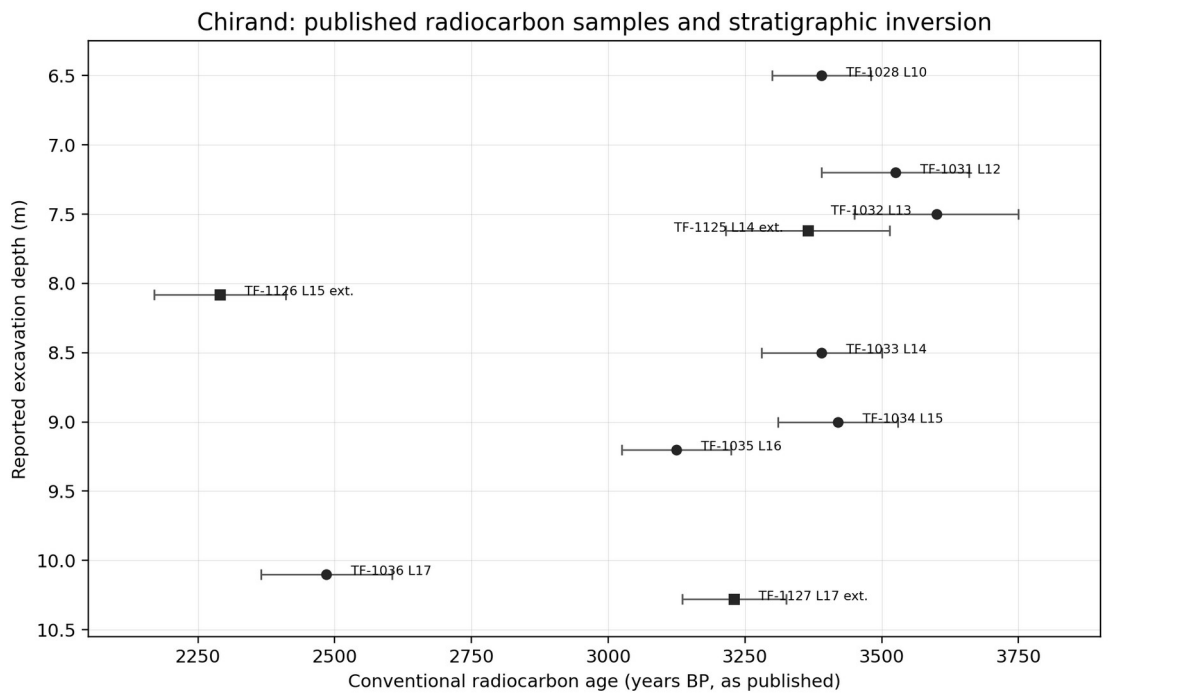
Modern calibration requires the original radiocarbon determination, uncertainty, material and context information, and an appropriate calibration curve.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 3. Chirand radiocarbon samples plotted against reported excavation depth. The graph visualizes the…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 3. Chirand radiocarbon samples plotted against reported excavation depth. The graph visualizes the laboratory authors' warning that deeper samples below Layer 14 show mix-up; it must not be read as a calibrated…

Original editorial graph prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026. Data transcribed from D. P. Agrawal and Sheela Kusumgar, “Tata Institute Radiocarbon…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# Senuwar and comparison within Bihar

### Senuwar and comparison within Bihar

Senuwar in the Kaimur region provides an important comparative sequence because it was excavated with attention to early farming, material culture, plant economy, and…

### From “agricultural revolution” to overlapping lifeways

A recent geoarchaeological synthesis of more than a hundred studies emphasizes that Mesolithic and Neolithic occupations in the Ganga plain overlap substantially in time.

### Households, labour, and the limits of social reconstruction

Archaeological deposits are rich in the products of work but poor in named workers.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This restraint is especially important because ethnographic analogies can become circular: a modern division of labour is assumed for the past and then cited as evidence for the antiquity of that…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# Preservation, recovery, and what earlier excavations could miss

### Preservation, recovery, and what earlier excavations could miss

The kinds of evidence recovered from an excavation depend partly on field and laboratory method.

### Chirand in public heritage and the distinction between site and story

The Bihar Directorate of Archaeology lists Chirand among the state's protected and excavated archaeological sites and identifies the Chirand excavation report among its…

### Research priorities for the expanded edition

A future book should treat Chirand as a test case for transparent archaeological synthesis.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Such work would not simply lengthen the chapter.



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# What this chapter establishes

### Preservation, recovery, and what earlier excavations could miss

The kinds of evidence recovered from an excavation depend partly on field and laboratory method.

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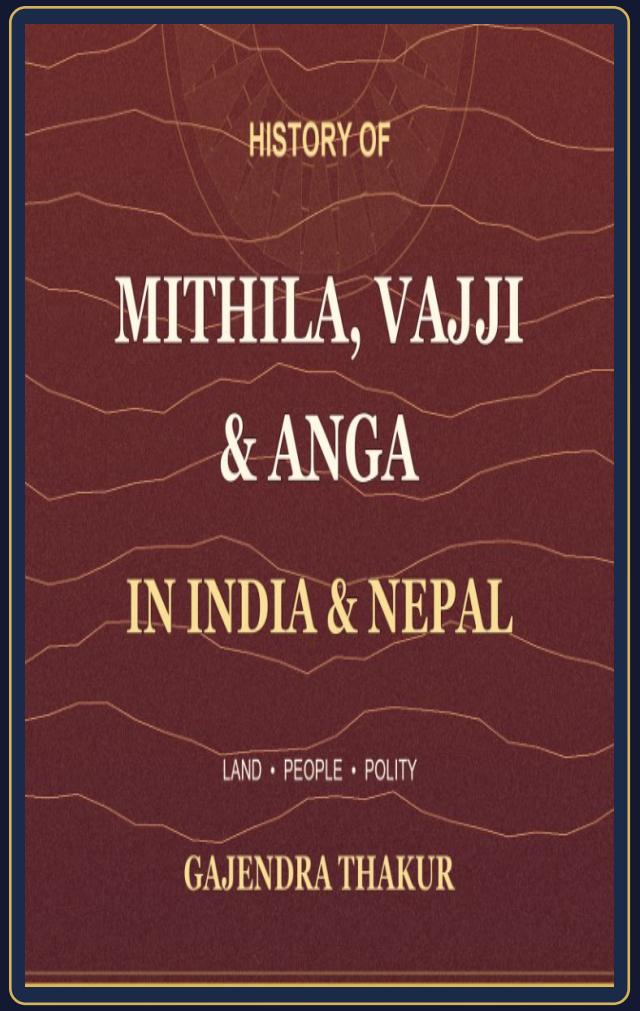
A future book should treat Chirand as a test case for transparent archaeological synthesis.

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 03

# Late prehistoric and early iron-using horizons

A source-controlled history · prehistory & protohistory

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–6 — **A long transition**

02 §7–12 — **Texts and material sequences**

03 §13–19 — **Black-and-red ware: a firing category with a long history**

04 §20–25 — **Fortification as labour, defence, and political display**

05 §26–32 — **Writing, seals, and administrative visibility**

32 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# A long transition

### A long transition

Across the middle Gangetic plain, the later second and first millennia BCE saw changes in settlement density, ceramics, metal use, and cultivation.

### Ceramic labels are chronological tools

Black-and-red ware, northern black polished ware, and other ceramic categories are archaeological classifications.

### Protohistory and restraint

The threshold between prehistory and history is uneven because writing, recoverable inscriptions, and datable textual references appear gradually.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The threshold between prehistory and history is uneven because writing, recoverable inscriptions, and datable textual references appear gradually.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 4–6

# Iron within a larger technological system

### Iron within a larger technological system

Iron mattered because it expanded the range of durable edges, points, fittings, and implements available to communities, but its effects depended on access to ore, fuel…

### Settlement growth and political concentration

Larger settlements and denser site distributions can indicate demographic growth, intensified production, exchange, and administrative concentration.

### Exchange before coinage

Long-distance movement did not begin with minted money.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Long-distance movement did not begin with minted money.



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# Texts and material sequences

**Texts and material sequences**

Vedic and later texts cannot simply be laid over a pottery map.

**The threshold of the early-historic city**

Northern Black Polished Ware, increasing settlement complexity, coinage, inscriptions, and textual references form part of the evidentiary horizon within which early…

**The “Iron Age” is an archaeological period label, not a people**

The term Iron Age is convenient only when its scale is specified.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The term Iron Age is convenient only when its scale is specified.



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# How the chronology debate changed

### How the chronology debate changed

Older syntheses often placed the effective beginning of iron use in the Gangetic region close to the opening centuries of the first millennium BCE and then linked its…

### Why an early date elsewhere cannot date Mithila or Anga

A comparative date is not a regional date. Tewari’s excavated sites are in present Uttar Pradesh, and their chronology cannot be transferred automatically to north Bihar…

### Iron use, forging, and smelting are different archaeological propositions

The archaeological vocabulary of metallurgy should be kept precise. A finished iron artefact establishes use or deposition.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

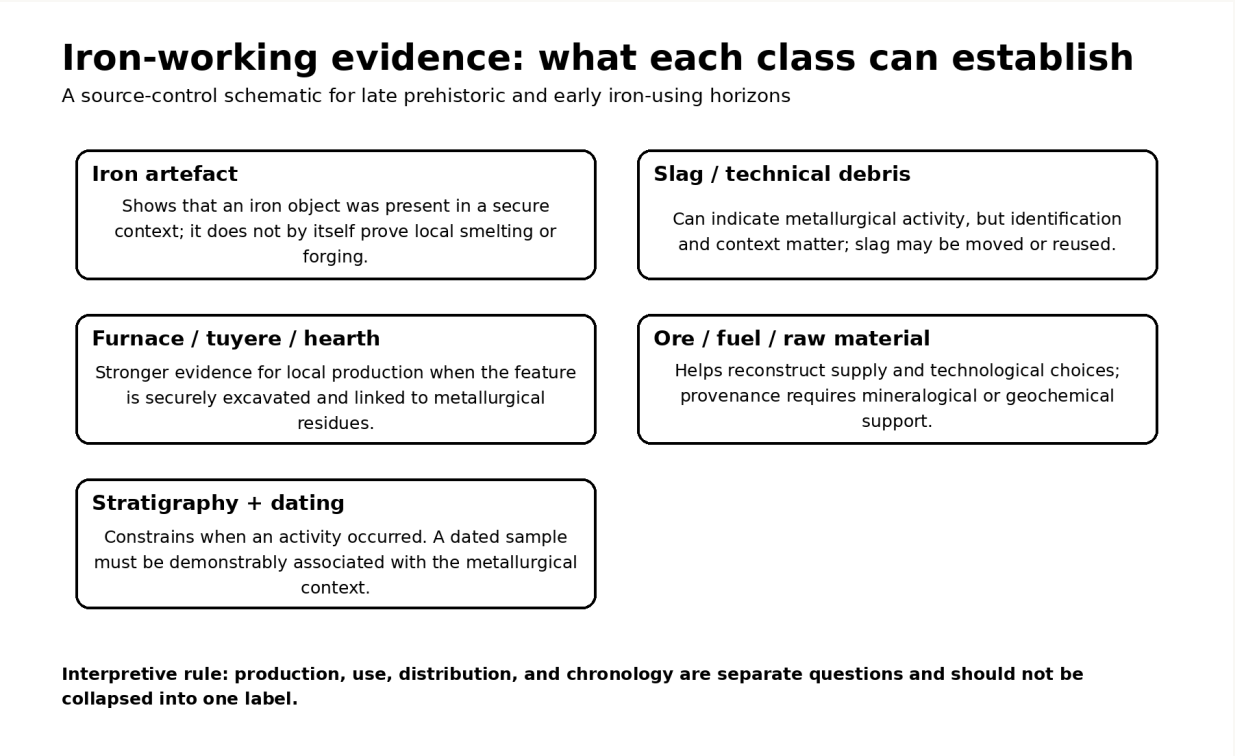
The archaeological vocabulary of metallurgy should be kept precise. A finished iron artefact establishes use or deposition.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 4. Iron-working evidence hierarchy. The diagram distinguishes what an artefact, slag or technical…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 4. Iron-working evidence hierarchy. The diagram distinguishes what an artefact, slag or technical debris, production features, raw-material evidence, and stratigraphic dating can each establish. It is an…

Original editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026. Conceptual distinctions synthesized from Chakrabarti, Tewari, and the…



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# Black-and-red ware: a firing category with a long history

**Black-and-red ware: a firing category with a long history**

Black-and-red ware (BRW) is especially vulnerable to over-interpretation because its name sounds like a bounded archaeological culture while describing a visible ceramic…

**Painted Grey Ware is a comparative horizon, not the template for the east**

Painted Grey Ware (PGW) has been central to archaeological discussion of the upper Ganga-Yamuna plain, especially because excavations at sites such as Hastinapura and…

**Northern Black Polished Ware: name, technology, and distribution**

Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) is a fine ceramic category whose highly finished surface attracted archaeological attention early in the discipline’s history.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) is a fine ceramic category whose highly finished surface attracted archaeological attention early in the discipline’s history.



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# A fine ware is not a universal social class marker

**A fine ware is not a universal social class marker**

The fineness and lustre of NBPW have often encouraged the label “luxury” or “elite” ware.

**Bihar within the NBPW archaeological field**

The NBPW horizon is directly relevant to Bihar because early and later archaeological literature records the ware at major sites including Rajgir, Patna, Sonepur...

**Ceramic horizons and political geography should not be collapsed**

It is tempting to map the spread of NBPW directly onto the expansion of Magadha because the ware is prominent in the Ganga plain during the period in which Magadhan power...

SOURCE INSIGHT

It is tempting to map the spread of NBPW directly onto the expansion of Magadha because the ware is prominent in the Ganga plain during the period in which Magadhan...



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# From site size to settlement hierarchy

### From site size to settlement hierarchy

The growth of larger settlements is one of the central archaeological changes of the first millennium BCE, but size by itself is not equivalent to urbanism.

### Fortification as labour, defence, and political display

Ramparts, ditches, gates, and defensive walls are among the most visible signs of concentrated labour in early historic archaeology.

### Iron and forest clearance: from master cause to testable mechanism

A major historiographical model linked iron axes and ploughshares to forest clearance, agricultural surplus, social stratification, and the rise of states in the middle…

SOURCE INSIGHT

A major historiographical model linked iron axes and ploughshares to forest clearance, agricultural surplus, social stratification, and the rise of states in the…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# Agrarian intensification was a social process

**Agrarian intensification was a social process**

Cultivation expands only through people, institutions, and access to land and water.

**Craft specialization without imagining modern factories**

Iron working, fine pottery, bead production, carpentry, textiles, construction, and food processing all required learned skills.

**Exchange networks before and alongside coined money**

The first-millennium BCE expansion of exchange should not be dated solely by the first coin found in a trench.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The first-millennium BCE expansion of exchange should not be dated solely by the first coin found in a trench.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–27

# Punch-marked coins: strong evidence, careful chronology

**Punch-marked coins: strong evidence, careful chronology**

Punch-marked coins are important to the threshold of the early historic period because they provide material evidence for monetized transactions, political or mercantile…

**Writing, seals, and administrative visibility**

Writing changes the surviving archive because names, titles, donations, ownership claims, religious formulae, and administrative acts can become materially recoverable.

**The “second urbanization” as a historiographical term**

Historians often use “second urbanization” for the emergence and growth of towns in the Ganga plain during the first millennium BCE, distinguishing it from the much…

SOURCE INSIGHT

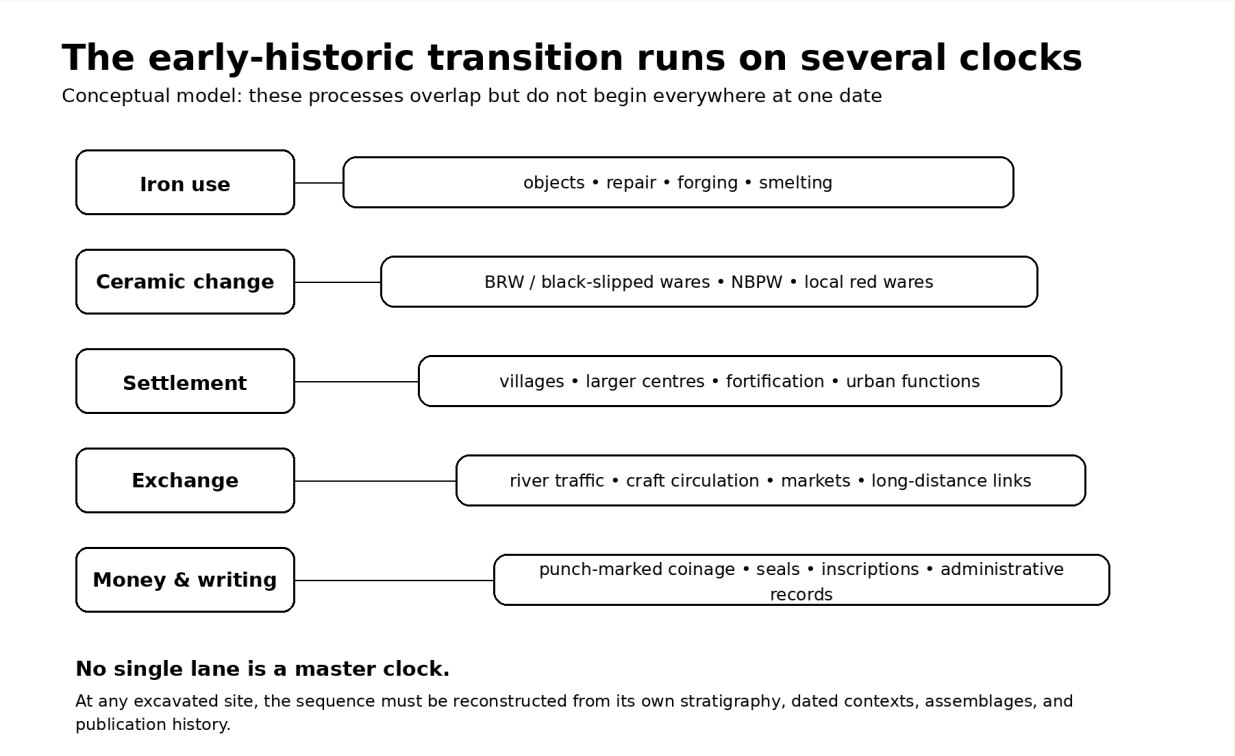
Historians often use “second urbanization” for the emergence and growth of towns in the Ganga plain during the first millennium BCE, distinguishing it from the much…



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 5. The early-historic transition runs on several clocks. Iron use, ceramic change, settlement…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 5. The early-historic transition runs on several clocks. Iron use, ceramic change, settlement growth, exchange, and money/writing overlap but do not begin everywhere at one date. The diagram deliberately has no…

Original editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026. Analytical model synthesized from Erdosy, Chakrabarti, Singh, and Kanungo et al.....



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Urbanism and inequality

**Urbanism and inequality**

Urban growth redistributed opportunities and burdens.

**Rivers as infrastructure in the eastern Gangetic transition**

The regional geography developed in Chapters 1 and 2 becomes especially important as settlement and exchange intensify.

**Textual geography enters a material landscape already in motion**

As texts begin to name eastern polities and communities more frequently, they encounter a material landscape whose settlement, technology, and exchange had already been…

SOURCE INSIGHT

As texts begin to name eastern polities and communities more frequently, they encounter a material landscape whose settlement, technology, and exchange had already…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 31–32

# The archive becomes denser, not complete

### The archive becomes denser, not complete

By the early historic centuries the historian possesses more kinds of evidence than for the Neolithic: iron and other metals, refined ceramics, settlement hierarchies, fortifications, coins, seals, inscriptions, literary…

### A research programme for the full Chapter 3 edition

A publication-scale expansion should build a site-by-site database for Bihar and the Nepal Tarai recording phase names, calibrated and uncalibrated dates, ceramic frequencies, iron artefacts, slag, furnaces or tuyeres…

SOURCE INSIGHT

A publication-scale expansion should build a site-by-site database for Bihar and the Nepal Tarai recording phase names, calibrated and uncalibrated dates, ceramic…



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# What this chapter establishes

### Textual geography enters a material landscape already in motion

As texts begin to name eastern polities and communities more frequently, they encounter a material landscape whose settlement, technology, and exchange had…

### The archive becomes denser, not complete

By the early historic centuries the historian possesses more kinds of evidence than for the Neolithic: iron and other metals, refined ceramics, settlement…

### A research programme for the full Chapter 3 edition

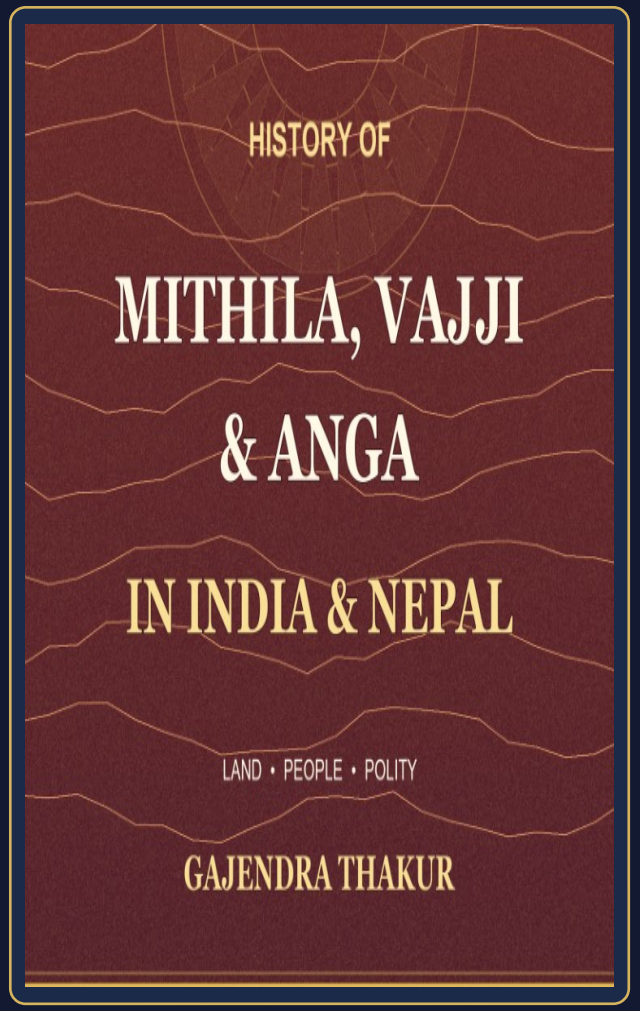
A publication-scale expansion should build a site-by-site database for Bihar and the Nepal Tarai recording phase names, calibrated and uncalibrated dates…

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 04

# Environment, mobility, and settlement

A source-controlled history · prehistory & protohistory

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–4 — **Floodplains and piedmonts**

02 §5–9 — **Seasonality and the organization of work**

03 §10–14 — **Megafans and interfan plains are different…**

04 §15–19 — **Wetlands were neither wastelands nor permanent lakes**

05 §20–24 — **Remote sensing expands the field of view but does not…**

24 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 1–3

# Floodplains and piedmonts

### Floodplains and piedmonts

North Bihar and the Nepal Tarai combine Himalayan piedmont, alluvial fans, active channels, wetlands, and older floodplain surfaces.

### Mobility alongside village life

Fishing, herding, seasonal movement, woodland use, and river transport continued alongside settled cultivation.

### The environmental caution

Neither flood nor drought is purely 'natural' in its historical effects.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Neither flood nor drought is purely 'natural' in its historical effects.



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# A connected river system

### A connected river system

The northern tributaries of the Ganga descend rapidly from Himalayan catchments, cross the piedmont, and spread across low-gradient plains.

### Seasonality and the organization of work

Monsoon rainfall and river regimes shaped calendars of sowing, harvesting, fishing, grazing, building, and movement.

### Piedmont, plain, and wetland

The Tarai and Gangetic plain should not be reduced to one environmental zone.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Tarai and Gangetic plain should not be reduced to one environmental zone.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# Visibility and the map of known sites

**Visibility and the map of known sites**

The distribution of recorded sites reflects modern investigation as well as ancient settlement.

**Adaptation without environmental determinism**

Rivers and soils constrained possibilities, but they did not dictate a single social outcome.

**The foreland is an archive of moving sediment**

The north Bihar plain and the Nepal Tarai form part of the Himalayan foreland, a low-gradient depositional system in which water and sediment move from mountain…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The surface visible today is also not a single-age landscape.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# Megafans and interfan plains are different archaeological settings

**Megafans and interfan plains are different archaeological settings**

The Kosi and Gandak are major Himalayan rivers with extensive fan-shaped depositional bodies in the foreland.

**The Kosi and the problem of the “westward sweep”**

A familiar historical narrative described the Kosi as having shifted progressively westward across its megafan over the last two centuries.

**The Baghmati shows why “river mobility” has several forms**

The Baghmati provides a useful contrast because its middle reaches in north Bihar occupy an interfan setting between the Kosi and Gandak megafans.

SOURCE INSIGHT

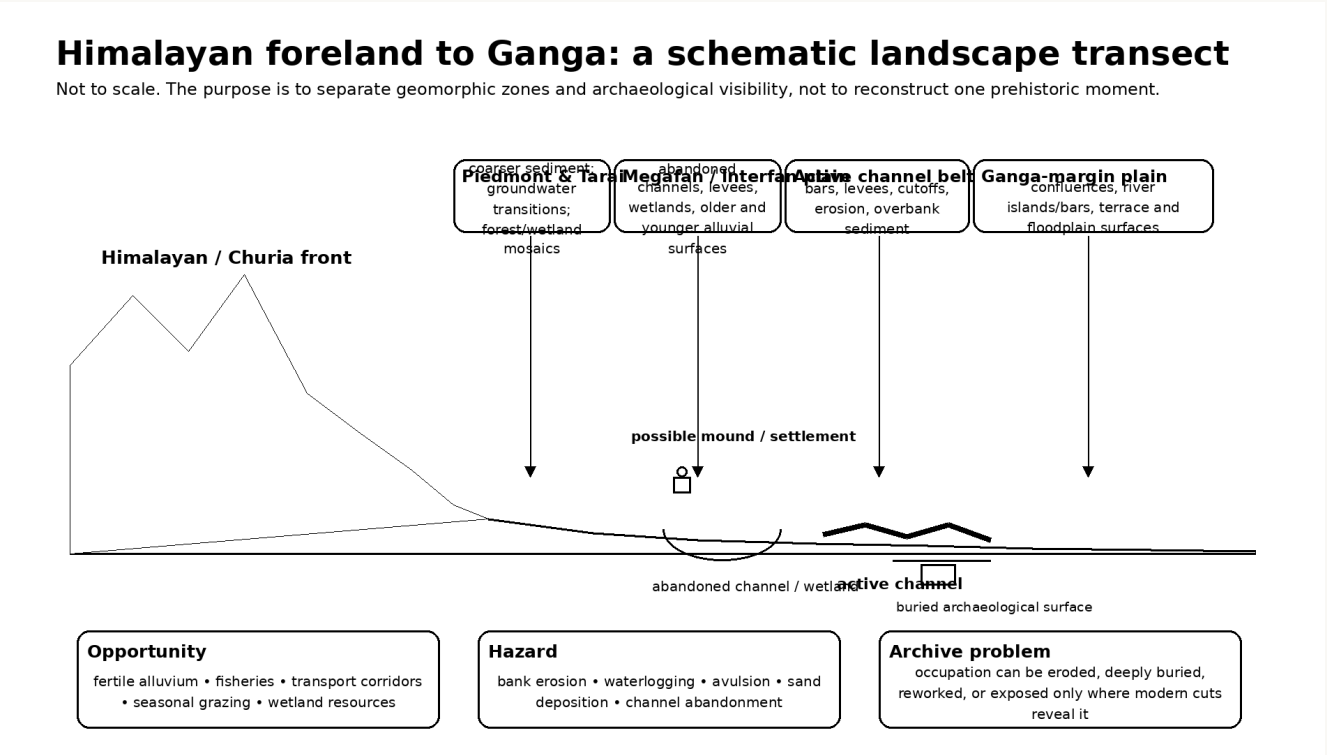
A historical geography that labels every abandoned channel simply “old Kosi” or treats every multi-channel reach as braiding would therefore erase process differences.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 6. Himalayan foreland to Ganga: schematic landscape transect. The diagram separates piedmont/Tarai…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 6. Himalayan foreland to Ganga: schematic landscape transect. The diagram separates piedmont/Tarai, megafan or interfan plain, active channel belt, and Ganga-margin settings while showing how the same alluvial…

Original editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026. Analytical synthesis based on Sinha and Friend, Singh, Parkash, and Gohain, and Sinha…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 13–15

# Subsurface architecture makes absence especially difficult to prove

**Subsurface architecture makes absence especially difficult to prove**

Electrical-resistivity soundings, borehole records, and drill cores from the Kosi and Gandak megafans show substantial vertical and lateral variation in gravel, sand, and…

**Landform age and settlement age must be dated independently**

An “older alluvial surface” is a geomorphic category, not a direct archaeological period.

**Wetlands were neither wastelands nor permanent lakes**

Backswamps, abandoned channels, marshes, seasonally inundated depressions, and shallow groundwater zones are recurring components of the north Bihar-Tarai alluvial…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Wetlands also complicate archaeological preservation.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# Seasonality links environment to labour without fixing one social model

**Seasonality links environment to labour without fixing one social model**

Monsoon seasonality creates recurrent but variable rhythms of cultivation, grazing, fishing, transport, house repair, craft production, and movement.

**Microtopography can matter more than a regional average elevation**

On a very low-gradient plain, small differences in elevation can affect drainage, flood duration, and access to a channel.

**The Tarai is an ecological gradient, not an ancient international margin**

The Tarai connects Himalayan foothills with the Gangetic plain through changing belts of coarse piedmont sediment, groundwater emergence, forest, grassland, wetlands…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The archaeological record is also institutionally divided by that boundary.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# Climate and tectonics are mechanisms, not automatic explanations

**Climate and tectonics are mechanisms, not automatic explanations**

Monsoon variability, Himalayan sediment supply, local subsidence or tilting, earthquakes, and autogenic river processes can all influence channel behaviour.

**Remote sensing expands the field of view but does not date a feature**

Satellite imagery and digital elevation models can reveal abandoned channels, levees, fan lobes, drainage anomalies, and large mounds across areas far larger than a…

**From occupation to published site: the visibility filter**

Between ancient occupation and the modern distribution map lie several filters.

SOURCE INSIGHT

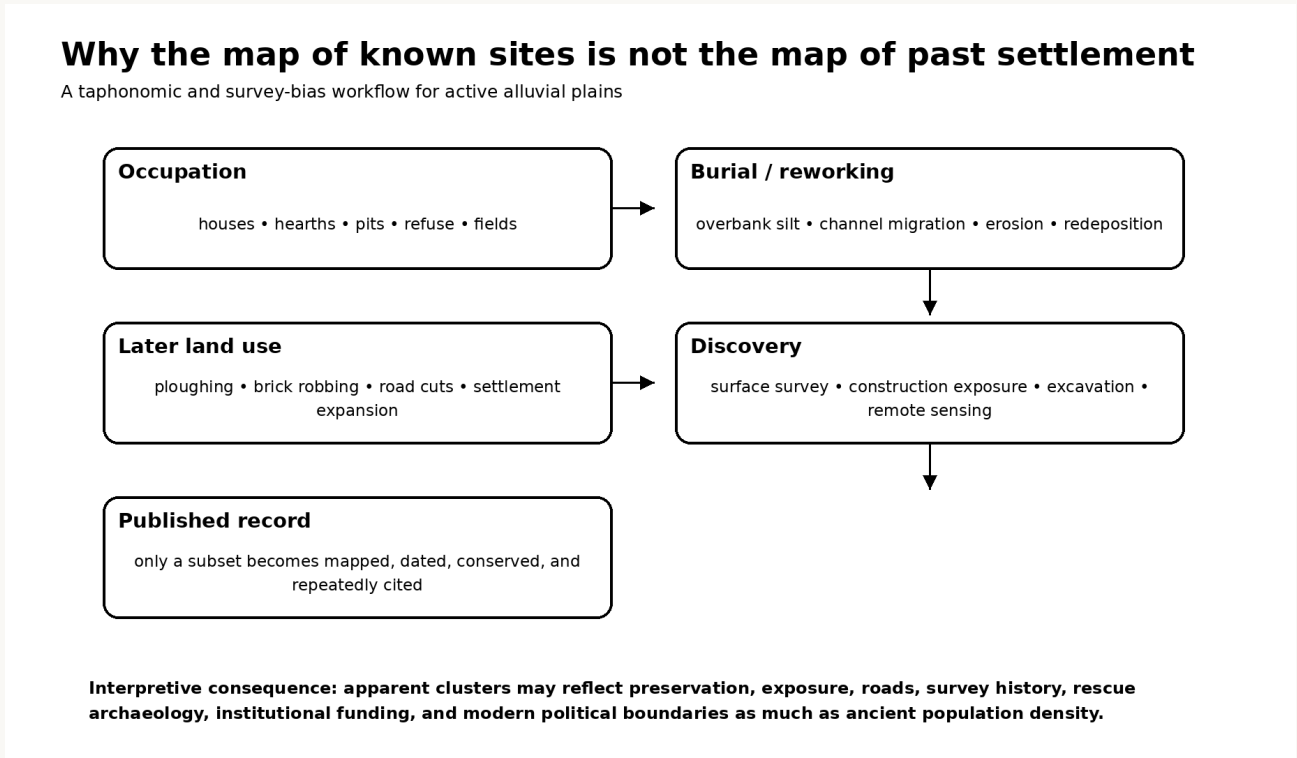
A rigorous settlement study should therefore record the denominator as well as the numerator: how much area was surveyed, by what method, in what season, with what visibility, and with what criteria…



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 7. Why the map of known sites is not the map of past settlement. The workflow shows how occupation…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 7. Why the map of known sites is not the map of past settlement. The workflow shows how occupation evidence can be altered by burial and reworking, later land use, discovery conditions, and publication…

Original editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026. Analytical synthesis informed by the geomorphic and historical-mapping methods of…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# Environmental risk is socially distributed

**Environmental risk is socially distributed**

The physical probability of inundation is only one component of historical risk.

**Resilience without evolutionary ranking**

A mixed economy of cultivation, fishing, herding, gathering, craft, and mobility should not be described as an incomplete stage on the way to fully settled agriculture.

**What Chapter 4 establishes**

The strongest conclusion is not a single map of prehistoric settlement but a method for reconstructing one.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Accordingly, later chapters use environmental evidence in three disciplined ways. First, landform and channel reconstructions are dated independently wherever possible.



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# What this chapter establishes

### Environmental risk is socially distributed

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### What Chapter 4 establishes

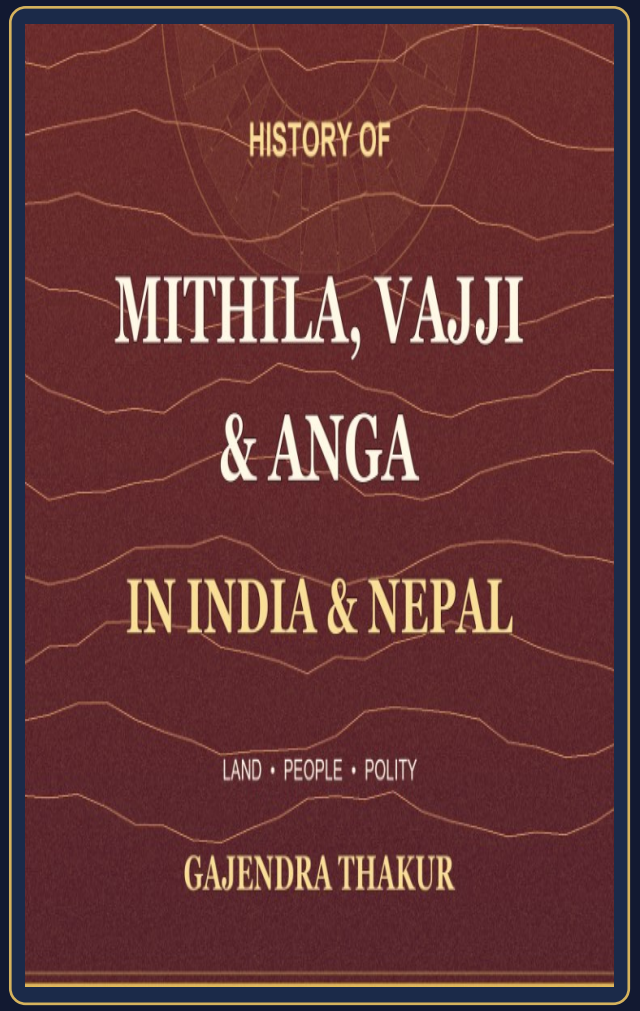
The strongest conclusion is not a single map of prehistoric settlement but a method for reconstructing one.

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 05

# Videha in Vedic and Upanishadic textual worlds

A source-controlled history · ancient mithila, vajji & anga

Gajendra Thakur | Videha



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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–4 — Sources, recensions, and the limits of a textual…

02 §5–9 — The Sadanira and disputed historical geography

03 §10–14 — Cattle, gold, and the political economy of learned…

04 §15–19 — Maitreyi, wealth, immortality, and the household threshold

05 §20–24 — Videha, Kuru-Panchala, and interregional intellectual…

24 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 1–3

# Sources, recensions, and the limits of a textual chronology

### Sources, recensions, and the limits of a textual chronology

Chapter 5 rests principally on two related but differently transmitted Vedic corpora: the Satapatha Brahmana of the White Yajurveda and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad that…

### Videgha Mathava and the east

Satapatha Brahmana 1.4.1 narrates an eastward movement in which Videgha Mathava and the priest Gotama Rahugana follow Agni Vaisvanara from the region of the Sarasvati…

### Reading Satapatha Brahmana 1.4.1 as a ritual-political narrative

The sequence of the passage is deliberately meaningful. Videgha Mathava is not presented as an isolated pioneer.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Ritual texts also work by etiological explanation: they explain why a practice, place, boundary, or social distinction is as it is.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 4–6

# Fire, land, and the danger of a literal clearance model

### Fire, land, and the danger of a literal clearance model

Older historical writing sometimes converted Agni's eastward burning into a straightforward description of Vedic settlers destroying primeval forest and opening virgin…

### The Sadanira and disputed historical geography

The Sadanira is commonly identified with the Gandak, but the equation is a scholarly reconstruction rather than an identification supplied by the text itself.

### Kosala, Videha, and a boundary that is textual before it is cartographic

The Satapatha passage is important because it does more than narrate motion: it places Kosala and Videha in a relationship across the Sadanira.

SOURCE INSIGHT

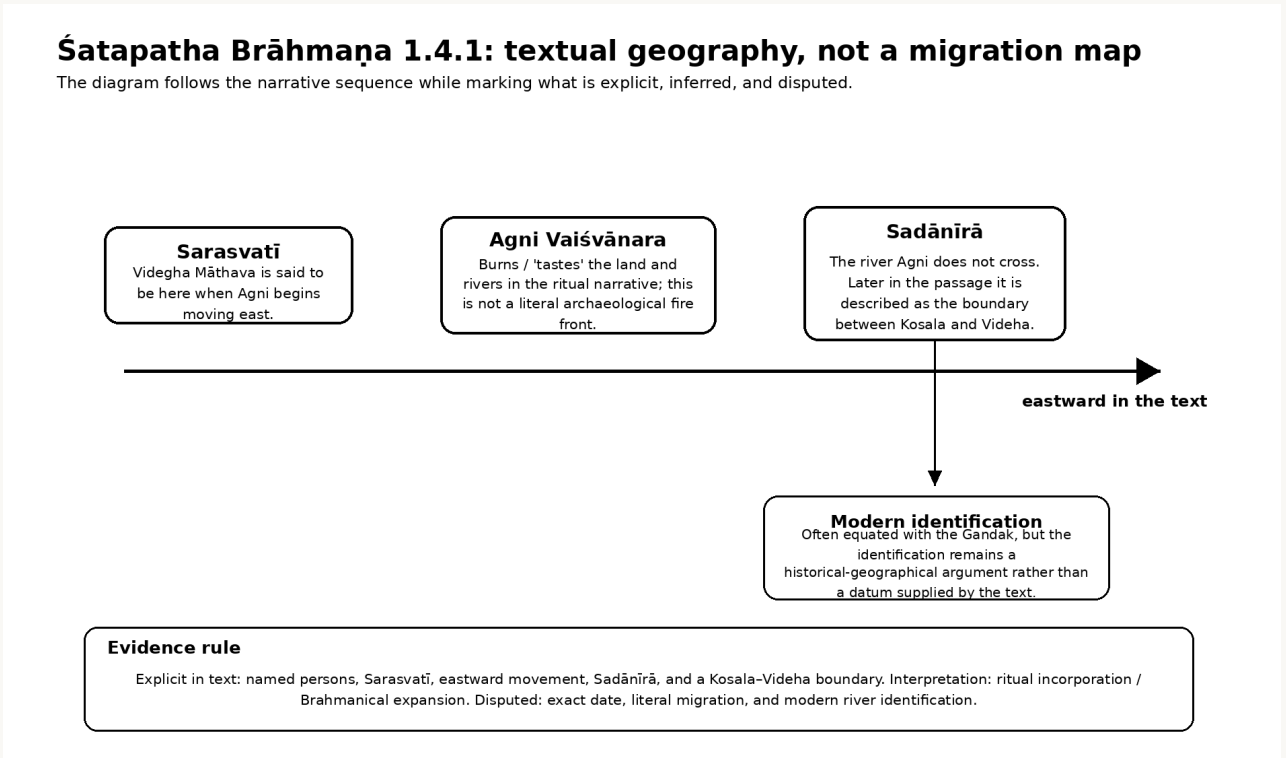
The later history of the region makes the caution especially necessary. Videha, Mithila, Tirabhukti, Tirhut, and modern administrative units belong to different periods.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 8. Satapatha Brahmana 1.4.1 as textual geography. The diagram follows the narrated sequence from...




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 8. Satapatha Brahmana 1.4.1 as textual geography. The diagram follows the narrated sequence from Sarasvati through eastward movement to the Sadanira and separates explicit textual statements from later...

Editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026. Primary textual basis: Satapatha Brahmana 1.4.1 in Julius Eggeling, trans., The Satapatha-Brahmana, Part I...



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# Vedic schools and the making of an eastern textual world

### Vedic schools and the making of an eastern textual world

Vedic texts were transmitted through schools, or sakhas, whose histories are central to reconstructing the movement of ritual knowledge.

### The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad as a composite historical source

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is one of the earliest and largest Upanishads and survives within both major recensions of the Satapatha Brahmana.

### Janaka's sacrificial court as an arena of knowledge

Brihadaranyaka 3 places Janaka of Videha at a sacrifice attended by Brahmins from the Kuru and Panchala regions.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The presence of Kuru-Panchala Brahmins at a Videhan royal sacrifice is historically suggestive without being a travel register.



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# Cattle, gold, and the political economy of learned prestige

**Cattle, gold, and the political economy of learned prestige**

The cattle and gold attached to the contest are not decorative details.

**Brahmodya, debate, and literary performance**

The questioning of Yajnavalkya belongs to a wider Vedic culture of brahmodya: competitive or formalized exchanges concerning ritual and ultimate knowledge.

**Janaka and Yajnavalkya: patron, interlocutor, and learner**

The fourth book of the Brihadaranyaka repeatedly brings Janaka and Yajnavalkya into direct dialogue.

SOURCE INSIGHT

It would nevertheless be too strong to conclude that the historical government of Videha was organized by philosopher-kings or that every Janaka personally authored Upanishadic doctrine.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 13–15

# Kingship, ritual authority, and negotiated hierarchy

**Kingship, ritual authority, and negotiated hierarchy**

Later Vedic literature repeatedly explores the relationship between king and priest because neither authority is fully reducible to the other.

**Gargi Vachaknavi and the visibility of women in philosophical debate**

Gargi Vachaknavi appears as a formidable interlocutor in the third book of the Brihadaranyaka, where her questions address the structure of the cosmos and the imperishable.

**Maitreyi, wealth, immortality, and the household threshold**

The Maitreyi dialogue shifts the setting from royal competition to household transition.

SOURCE INSIGHT

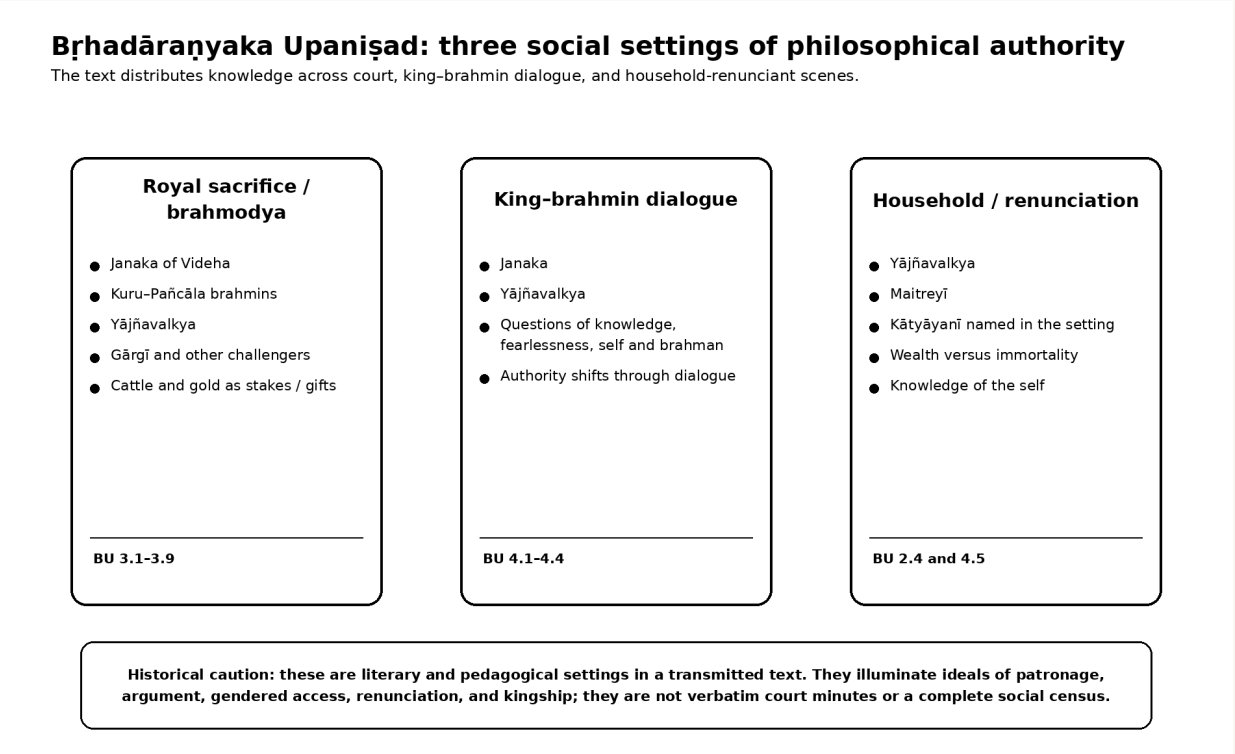
The dialogue should not be mined for a complete law of women's property. It is a literary-philosophical scene, and its duplicated transmission complicates biographical use.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 9. Three social settings of philosophical authority in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: royal sacrifice…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 9. Three social settings of philosophical authority in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: royal sacrifice and debate, Janaka-Yajnavalkya dialogue, and the Maitreyi household-renunciation scene. The diagram is…

Editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026, from the textual arrangement in Patrick Olivelle, The Early Upanisads: Annotated Text and Translation, with…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# Women, philosophical speech, and the limits of representativeness

### Women, philosophical speech, and the limits of representativeness

Gargi and Maitreyi occupy different social positions in the literary architecture: one speaks in a competitive public assembly and the other in a household conversation…

### Yajnavalkya as textual persona rather than secure biography

Yajnavalkya dominates large portions of the Brihadaranyaka and is associated with the White Yajurvedic tradition more broadly.

### 'Janaka' as name, title, and dynastic memory

The Janaka problem is similar. Vedic and later literature uses Janaka in ways that have often been harmonized into the biography of a single philosopher-king. The…

SOURCE INSIGHT

This does not make the association between Janaka and Videha historically meaningless.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# Philosophical content as social history: self, brahman, and the imperishable

**Philosophical content as social history: self, brahman, and the imperishable**

The philosophical doctrines debated in the Brihadaranyaka are themselves historical evidence.

**Videha, Kuru-Panchala, and interregional intellectual circulation**

The Brihadaranyaka repeatedly links Videha to learned persons associated with Kuru-Panchala.

**Videha and the 'Greater Magadha' debate**

Johannes Bronkhorst's influential model of 'Greater Magadha' argues that the eastern region in which Buddhism, Jainism, Ajivikism, and related ideas developed possessed…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Its geographical and ideological unity should not, however, be treated as settled fact.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# Archaeology cannot be made to illustrate the text by force

### Archaeology cannot be made to illustrate the text by force

The temptation to correlate the Videgha narrative with a particular ceramic horizon, iron horizon, or wave of settlement is strong because Volume I has already described…

### Sacred geography, historical geography, and later Mithila memory

Later Mithila traditions have understandably treated the Vedic and Upanishadic prominence of Videha as part of a deep regional intellectual ancestry.

### What Chapter 5 establishes, and what it leaves open

Established at the level of textual evidence: the Satapatha Brahmana represents Videgha Mathava, Gotama Rahugana, Agni, and the Sadanira within an eastward ritual…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Strong scholarly inference: these texts preserve the historical significance of eastern expansion, interregional movement of Vedic specialists, royal patronage of learned institutions, and…



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# What this chapter establishes

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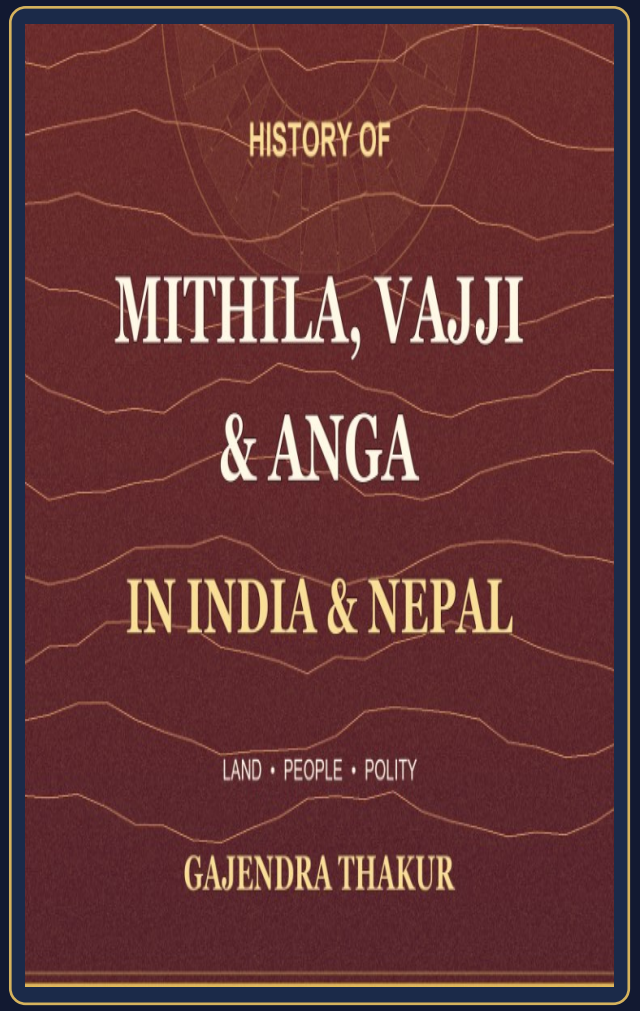
**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 06

# Janaka, Sita, and the discipline of reading tradition

A source-controlled history · ancient mithila, vajji & anga

Gajendra Thakur | Videha



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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–7 — Epic geography and living memory

02 §8–14 — Critical edition, received text, and what "the Ramayana"...

03 §15–21 — Genealogy is a claim within a text

04 §22–28 — The fire ordeal, exile, and the danger of one timeless...

05 §29–36 — Painting Sita: visual tradition as reception history

36 analysed sections · 3 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# Epic geography and living memory

### Epic geography and living memory

The Ramayana associates Sita with Janaka and Mithila, and Janakpur became a major centre of pilgrimage and regional identity.

### Multiple textual lives

The Ramayana developed through a long history of composition, transmission, commentary, vernacular retelling, and performance.

### Why the distinction matters

Separating devotion from event-history does not diminish cultural importance.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Separating devotion from event-history does not diminish cultural importance.



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# Epic time and historical time

### Epic time and historical time

Epic narrative arranges persons, kingdoms, journeys, and moral choices within a meaningful story world.

### Many Ramayanas and regional authorship

The Ramayana tradition has never been confined to one unchanged text.

### Sita, gender, and ethical argument

Sita has served as an image of devotion, endurance, sovereignty, agricultural fertility, suffering, and resistance.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Sita has served as an image of devotion, endurance, sovereignty, agricultural fertility, suffering, and resistance.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Figure 1. Janaki Mandir in Janakpur, photographed in 2015. The modern temple materializes continuing…



FROM THE BOOK

Figure 1. Janaki Mandir in Janakpur, photographed in 2015. The modern temple materializes continuing Sita-Rama sacred geography; it is not archaeological evidence for epic chronology.

Photograph: Bijaya2043, 3 March 2015. CC BY-SA 4.0. Source record: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Janaki_Temple_Janakpur-Janakpur030315_MG_36680059.jpg...



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# Janakpur as a historical sacred centre

### Janakpur as a historical sacred centre

Janakpur's importance is securely documentable as a centre of pilgrimage, ritual, artistic production, and Mithila identity, even though the physical localization of...

### Critical edition, received text, and what "the Ramayana" means

A historical use of the Ramayana begins by specifying which text is being read. The Baroda Oriental Institute's critical edition did not recover an author's autograph.

### Epic Mithila and the discipline of relational geography

In the Balakanda, Mithila is a royal and ritual centre associated with Janaka.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This distinction is especially important because later pilgrimage landscapes localize many Ramayana episodes with great specificity.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# Janaka in the epic is not automatically the Upanishadic Janaka

**Janaka in the epic is not automatically the Upanishadic Janaka**

Chapter 5 examined Janaka of Videha in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad as a patron and participant in philosophical debate.

**Sita in the furrow: name, narrative, and agricultural symbolism**

In the Balakanda, Janaka recounts that Sita was found when he was ploughing a sacrificial field.

**Vaidehi, Maithili, Janaki: geography carried in epithets**

Sita is repeatedly identified through relational epithets: Vaidehi links her to Videha, Maithili to Mithila, and Janaki to Janaka.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Such epithets are not cadastral evidence. Their historical importance lies in the durable association they create between Sita and a remembered regional world. The distinction helps explain why…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 13–15

# The bow episode: valor, marriage, and narrative sovereignty

### The bow episode: valor, marriage, and narrative sovereignty

The marriage episode is often called a swayamvara in modern retelling, but the critically edited Balakanda more specifically emphasizes Janaka's condition that Sita is to…

### Marriage as interdynastic connection, not merely private romance

The Ramayana wedding narrative links royal houses rather than isolating Rama and Sita as a private couple.

### Genealogy is a claim within a text

The Balakanda gives genealogical material for royal houses.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A source-controlled regional history therefore does not use the epic genealogies to fill gaps in an archaeological chronology.



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# Balakanda and the problem of later strata

### Balakanda and the problem of later strata

The Balakanda is indispensable for Mithila because it contains the major narrative complex of Janaka, Sita's origin, the bow, and the wedding.

### Epic chronology: why precision is misleading

The date of the Valmiki Ramayana has been debated through language, meter, social institutions, intertextual comparison, and the history of manuscript transmission.

### Many Ramayanas: plurality is part of the history

The Ramayana tradition is plural not only because manuscripts vary but because authors, performers, communities, and religious traditions repeatedly re-narrated the story.

SOURCE INSIGHT

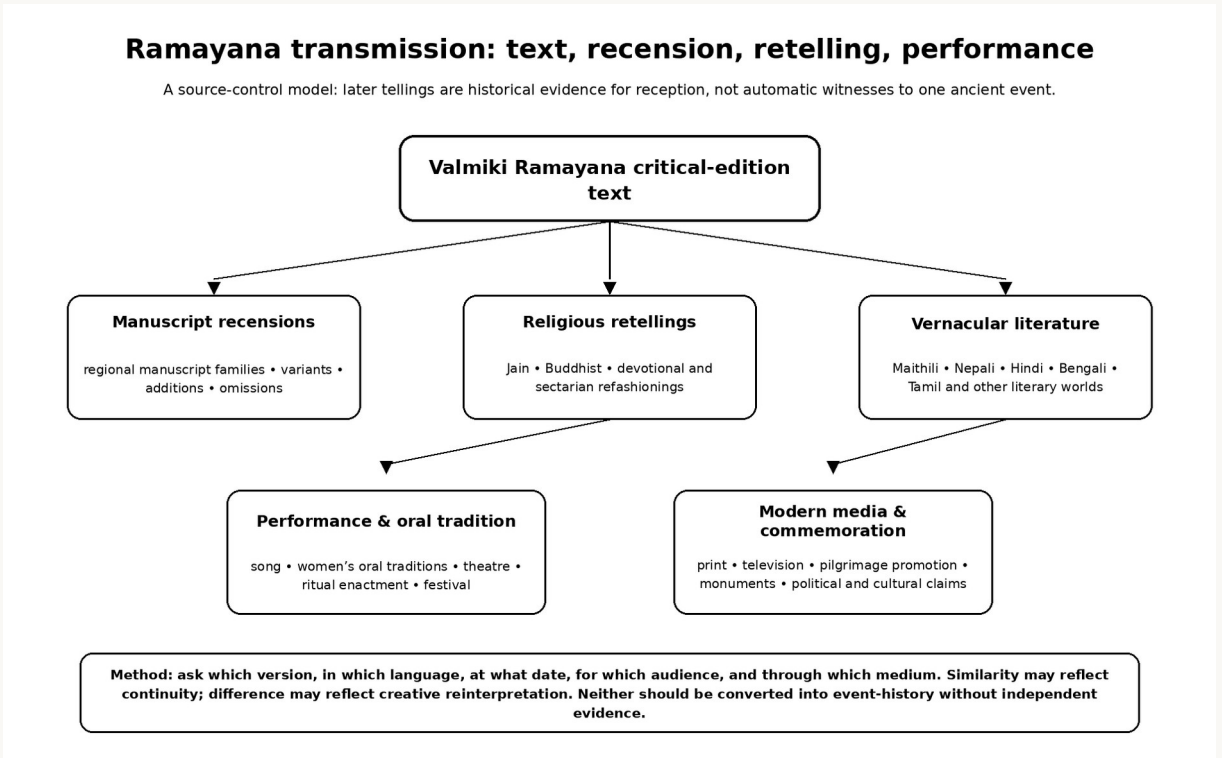
For regional history, this plurality has two consequences.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 10. Ramayana transmission as a field rather than a single line of copying. The diagram separates the…




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 10. Ramayana transmission as a field rather than a single line of copying. The diagram separates the critically edited Sanskrit text from manuscript recensions, religious retellings, vernacular literature…

Editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026. Analytical framework based on the textual-critical introduction to Goldman 1984, the comparative approach of Richman…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# Jain and Buddhist tellings: comparison without harmonization

### Jain and Buddhist tellings: comparison without harmonization

Jain and Buddhist Rama narratives belong to distinct religious and literary histories.

### Vernacularization and the expansion of Sita's regional lives

The Rama story moved through regional literary languages and performance traditions over many centuries.

### Sita and the history of gendered interpretation

Sita has been read as devoted wife, autonomous moral agent, wronged queen, daughter of earth, emblem of endurance, and figure of resistance.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A gender history must distinguish representation from lived social condition.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# The fire ordeal, exile, and the danger of one timeless Sita

### The fire ordeal, exile, and the danger of one timeless Sita

Episodes associated with Sita's ordeal by fire and, in the Uttarakanda, her later exile and return to the earth became central to ethical debate.

### Women's oral traditions and counter-voices

A. K. Ramanujan, Velcheru Narayana Rao, and other contributors to Many Ramayanas drew attention to tellings in which women sing, reinterpret, or re-center episodes from...

### Janakpur as sacred geography rather than automatic event-site

Janakpur is securely historical as a living centre of Sita-Rama pilgrimage, temple patronage, festival, urban identity, and Maithil culture.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The 2008 Ram Janaki Temple entry on UNESCO's Tentative List was submitted by Nepal's Department of Archaeology.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–27

# Janaki Mandir: modern monument, layered historical claim

### Janaki Mandir: modern monument, layered historical claim

The extant Janaki Mandir is a major monument in the modern sacred landscape of Janakpur.

### Vivah Panchami: annual performance of a remembered marriage

Vivah Panchami annually celebrates the marriage of Rama and Sita at Janakpur and draws pilgrims into a ritual landscape in which epic narrative becomes public procession...

### Ponds, routes, and the accumulation of sacred place

Janakpur's sacred landscape includes temples, ponds, ritual routes, and named locations associated by tradition with the Ramayana.

SOURCE INSIGHT

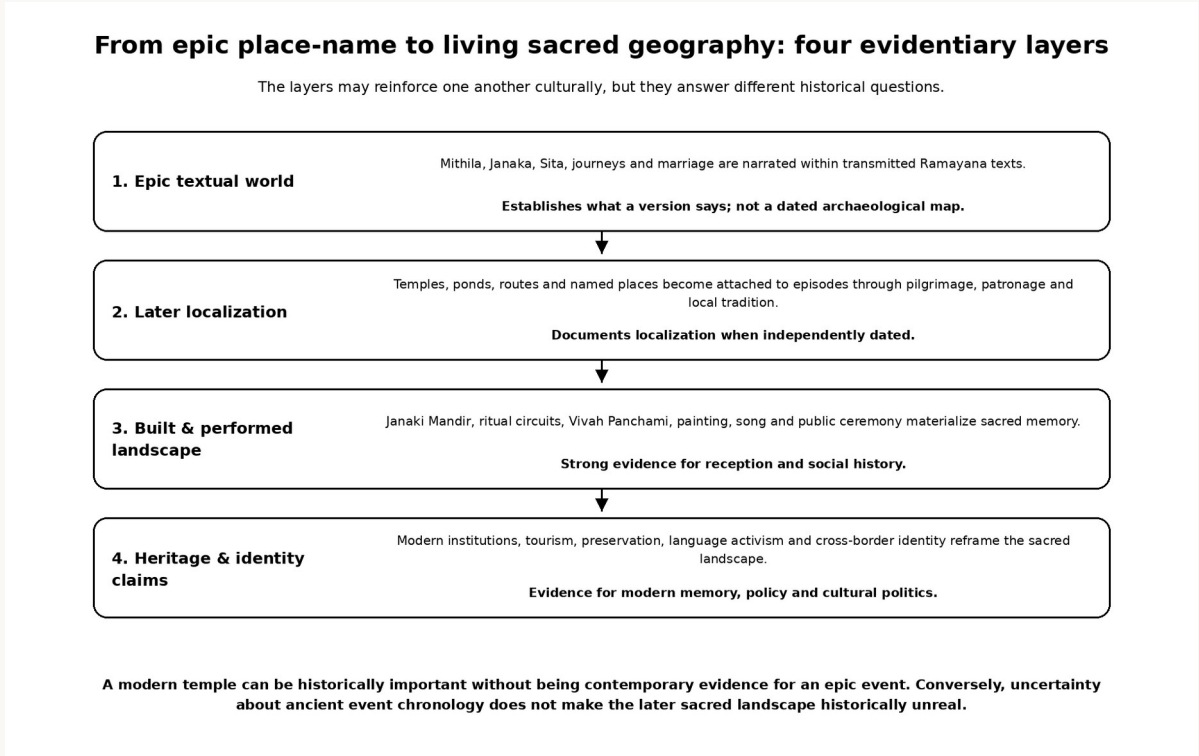
This is why sacred geography should not be opposed to 'real history.' Its temples, donations, festivals, repairs, inscriptions, property disputes, pilgrims, paintings, and municipal interventions...



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 11. Four evidentiary layers between an epic place-name and a living sacred geography: the…




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 11. Four evidentiary layers between an epic place-name and a living sacred geography: the transmitted textual world, later localization, built and performed landscape, and modern heritage or identity claims….

Editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026. Analytical framework developed for this chapter from the book-wide distinction between event-history, textual tradition…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Marriage circuits and the India-Nepal border: ancient story, modern frontier

**Marriage circuits and the India-Nepal border: ancient story, modern frontier**

The present international boundary between India and Nepal did not structure the epic's world.

**Painting Sita: visual tradition as reception history**

Visual representations of Sita and the Ramayana range across manuscript painting, temple art, popular prints, Mithila painting, theatre design, television, and…

**Performance creates historical presence without creating ancient documentation**

Performance makes the Ramayana present. Actors, singers, dancers, priests, audiences, ritual specialists, and organizers re-create persons and episodes within a…

SOURCE INSIGHT

For historians, this means that a performance has at least two temporalities: the epic time represented and the historical time of performance.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 31–33

# Print, television, and standardization

**Print, television, and standardization**

Print culture and electronic media can give one version unprecedented reach.

**The Ramayana and political imagination**

Sheldon Pollock argued that Ramayana idioms have been repeatedly available for political imagination in South Asia, while subsequent scholarship has debated the scope and…

**Sacred tradition and archaeology: neither confirmation nor dismissal by reflex**

Archaeology and sacred tradition ask different questions.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This avoids two symmetrical errors. The first is to declare an epic event proved because a place is sacred or anciently occupied. The second is to declare the sacred landscape historically…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# Janaka, Sita, and Mithila in modern regional identity

### Janaka, Sita, and Mithila in modern regional identity

Janaka and Sita supply modern Mithila with exceptionally powerful figures of learned kingship, ethical debate, marriage, suffering, fertility, devotion, and cultural...

### What Chapter 6 can establish with confidence

Established at the level of textual evidence: the critically edited Balakanda associates Janaka, Sita, and Mithila with the bow episode and royal marriage; Sita's origin...

### Research agenda for a full-scale edition

Further research should deepen this chapter through the Baroda critical apparatus, manuscript catalogues, Maithili and Nepali Ramayana traditions, dated Janakpur...

SOURCE INSIGHT

Particular priority should be given to resolving the chronology of the present Janaki Mandir through archival or architectural evidence rather than repeating conflicting tourism dates; documenting...



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# What this chapter establishes

### Janaka, Sita, and Mithila in modern regional identity

Janaka and Sita supply modern Mithila with exceptionally powerful figures of learned kingship, ethical debate, marriage, suffering, fertility, devotion, and…

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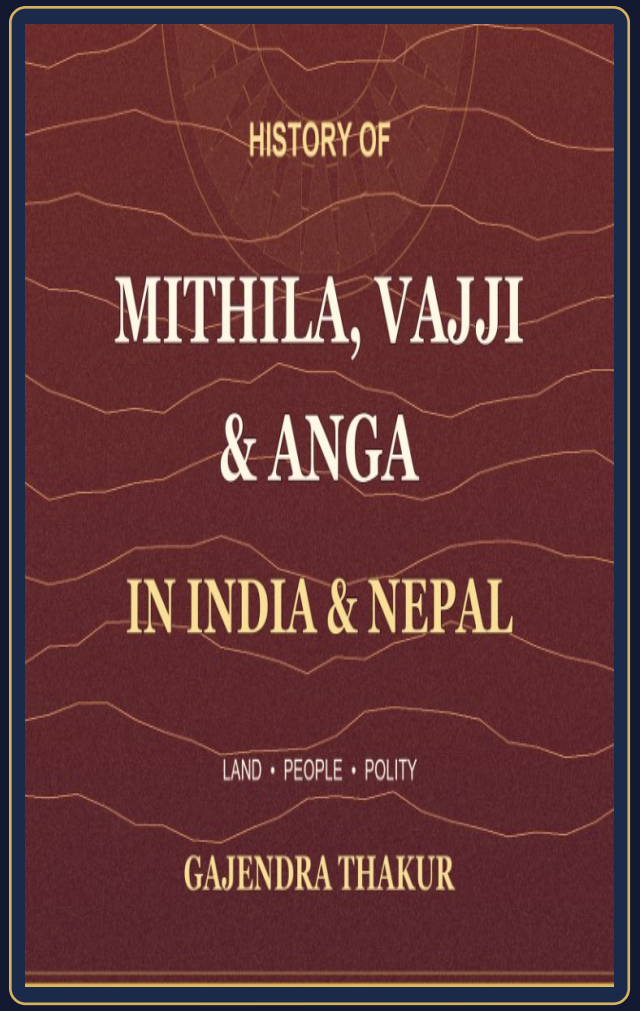
**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 07

# Vajji, the Licchavis, and Vaishali

A source-controlled history · ancient mithila, vajji & anga

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–7 — **A confederated political field**

02 §8–14 — **Rules, precedent, and constitutional vocabulary**

03 §15–21 — **Pataligama and strategic geography**

04 §22–28 — **Vaishali as a Buddhist landscape**

05 §29–36 — **Pottery, coins, seals, and administrative visibility**

36 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# A confederated political field

### A confederated political field

The Vajjis enter early Buddhist political narrative as a powerful corporate formation north of the Ganga, with the Licchavis of Vesali or Vaishali among its most visible…

### The archive and its asymmetries

The political history of Vajji is reconstructed from sources written for purposes other than constitutional description.

### Vajji, Licchavi, Videha: names and constituencies

Vajji or Vriji, Licchavi, and Videha should not be used as interchangeable labels.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Vajji or Vriji, Licchavi, and Videha should not be used as interchangeable labels.



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# Mishra's 1962 critique of the eight-clan formula

### Mishra's 1962 critique of the eight-clan formula

A useful mid-twentieth-century intervention came from Yogendra Mishra, who rejected the then-common inference that the Vajjian polity necessarily consisted of exactly...

### Republic, oligarchy, or gana-sangha

Older scholarship often translated north Indian non-monarchical polities as 'republics', a vocabulary that drew attention to assemblies and collective rule but also...

### Assemblies, concord, and the politics of procedure

The first two conditions of non-decline in Digha Nikaya 16 emphasize frequent, well-attended gatherings and concord in assembling, dispersing, and conducting public...

SOURCE INSIGHT

The first two conditions of non-decline in Digha Nikaya 16 emphasize frequent, well-attended gatherings and concord in assembling, dispersing, and conducting public...



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# The seven conditions as normative evidence

### The seven conditions as normative evidence

The seven Vajjian conditions are best read as normative Buddhist evidence about political resilience.

### Rules, precedent, and constitutional vocabulary

A further condition states that the Vajjis do not casually enact new rules or abolish established ones but proceed according to inherited norms.

### Modern constitutional vocabulary in the historiography of Vaishali

Mishra's chapter on the 'Constitution of the Vajjian Republic' is especially revealing as a document of twentieth-century historiography.

SOURCE INSIGHT

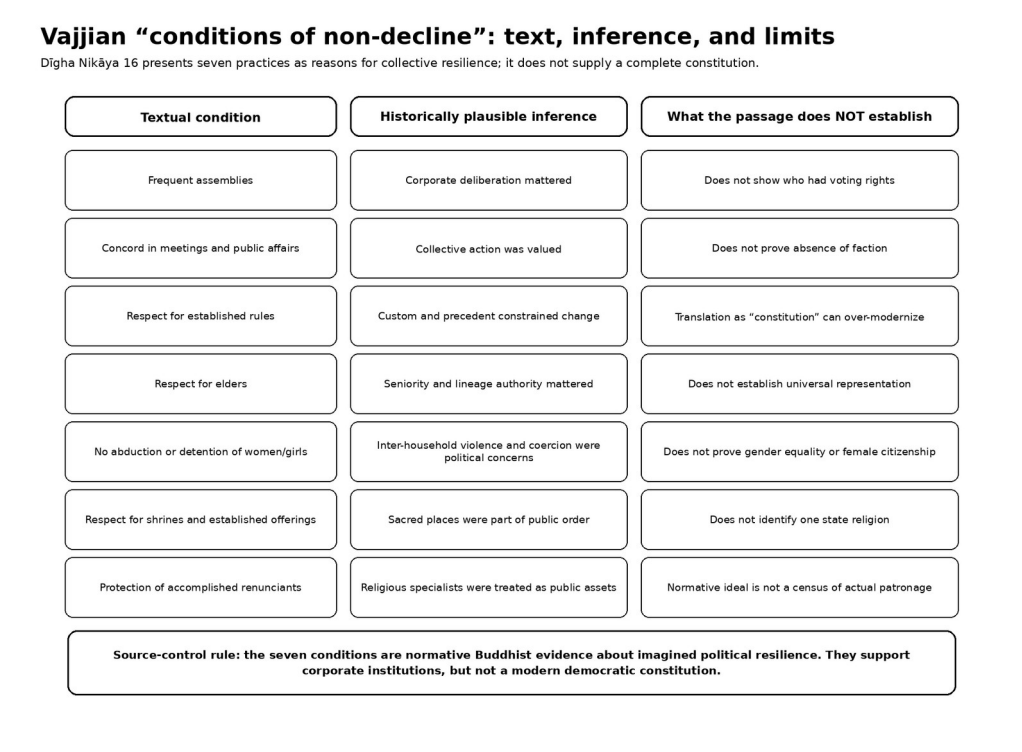
That organization made older evidence legible to readers familiar with a modern constitution, but it could also create a degree of institutional precision that the sources do not independently...



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 12. Vajjian 'conditions of non-decline': text, inference, and limits. The diagram follows the seven…



**Vajjian “conditions of non-decline”: text, inference, and limits**

Dīgha Nikāya 16 presents seven practices as reasons for collective resilience; it does not supply a complete constitution.

| Textual condition | Historically plausible inference | What the passage does NOT establish |
|---|---|---|
| Frequent assemblies | Corporate deliberation mattered | Does not show who had voting rights |
| Concord in meetings and public affairs | Collective action was valued | Does not prove absence of faction |
| Respect for established rules | Custom and precedent constrained change | Translation as “constitution” can over-modernize |
| Respect for elders | Seniority and lineage authority mattered | Does not establish universal representation |
| No abduction or detention of women/girls | Inter-household violence and coercion were political concerns | Does not prove gender equality or female citizenship |
| Respect for shrines and established offerings | Sacred places were part of public order | Does not identify one state religion |
| Protection of accomplished renunciants | Religious specialists were treated as public assets | Normative ideal is not a census of actual patronage |

**Source-control rule: the seven conditions are normative Buddhist evidence about imagined political resilience. They support corporate institutions, but not a modern democratic constitution.**

## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 12. Vajjian 'conditions of non-decline': text, inference, and limits. The diagram follows the seven conditions in Digha Nikaya 16 and separates what the passage explicitly states from historically plausible…



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# Elders, lineage, and unequal participation

### Elders, lineage, and unequal participation

Respect for elders is another condition of collective welfare.

### Women in the welfare conditions

The prohibition on abducting and detaining women and girls of good families is one of the most striking Vajjian clauses.

### Shrines, offerings, and public religion

The condition concerning shrines within and outside the city places sacred sites within the maintenance of public order.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The condition concerning shrines within and outside the city places sacred sites within the maintenance of public order.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 13–15

# Renunciants as protected persons

### Renunciants as protected persons

The final condition describes the protection of arahants so that worthy renunciants might come to the realm and those already present might live there peacefully.

### Ajatasattu, Vassakara, and the Magadhan problem

Digha Nikaya 16 frames its discussion of Vajjian welfare through Ajatasattu of Magadha's desire to wage war against the Vajjis.

### Pataligama and strategic geography

Later in the same sutta, the Magadhan ministers Sunidha and Vassakara are said to be fortifying Pataligama in defence against the Vajjis.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Later in the same sutta, the Magadhan ministers Sunidha and Vassakara are said to be fortifying Pataligama in defence against the Vajjis.



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# Confederation, faction, and diplomacy

### Confederation, faction, and diplomacy

A confederated polity must solve problems that a centralized monarchy solves differently: coordinating constituent elites, allocating military burdens, managing disputes…

### Buddhist and Jain memories of the Magadha-Vajji war

Mishra's reconstruction of the fall of the Vajjian polity is valuable above all because he places Buddhist and Jain narratives side by side instead of pretending that…

### Social hierarchy beyond the assembly

Political texts naturally privilege rulers, ministers, lineage leaders, and religious specialists.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Political texts naturally privilege rulers, ministers, lineage leaders, and religious specialists.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# Ambapali, property, and patronage

### Ambapali, property, and patronage

The Mahaparinibbana Sutta's account of Ambapali complicates any political history limited to male assemblies.

### Urban economy and tributary hinterland

Vesali appears in texts as a place of carriages, elite display, gardens, religious visitors, and tributary lands.

### Mishra's textual dossier on crafts, education, revenue, and routes

Mishra's social and economic chapters assembled a useful dossier of textual indications that can supplement, but not replace, archaeological evidence.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The evidentiary value of this dossier is relational rather than statistical.



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# Vaishali as a Buddhist landscape

### Vaishali as a Buddhist landscape

Buddhist traditions connect Vesali with repeated visits of the Buddha, Ambapali's grove, shrines, monastic residence, the narrative of his final journey, relic...

### Vaishali as a Jain landscape

Jain tradition likewise places Mahavira's life and kinship world in the Vaishali region and associates his birth with Kundagrama or a related locality in the greater...

### The Second Buddhist Council: historical core and disputed consequences

Vinaya traditions of several Buddhist schools preserve an important dispute at Vaishali, conventionally called the Second Buddhist Council and usually placed by the...

SOURCE INSIGHT

Vinaya traditions of several Buddhist schools preserve an important dispute at Vaishali, conventionally called the Second Buddhist Council and usually placed by the...



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# Identifying Vaishali: Basarh and the archaeological argument

**Identifying Vaishali: Basarh and the archaeological argument**

The identification of the Basarh complex and neighbouring mounds with ancient Vaishali rests on cumulative historical geography rather than one spectacular object.

**Excavation history and the problem of samples**

The published excavations of 1950 and 1958-1962 remain foundational for Vaishali, but they belong to particular stages in South Asian archaeological practice.

**Raja Vishal ka Garh: fortification before 'parliament'**

Raja Vishal ka Garh is one of the most prominent fortified mounds in the Vaishali archaeological zone and is widely presented in popular and tourism literature as the...

SOURCE INSIGHT

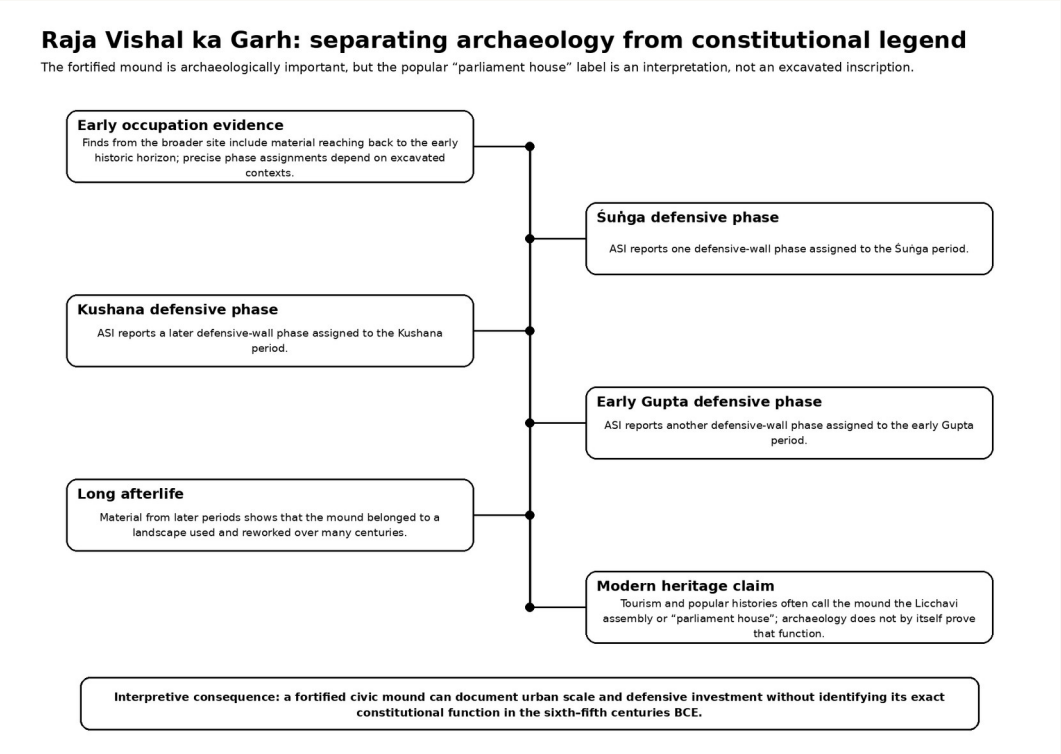
Credit: Editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 13. Raja Vishal ka Garh: archaeology versus constitutional legend. The diagram separates site…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 13. Raja Vishal ka Garh: archaeology versus constitutional legend. The diagram separates site occupation, ASI-reported Sunga, Kushana, and early-Gupta defensive phases, long later use, and the modern…



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# Fortification phases and urban duration

### Fortification phases and urban duration

The ASI phase sequence makes two historical points possible at once.

### Pottery, coins, seals, and administrative visibility

Ceramics and small finds provide the chronological texture that monumental narratives often lack.

### The relic stupa and attribution

At Harpur Basant, the ASI Patna Circle identifies an excavated stupa as one of the relic stupas associated with the distribution of the Buddha's corporeal remains and…

SOURCE INSIGHT

At Harpur Basant, the ASI Patna Circle identifies an excavated stupa as one of the relic stupas associated with the distribution of the Buddha's corporeal remains and…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 31–33

# Kolhua, pillars, stupas, and multi-period sacred space

### Kolhua, pillars, stupas, and multi-period sacred space

The Kolhua complex, including the lion-capital pillar, stupas, monastic remains, and later conservation landscape, illustrates the same principle of layered sacred space.

### Later pilgrims and remembered Vaishali

Faxian and Xuanzang visited a landscape already centuries removed from the period of the Buddha and the early Vajjian polity.

### Modern heritage, democracy, and regional identity

Modern public history often celebrates Vaishali as the world's first republic or democracy and identifies Raja Vishal ka Garh as an ancient parliament.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Modern public history often celebrates Vaishali as the world's first republic or democracy and identifies Raja Vishal ka Garh as an ancient parliament.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# Vajji and Mithila: connected but not identical

### Vajji and Mithila: connected but not identical

The Vajjian field and the historical region later called Mithila overlap in broader north Bihar memory but should not be collapsed.

### Was Videha a constituent of Vajji? Mishra's dissenting reconstruction

One reason the distinction must remain explicit is that the political status of Videha in the age associated with the Vajjian gana-sangha has itself been disputed.

### Evidentiary conclusions

Vaishali offers unusually rich opportunities because political narrative, religious memory, archaeology, monuments, and modern heritage all converge.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Vaishali offers unusually rich opportunities because political narrative, religious memory, archaeology, monuments, and modern heritage all converge.



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# What this chapter establishes

### Vajji and Mithila: connected but not identical

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### Was Videha a constituent of Vajji? Mishra's dissenting reconstruction

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### Evidentiary conclusions

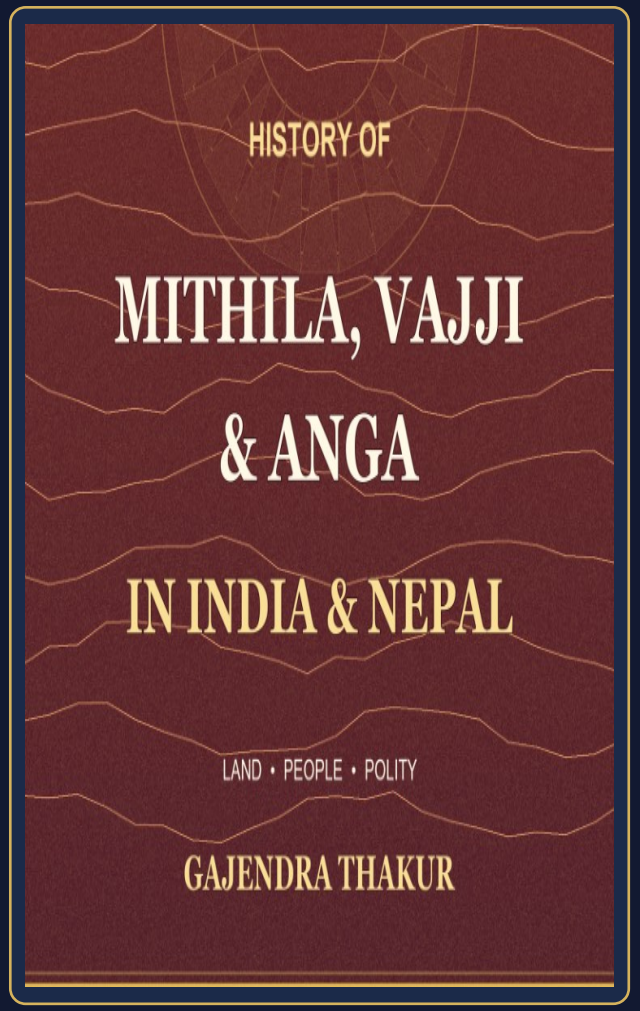
Vaishali offers unusually rich opportunities because political narrative, religious memory, archaeology, monuments, and modern heritage all converge.

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 08

# Anga, Champa, and the Magadhan horizon

A source-controlled history · ancient mithila, vajji & anga

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–5 **Anga as a historical problem**

02 §6–10 **Sonadanda's grant and Bimbisara's authority**

03 §11–15 **Merchants in narrative and the problem of economic…**

04 §16–20 **NBPW is a horizon, not a city label**

05 §21–26 **Kushan, Gupta, and later Champa**

26 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 1–3

# Anga as a historical problem

### Anga as a historical problem

Anga is one of the clearest examples of why political geography must be reconstructed from several different kinds of evidence.

### Mahajanapada lists and political scale

In the Anguttara Nikaya, Anga appears in the conventional list of sixteen major countries or mahajanapadas.

### Early Brahmanical references and the danger of ethnic reading

Anga is also named in early Brahmanical textual traditions, including the Atharvavedic corpus, where eastern peoples can be represented through the cultural judgments of…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Anga is also named in early Brahmanical textual traditions, including the Atharvavedic corpus, where eastern peoples can be represented through the cultural judgments…



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# Epic Anga and Karna: tradition rather than regnal history

### Epic Anga and Karna: tradition rather than regnal history

The Mahabharata's powerful association of Karna with Anga has had an immense afterlife in regional memory.

### Champa as the capital in Buddhist textual geography

Buddhist sources repeatedly connect the country of the Angas with the city of Champa.

### Sonadanda's grant and Bimbisara's authority

The Sonadanda Sutta provides a firmer anchor for Magadhan power than many later conquest stories.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The Sonadanda Sutta provides a firmer anchor for Magadhan power than many later conquest stories.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# Bimbisara's conquest: what can and cannot be said

### Bimbisara's conquest: what can and cannot be said

Buddhist and later historical traditions remember Bimbisara as the Magadhan ruler who subdued Anga.

### A city ranked among great cities

The Mahaparinibbana Sutta gives Champa an important place in remembered urban hierarchy.

### Gaggara's lotus pond and urban ecology

The repeated association of Champa with Gaggara's lotus pond reminds us that early cities were ecological landscapes, not only walls and streets.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The repeated association of Champa with Gaggara's lotus pond reminds us that early cities were ecological landscapes, not only walls and streets.



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# Jain Campa and Mahavira's itinerary

### Jain Campa and Mahavira's itinerary

Jain tradition gives Campa a second major sacred geography.

### Merchants in narrative and the problem of economic inference

Later Buddhist narrative traditions repeatedly use Champa as a point of departure for merchants.

### Riverine commerce before a seaport narrative

Champa's position in the Ganga system made river transport a central possibility, but the city should not automatically be called a maritime port.

SOURCE INSIGHT

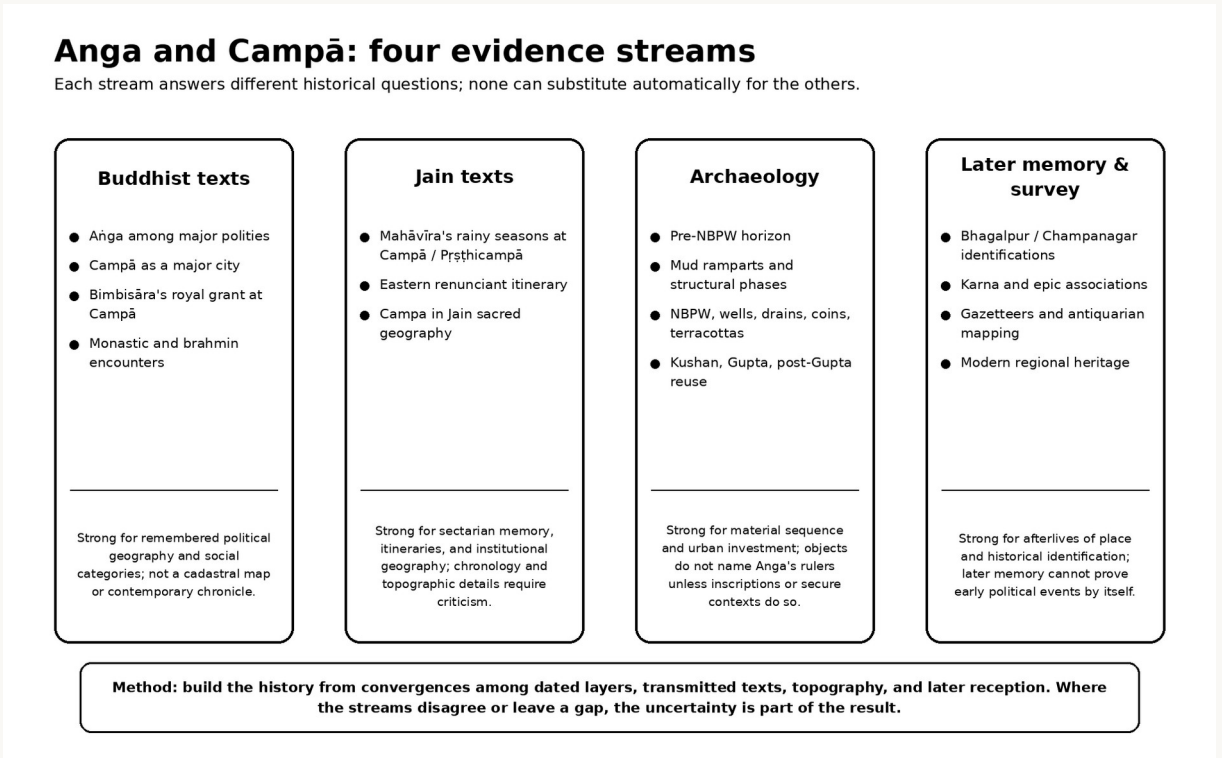
Credit: Editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026. Based on Digha Nikaya 4 and 16, Kalpa Sutra, published Champa excavation reports, and modern archaeological/historical synthesis.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 14. Anga and Champa: four evidence streams. Buddhist and Jain textual geography, archaeology, and...




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 14. Anga and Champa: four evidence streams. Buddhist and Jain textual geography, archaeology, and later survey or memory are treated as distinct archives whose convergences strengthen an argument but whose...



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# Identifying ancient Champa near Bhagalpur

### Identifying ancient Champa near Bhagalpur

The identification of ancient Champa with the Champanagar-Nathnagar area near modern Bhagalpur is cumulative rather than dependent on name resemblance alone.

### Excavation history: a city recovered by campaigns

Modern archaeological knowledge of Champa was built through repeated field seasons rather than a single definitive excavation.

### Pre-NBPW occupation below the urban horizon

Later campaigns pushed the sequence earlier. The 1974-75 review reports a deposit beneath the first mud-rampart containing coarse black-and-red ware forms and explicitly…

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Later campaigns pushed the sequence earlier. The 1974-75 review reports a deposit beneath the first mud-rampart containing coarse black-and-red ware forms and…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# NBPW is a horizon, not a city label

**NBPW is a horizon, not a city label**

Northern Black Polished Ware is prominent in Champa's early-historic deposits, but it cannot be treated as a synonym for the Anga kingdom or for urbanism itself.

**Fortification: more than one defensive episode**

Champa's mud ramparts are among its most important archaeological features.

**Wells, drains, and household infrastructure**

Water and waste infrastructure are among the strongest material signs of dense occupation.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Water and waste infrastructure are among the strongest material signs of dense occupation.



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# Coins, beads, ivory, and craft specialization

**Coins, beads, ivory, and craft specialization**

Cast copper coins and punch-marked coins, beads of semi-precious stone, glass and terracotta, ivory objects, terracotta figurines, bone tools, moulds, copper objects, and...

**Conflagration as an event, not a dynasty marker**

One excavated phase ended with evidence of large-scale burning.

**Kushan, Gupta, and later Champa**

Champa remained occupied and repeatedly reorganized after the early-historic horizon.

SOURCE INSIGHT

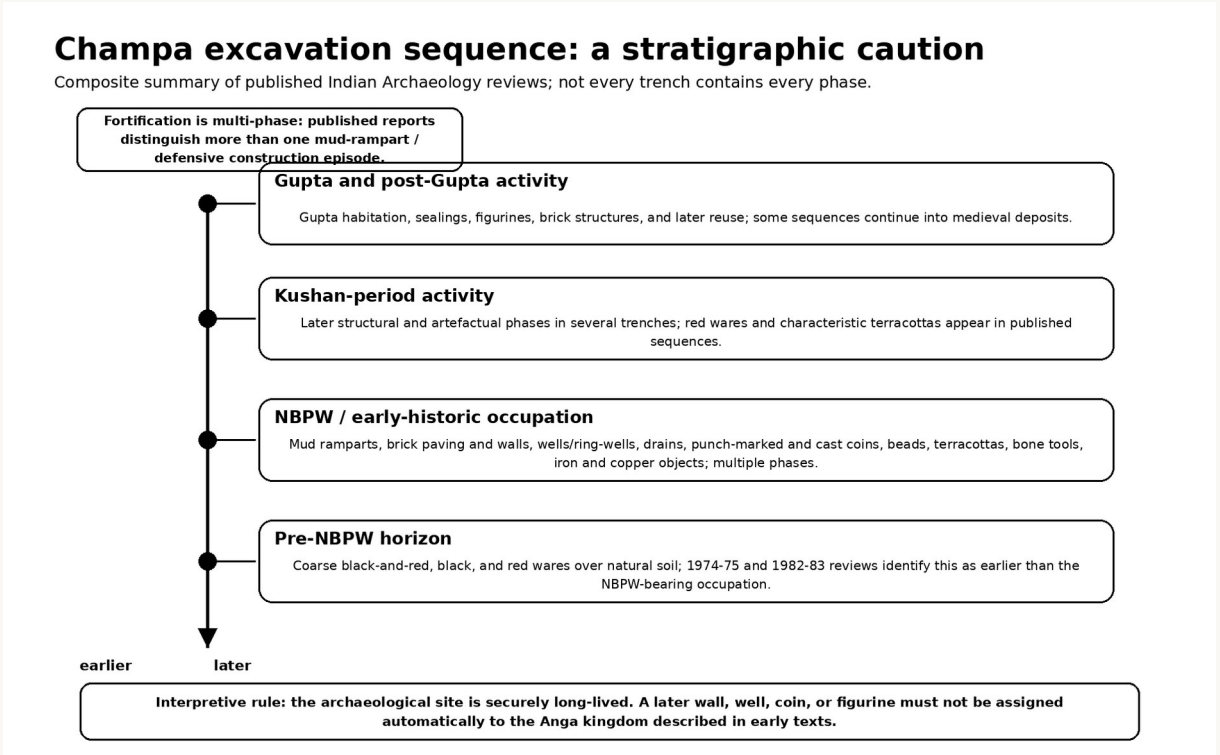
Credit: Editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026, from Archaeological Survey of India, Indian Archaeology - A Review reports for 1970-71, 1971-72, 1974-75, and 1982-83.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 15. Champa excavation sequence: a stratigraphic caution. Composite summary of published excavation…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 15. Champa excavation sequence: a stratigraphic caution. Composite summary of published excavation reviews; not every trench contains every phase, and the diagram does not convert ceramic or structural phases…



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# Agrarian hinterland and the city

### Agrarian hinterland and the city

No city of Champa's scale could have lived from commerce alone.

### State revenue, landed grants, and intermediaries

Bimbisara's grant to Sonadanda is also evidence for political mediation.

### Anga and Magadha as a paired political geography

The recurrent pairing of Anga and Magadha in textual lists is significant even after Anga's political subordination.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The recurrent pairing of Anga and Magadha in textual lists is significant even after Anga's political subordination.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–26

# Karna memory and archaeological restraint

### Karna memory and archaeological restraint

Bhagalpur and Champanagar preserve strong traditions connecting the landscape with Karna.

### Evidentiary conclusions

A defensible history of Anga begins with a major eastern polity remembered across Buddhist, Jain, and Brahmanical traditions and a capital, Champa, whose broad identification near modern Bhagalpur is supported by historical…

SOURCE INSIGHT

A defensible history of Anga begins with a major eastern polity remembered across Buddhist, Jain, and Brahmanical traditions and a capital, Champa, whose broad…



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# What this chapter establishes

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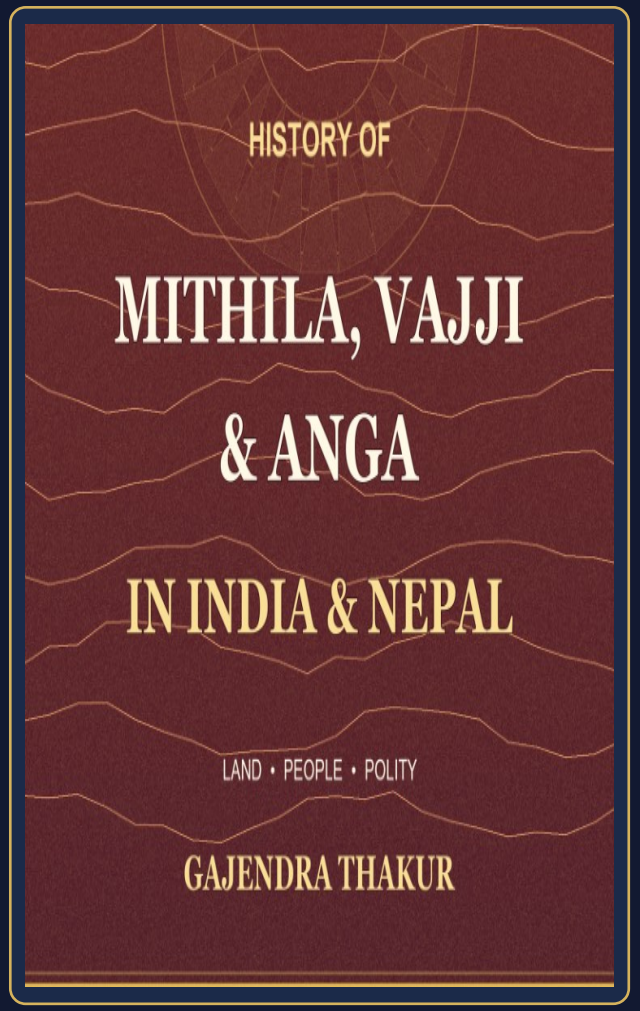
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CHAPTER 09

# Buddhism, Jainism, and eastern Gangetic religious change

A source-controlled history · ancient mithila, vajji & anga

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements




48 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 1–3

# Shared landscape, distinct traditions

### Shared landscape, distinct traditions

The eastern Gangetic plain was not the birthplace of one undifferentiated 'heterodox' movement.

### Chronology: founders, texts, and transmitted memory

The lives of the Buddha and Mahavira are commonly placed in the middle of the first millennium BCE, but exact dates remain debated.

### The sramana field without a single origin story

Renunciation, wandering, fasting, meditation, debate, and critiques of household or sacrificial life formed a broader religious field in which Buddhism and Jainism…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Renunciation, wandering, fasting, meditation, debate, and critiques of household or sacrificial life formed a broader religious field in which Buddhism and Jainism…



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# Greater Magadha as a model, not a map

### Greater Magadha as a model, not a map

Johannes Bronkhorst's model of Greater Magadha has been influential because it highlights an eastern cultural zone in which doctrines of rebirth, karmic retribution...

### Brahmanical presence in the eastern cities

Eastern renunciant movements did not operate in a landscape without brahmins.

### Buddhist renunciation and the institutional Sangha

The Buddhist Sangha transformed wandering renunciation into a durable institution governed by discipline, ordination, residence, property rules, and procedures for...

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Buddhist Sangha transformed wandering renunciation into a durable institution governed by discipline, ordination, residence, property rules, and procedures for...



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# Jain mendicancy and radical care in the Acaranga

### Jain mendicancy and radical care in the Acaranga

The Acaranga Sutra presents an exacting ascetic discipline in which movement, food, bodily comfort, speech, and use of the environment are governed by the imperative to…

### Asceticism and polemic

Buddhist texts sometimes define the Buddha's path against severe bodily austerity, while Jain traditions elevate disciplined endurance and non-harm within their own…

### Karma, rebirth, and liberation: shared questions, different answers

Buddhist and Jain traditions both made karma, rebirth, ethical causation, and release central, but their metaphysical and practical explanations differ profoundly.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Buddhist and Jain traditions both made karma, rebirth, ethical causation, and release central, but their metaphysical and practical explanations differ profoundly.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# Cities, markets, and the rejection of a simple bourgeois thesis

### Cities, markets, and the rejection of a simple bourgeois thesis

Urbanization and expanding exchange helped create settings in which itinerant teachers, merchants, rulers, and householders encountered one another, but Buddhism and…

### The gahapati and household power

Pali texts frequently use gahapati for substantial householders whose authority rested on property, dependants, production, and social standing.

### Royal patronage without a state church

Bimbisara, Ajatasattu, Pasenadi, Licchavi leaders, and other rulers appear in Buddhist and Jain traditions as patrons, interlocutors, relatives, rivals, or protectors.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Bimbisara, Ajatasattu, Pasenadi, Licchavi leaders, and other rulers appear in Buddhist and Jain traditions as patrons, interlocutors, relatives, rivals, or protectors.



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# Vaishali as an institutional crossroads

### Vaishali as an institutional crossroads

Vaishali is exceptional because Buddhist and Jain memories, corporate politics, archaeological remains, and later pilgrimage all converge there.

### Mishra's 1962 catalogue of Vaishali's Buddhist institutional memory

Yogendra Mishra's survey remains useful as a map of the Vaishali material preserved across Buddhist textual traditions.

### Mahapajapati Gotami and Vesali

The Buddhist ordination narrative places Mahapajapati Gotami - the Buddha's foster mother - at the centre of the foundation of the bhikkhuni community.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The Buddhist ordination narrative places Mahapajapati Gotami - the Buddha's foster mother - at the centre of the foundation of the bhikkhuni community.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# The garudhammas and textual controversy

### The garudhammas and textual controversy

The eight garudhammas or rules of respect associated with the founding of the bhikkhuni order have been read in sharply different ways.

### Women as renunciants, teachers, and subjects of discipline

Early Buddhist literature preserves women not only as donors or relatives but as renunciants and teachers.

### Ambapali: wealth, status, and female patronage

The Mahaparinibbana Sutta's account of Ambapali at Vesali presents a courtesan with property-like control over a mango grove, substantial public visibility, and the…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Mahaparinibbana Sutta's account of Ambapali at Vesali presents a courtesan with property-like control over a mango grove, substantial public visibility, and the…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# Jain women: nuns, laywomen, and the fourfold community

**Jain women: nuns, laywomen, and the fourfold community**

Jain tradition conceptualizes religious society through monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen, although the roles and soteriological interpretations of women differ across…

**Laywomen and the household economy of merit**

Both Buddhist and Jain traditions depended on laywomen as food donors, household managers, patrons, relatives, and participants in ritual.

**Monsoon, vassa, and institutional time**

The rainy season mattered to religious organization.

SOURCE INSIGHT

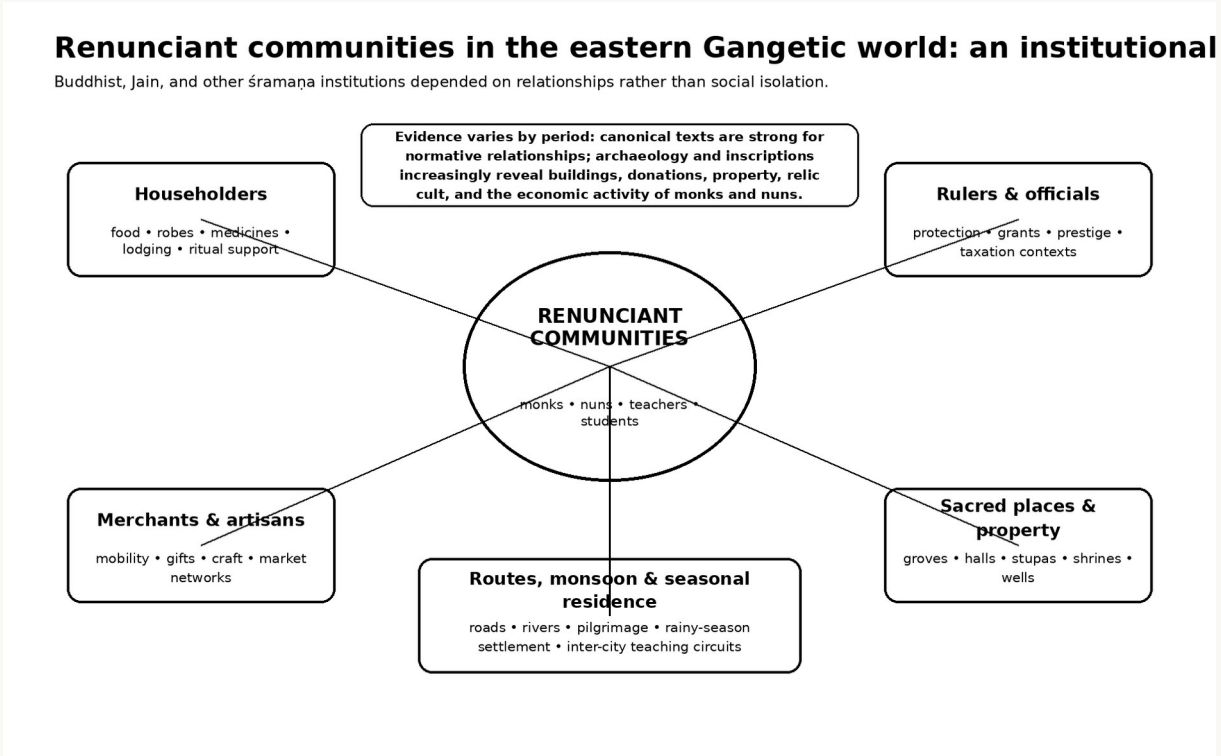
The rainy season mattered to religious organization.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 16. Renunciant communities in the eastern Gangetic world: an institutional ecology. Buddhist, Jain…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 16. Renunciant communities in the eastern Gangetic world: an institutional ecology. Buddhist, Jain, and other renunciant institutions depended on recurring relationships with households, rulers, markets, sacred…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# Groves, halls, and donated spaces

### Groves, halls, and donated spaces

Canonical narratives repeatedly locate teaching in groves, halls, forests, ponds, and donated pleasure grounds.

### Gift, merit, and reciprocity

A gift to a renunciant community was not merely economic transfer.

### Monks and nuns as economic actors: the later evidence

Gregory Schopen's work on inscriptions and monastic law has shown that Indian Buddhist monks and nuns could themselves appear as donors, sponsors, property holders, and…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Gregory Schopen's work on inscriptions and monastic law has shown that Indian Buddhist monks and nuns could themselves appear as donors, sponsors, property holders…



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# Relics and the making of sacred place

### Relics and the making of sacred place

Buddhist relic traditions transformed bodily remains, stupas, and pilgrimage into durable institutions of memory.

### Jain sacred biography and the making of place

Jain sacred geography likewise links Mahavira to Kundagrama, Vaishali, Mithila, Campa, Rajagriha, and Pava or Pavapuri in transmitted biography.

### Kundagrama and the historiography of Mahavira's birthplace

Mishra also devoted an extended discussion to the competing modern identifications of Mahavira's birthplace.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Accordingly, this book preserves a distinction between textual association and modern site identification.



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# The Second Buddhist Council at Vaishali

### The Second Buddhist Council at Vaishali

Several Vinaya traditions preserve a disciplinary dispute at Vaishali conventionally called the Second Buddhist Council and often located roughly a century after the…

### The ten points and the politics of discipline

In the Pali Vinaya tradition the Vaishali dispute is organized around contested practices later summarized as ten points, involving such matters as stored salt, meal…

### Council is not automatically schism

Older narratives often made the Second Council the direct cause of the first great Buddhist schism.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Older narratives often made the Second Council the direct cause of the first great Buddhist schism.



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# Jain councils and canon formation: a later institutional problem

### Jain councils and canon formation: a later institutional problem

Jain traditions also preserve accounts of councils, teachers, and the preservation or loss of scriptures.

### Language: Pali, Ardhamagadhi, Sanskrit, and the problem of speech

Buddhist and Jain traditions are preserved in languages whose relationship to the speech of early eastern India is historically complex.

### Orality, memorization, and institutional authority

Before widespread manuscript transmission, large bodies of doctrine and discipline were preserved through organized recitation and memorization.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Before widespread manuscript transmission, large bodies of doctrine and discipline were preserved through organized recitation and memorization.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# Debate as social institution

### Debate as social institution

Buddhist and Jain texts repeatedly stage debates with brahmins, rival ascetics, householders, and rulers.

### Nigantha Nataputta in Buddhist sources

Buddhist texts refer to Mahavira as Nigantha Nataputta and preserve stories about his followers, doctrines, and disputes.

### Ajivikas and the danger of a two-religion story

The eastern religious field included more than Buddhism and Jainism. Ajivikas and other teachers appear in Buddhist and Jain sources, often through polemic.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The eastern religious field included more than Buddhism and Jainism. Ajivikas and other teachers appear in Buddhist and Jain sources, often through polemic.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 37–39

# Caste, varna, and the limits of egalitarian claims

### Caste, varna, and the limits of egalitarian claims

Buddhist texts contain critiques of brahmanical claims to inherent superiority and admit members of different social origins into the Sangha.

### Slavery, service, and the archive of silence

Canonical texts refer to servants, dependants, labourers, and other socially subordinate people, but elite donors and religious specialists receive disproportionate…

### Food rules as social history

Detailed monastic rules about acceptable food, meal times, storage, invitations, and gifts reveal the dependence of renunciants on social provisioning.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Detailed monastic rules about acceptable food, meal times, storage, invitations, and gifts reveal the dependence of renunciants on social provisioning.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 40–42

# Medicine, illness, and embodied renunciation

### Medicine, illness, and embodied renunciation

Renunciation did not abolish the body. Buddhist Vinaya devotes attention to medicines, illness, nursing, and permissible material support; Jain disciplinary texts…

### Violence, non-harm, and political patronage

Jain ahimsa and Buddhist ethical restraints developed in societies whose rulers fought wars, punished offenders, hunted, taxed, and protected routes.

### Sacred landscape without exclusive ownership

Vaishali, Rajagriha, Champa, Mithila, and Pava can belong to more than one religious geography.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Vaishali, Rajagriha, Champa, Mithila, and Pava can belong to more than one religious geography.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 43–45

# Archaeology and the problem of sectarian identification

### Archaeology and the problem of sectarian identification

A stupa, monastery-like plan, image, inscription, or relic deposit may justify a Buddhist identification when context is secure.

### Inscriptions as a later but firmer social archive

For the first centuries of Buddhist and Jain history, narrative and disciplinary literature is far richer than dated inscriptions.

### From charismatic teacher to institution

The deaths of founders created a problem of continuity.

SOURCE INSIGHT

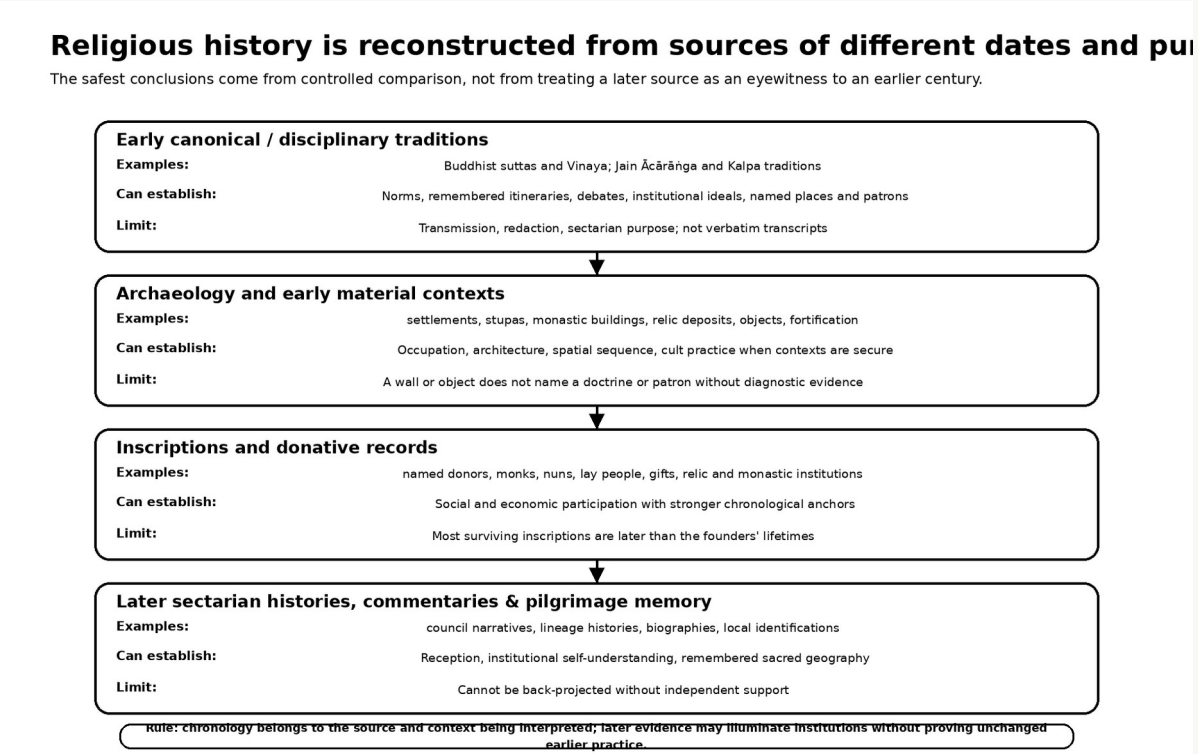
The deaths of founders created a problem of continuity.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 17. Religious history is reconstructed from sources of different dates and purposes. Canonical texts…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 17. Religious history is reconstructed from sources of different dates and purposes. Canonical texts, archaeology, inscriptions, and later sectarian or pilgrimage traditions answer different questions; later…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 46–48

# Religious change without a single conversion event

**Religious change without a single conversion event**

The growth of Buddhism and Jainism in eastern India was not a one-time conversion of a region.

**Decline is not disappearance**

Later reductions in Buddhist monastic patronage do not mean the immediate disappearance of Buddhist ideas, images, relic cults, or pilgrimage.

**Evidentiary conclusions**

The eastern Gangetic plain was a competitive institutional environment in which Buddhist, Jain, Brahmanical, Ajivika, and other communities debated shared questions while…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The eastern Gangetic plain was a competitive institutional environment in which Buddhist, Jain, Brahmanical, Ajivika, and other communities debated shared questions…



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# What this chapter establishes

### Religious change without a single conversion event

The growth of Buddhism and Jainism in eastern India was not a one-time conversion of a region.

### Decline is not disappearance

Later reductions in Buddhist monastic patronage do not mean the immediate disappearance of Buddhist ideas, images, relic cults, or pilgrimage.

### Evidentiary conclusions

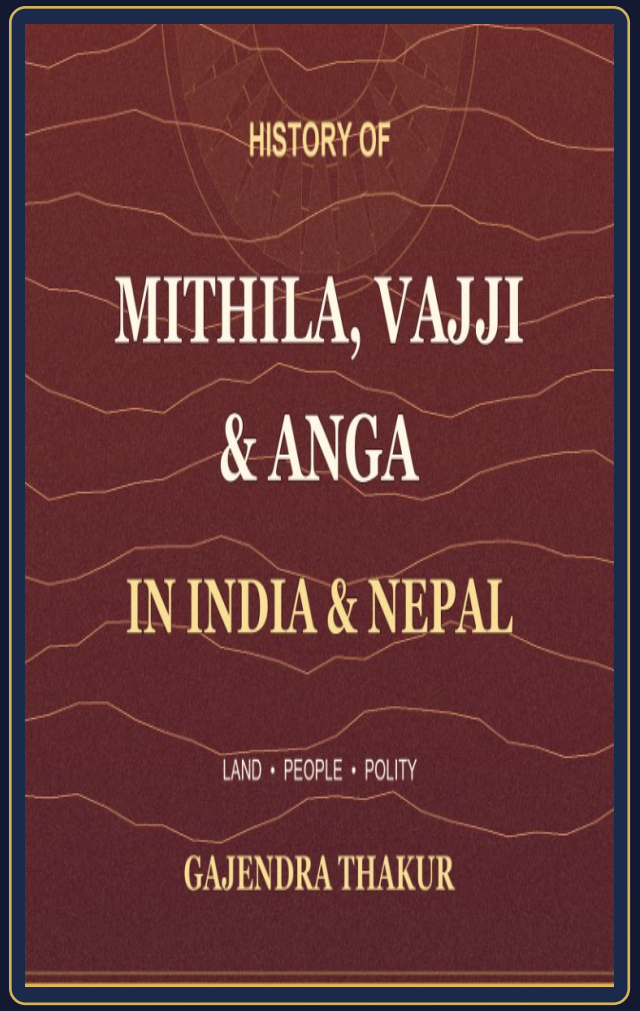
The eastern Gangetic plain was a competitive institutional environment in which Buddhist, Jain, Brahmanical, Ajivika, and other communities debated shared…

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 10

# Empires, inscriptions, and pilgrim itineraries

A source-controlled history · ancient mithila, vajji & anga

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements



01 §1–8 **Empire as a claim with uneven reach**

02 §9–17 **Lauriya-Areraj: an inscription at a lived place**

03 §18–25 **Gupta political re-scaling**

04 §26–34 **Pilgrims are authors, not transparent measuring…**

05 §35–43 **Pilgrimage creates and preserves route knowledge**

43 analysed sections · 3 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 1–3

# Empire as a claim with uneven reach

**Empire as a claim with uneven reach**

The appearance of the Mauryas, Guptas, and later supra-regional powers changes the scale at which the history of Mithila, Vajji, Anga, and the Nepal-facing corridor must…

**Mauryan north Bihar: monument and text must be separated**

North Bihar preserves an unusually important group of monolithic pillars associated with Ashoka.

**Stone, quarry, transport, and state capacity**

The polished sandstone pillars are also evidence for technologies and labour systems.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The polished sandstone pillars are also evidence for technologies and labour systems.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 4–6

# The first six Pillar Edicts in the Champaran corridor

### The first six Pillar Edicts in the Champaran corridor

The inscriptions at Lauriya-Areraj and Lauriya-Nandangarh, and the inscribed pillar at Rampurva, preserve versions of the first six Major Pillar Edicts.

### Dhamma was not a simple synonym for Buddhism

Ashoka's dhamma has often been narrated either as Buddhist doctrine imposed by an emperor or as a purely secular moral code.

### Officers, justice, and the language of government

The Pillar Edicts repeatedly bring officials into view.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Pillar Edicts repeatedly bring officials into view.



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# Punishment, mercy, and royal paternalism

### Punishment, mercy, and royal paternalism

The pillar-edict corpus also addresses punishment, reprieve, and opportunities for condemned persons to prepare religiously or petition on behalf of dependants.

### Animals, medicine, and welfare claims

Across the wider Ashokan corpus, inscriptions refer to restrictions on animal killing, medical provisions, wells, trees, and other welfare measures.

### Lauriya-Areraj: an inscription at a lived place

The Lauriya-Areraj monolith preserves the first six Pillar Edicts in early Brahmi.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Lauriya-Areraj monolith preserves the first six Pillar Edicts in early Brahmi.



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# Lauriya-Nandangarh: edict, capital, and neighbouring archaeology

### Lauriya-Nandangarh: edict, capital, and neighbouring archaeology

Lauriya-Nandangarh preserves one of the best-known lion-capital Ashokan pillars and the first six Major Pillar Edicts.

### Rampurva: a pair that demonstrates evidentiary difference

Rampurva is methodologically valuable because two Ashokan pillars were found there but only one is inscribed.

### Kolhua/Vaishali: Ashokan presence without an edict

The standing lion-capital pillar at Kolhua is among the most recognizable monuments of Vaishali and is officially identified as an Ashokan column.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The standing lion-capital pillar at Kolhua is among the most recognizable monuments of Vaishali and is officially identified as an Ashokan column.



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# A pillar corridor: useful hypothesis, not a demonstrated road map

### A pillar corridor: useful hypothesis, not a demonstrated road map

The sequence from Vaishali/Kolhua through Lauriya-Areraj and Lauriya-Nandangarh to Rampurva has long encouraged the hypothesis of a major northward corridor connecting…

### Pillar routes and the Nepal-facing frontier

The northern end of the Champaran pillar sequence lies near the Himalayan foreland, but 'route to Nepal' must be phrased carefully.

### Imperial communication and literacy

The edicts raise a further question: who could read them?

SOURCE INSIGHT

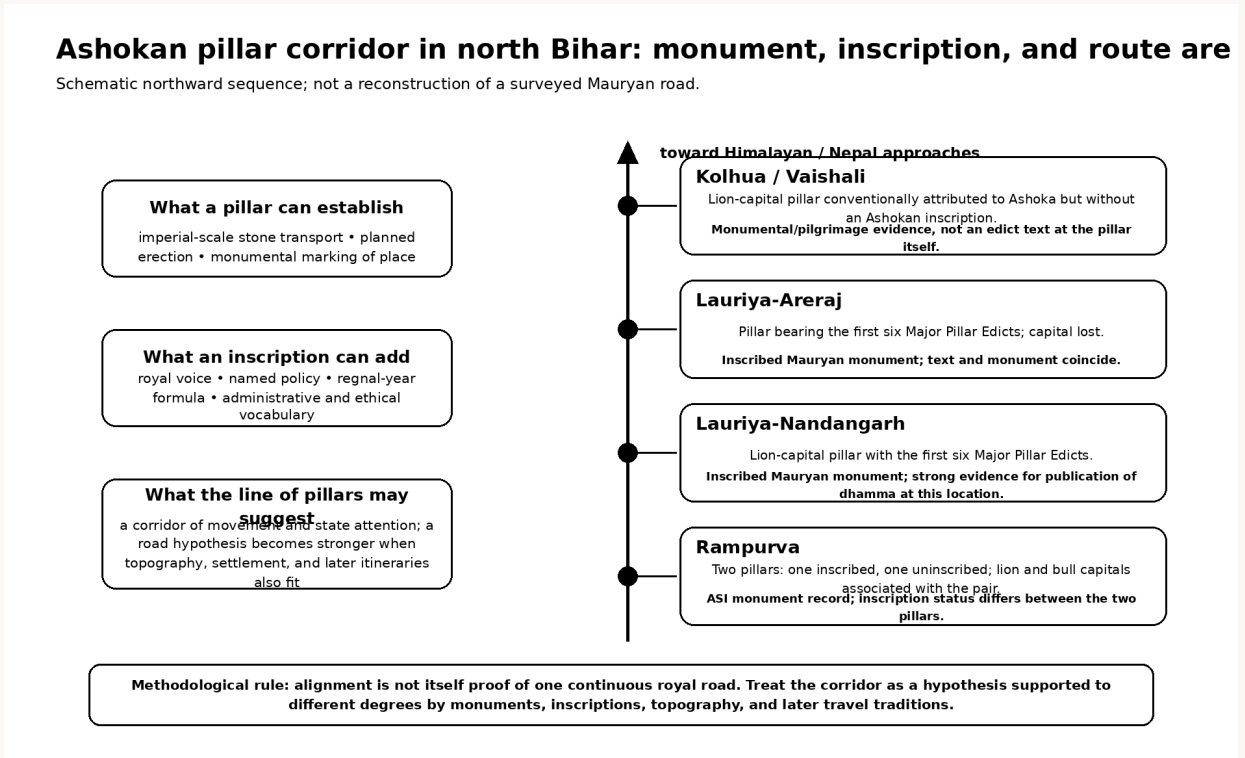
The edicts raise a further question: who could read them?



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 18. Ashokan pillar corridor in north Bihar: monument, inscription, and route are different claims....




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 18. Ashokan pillar corridor in north Bihar: monument, inscription, and route are different claims. Schematic only; not a surveyed reconstruction of a Mauryan road.



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# Scripts, languages, and the geography of authority

### Scripts, languages, and the geography of authority

Ashoka's wider inscriptional programme employed different scripts and languages across the subcontinent and north-west, while the north Bihar Pillar Edicts use Prakrit...

### From Mauryan to post-Mauryan landscapes

The end of Mauryan rule did not remove Mauryan pillars from the landscape.

### Gupta political re-scaling

By the fourth century CE, the Gupta political order created another supra-regional framework over much of the Gangetic plain.

SOURCE INSIGHT

By the fourth century CE, the Gupta political order created another supra-regional framework over much of the Gangetic plain.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# Chandragupta I, Kumaradevi, and Licchavi dynastic capital

### Chandragupta I, Kumaradevi, and Licchavi dynastic capital

A famous Gupta gold coin type depicts Chandragupta I and Kumaradevi together and names the Licchavis on the reverse.

### Coins are political media, not marriage certificates

The king-and-queen coin type should be read as designed royal media.

### Samudragupta and the Allahabad prasasti

The Allahabad pillar inscription or Prayaga prasasti of Samudragupta, composed by the court poet and official Harishena, is one of the central inscriptions for…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Allahabad pillar inscription or Prayaga prasasti of Samudragupta, composed by the court poet and official Harishena, is one of the central inscriptions for…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# Nepal in Samudragupta’s frontier world

### Nepal in Samudragupta’s frontier world

The prasasti names Nepal among frontier polities in a group that also includes Samatata, Davaka, Kamarupa, and Kartripura in Fleet's classic edition.

### An inscription can be a palimpsest of empires

The Allahabad pillar itself carries inscriptions from different political ages, including Ashokan texts, Samudragupta's fourth-century prasasti, and a later Mughal...

### Vaishali under later imperial horizons

Archaeology at Vaishali/Basarh includes occupation, seals, sealings, coins, religious remains, and structures extending beyond the early Vajjian period into Kushan...

SOURCE INSIGHT

Archaeology at Vaishali/Basarh includes occupation, seals, sealings, coins, religious remains, and structures extending beyond the early Vajjian period into Kushan...



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# Figure 2 revisited: Kolhua as a multi-period sacred landscape

**Figure 2 revisited: Kolhua as a multi-period sacred landscape**

The standing pillar at Kolhua is especially useful when read beside the surrounding stupas and monastic remains because it demonstrates how a sacred place accumulates…

**Pilgrims are authors, not transparent measuring instruments**

Faxian in the early fifth century and Xuanzang in the seventh are among the most important external witnesses to Buddhist landscapes in the Gangetic plain.

**Faxian: travel for Vinaya and sacred geography**

Faxian's journey at the turn of the fifth century was motivated in large part by the search for Vinaya and other Buddhist texts unavailable or incomplete in China.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Faxian's journey at the turn of the fifth century was motivated in large part by the search for Vinaya and other Buddhist texts unavailable or incomplete in China.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Figure 2. The lion-capital pillar and monastic remains at Kolhua, Vaishali. The visible complex contains…



FROM THE BOOK

Figure 2. The lion-capital pillar and monastic remains at Kolhua, Vaishali. The visible complex contains remains of more than one phase and must be read stratigraphically.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Faxian and Vaishali: memory between city and relic landscape

### Faxian and Vaishali: memory between city and relic landscape

Faxian's Vaishali material is briefer than Xuanzang's later account but preserves a Buddhist memory landscape associated with the Buddha, Ananda, relics, and monastic...

### Xuanzang: a seventh-century archive of ruins and communities

Xuanzang's account of Vaishali is unusually detailed.

### Ruins are historically specific evidence

A pilgrim's description of a ruined city is not proof that the entire region was depopulated.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A pilgrim's description of a ruined city is not proof that the entire region was depopulated.



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# Several hundred monasteries: count, convention, and translation

### Several hundred monasteries: count, convention, and translation

Large numerical statements in Chinese pilgrim records should be handled with care.

### Relational geography: sequence before coordinate

The safest way to use an itinerary is relational.

### Xuanzang’s Vaishali and religious plurality

Xuanzang's juxtaposition of a few occupied monasteries with many non-Buddhist temples and numerous Nirgrantha followers is especially significant for a history that…

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

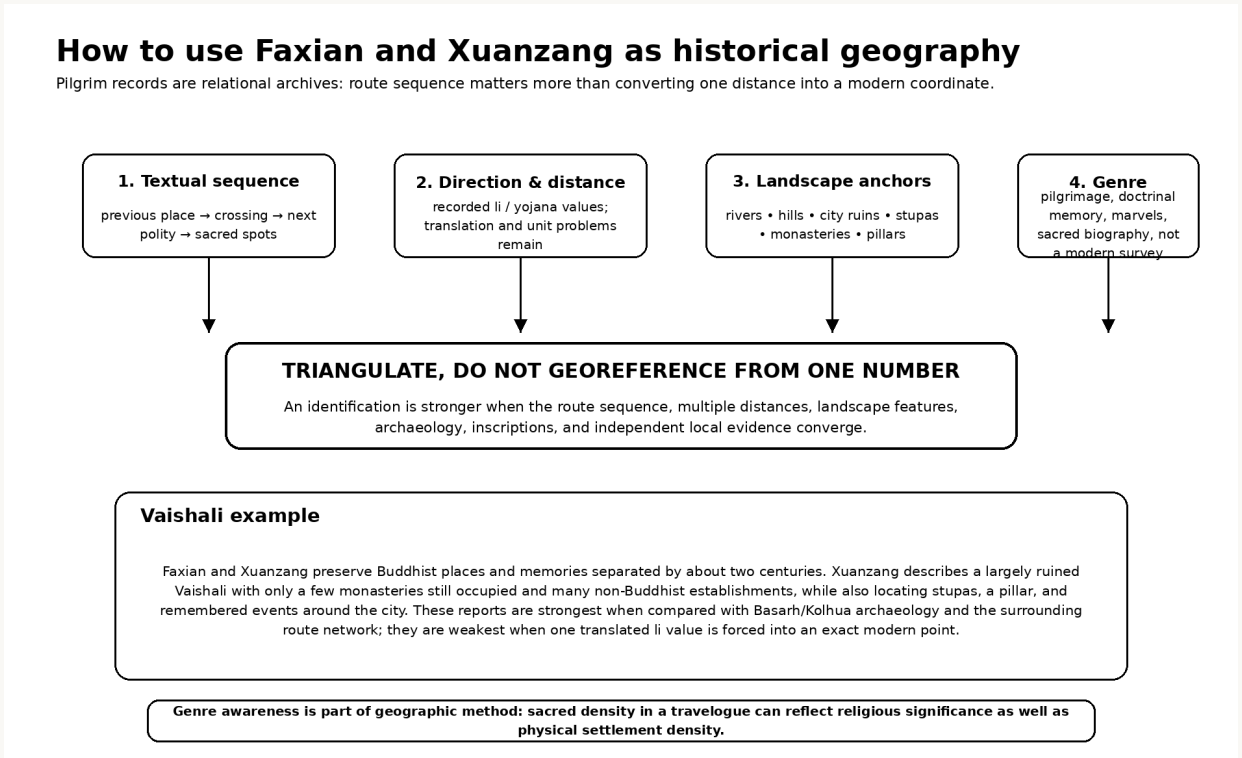
Xuanzang's juxtaposition of a few occupied monasteries with many non-Buddhist temples and numerous Nirgrantha followers is especially significant for a history that…



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 19. How to use Faxian and Xuanzang as historical geography. Pilgrim records are treated as…




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 19. How to use Faxian and Xuanzang as historical geography. Pilgrim records are treated as relational and genre-shaped archives rather than modern surveys.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# A pillar seen centuries later is evidence twice over

**A pillar seen centuries later is evidence twice over**

When a seventh-century pilgrim reports a pillar attributed to Ashoka, the statement has two chronological layers.

**Pilgrimage creates and preserves route knowledge**

Pilgrimage does more than record geography; it helps reproduce it.

**From Pataliputra to the north: continuity without a single road**

The Gangetic capital region and the north Bihar-Himalayan corridor recur across very different archives: Mauryan pillars, Buddhist itineraries, Gupta frontier claims, and…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Gangetic capital region and the north Bihar-Himalayan corridor recur across very different archives: Mauryan pillars, Buddhist itineraries, Gupta frontier claims…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 37–39

# Inscriptions and itineraries have opposite silences

**Inscriptions and itineraries have opposite silences**

Royal inscriptions foreground kings, officials, norms, conquest, lineage, and public claims; pilgrim records foreground monasteries, sacred events, relics, routes, and…

**Epigraphic absence is not political absence**

A locality without a surviving royal inscription was not necessarily outside imperial influence.

**Monument relocation and the danger of present position**

Some famous pillars elsewhere in India were moved in later periods, and the Allahabad pillar's long inscriptional biography itself raises questions of changing setting…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Some famous pillars elsewhere in India were moved in later periods, and the Allahabad pillar's long inscriptional biography itself raises questions of changing…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 40–42

# Colonial archaeology and the recovery of Buddhist geography

### Colonial archaeology and the recovery of Buddhist geography

Nineteenth-century surveyors used Chinese pilgrim translations, inscriptions, local names, and visible ruins to identify ancient Buddhist sites.

### Translation history is part of the evidence chain

The standard English forms 'Fa-Hien' and 'Hiuen Tsiang' in nineteenth-century scholarship reflect older systems of rendering Chinese names; Faxian and Xuanzang are now…

### Empires, sacred routes, and the India-Nepal frame

The present book spans India and Nepal, but the evidence in this chapter predates the modern international boundary.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The present book spans India and Nepal, but the evidence in this chapter predates the modern international boundary.



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# Evidentiary conclusions

**Evidentiary conclusions**

Chapter 10 changes the evidentiary scale of the book.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Chapter 10 changes the evidentiary scale of the book.



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# What this chapter establishes

### Translation history is part of the evidence chain

The standard English forms 'Fa-Hien' and 'Hiuen Tsiang' in nineteenth-century scholarship reflect older systems of rendering Chinese names; Faxian and Xuanzang...

### Empires, sacred routes, and the India-Nepal frame

The present book spans India and Nepal, but the evidence in this chapter predates the modern international boundary.

### Evidentiary conclusions

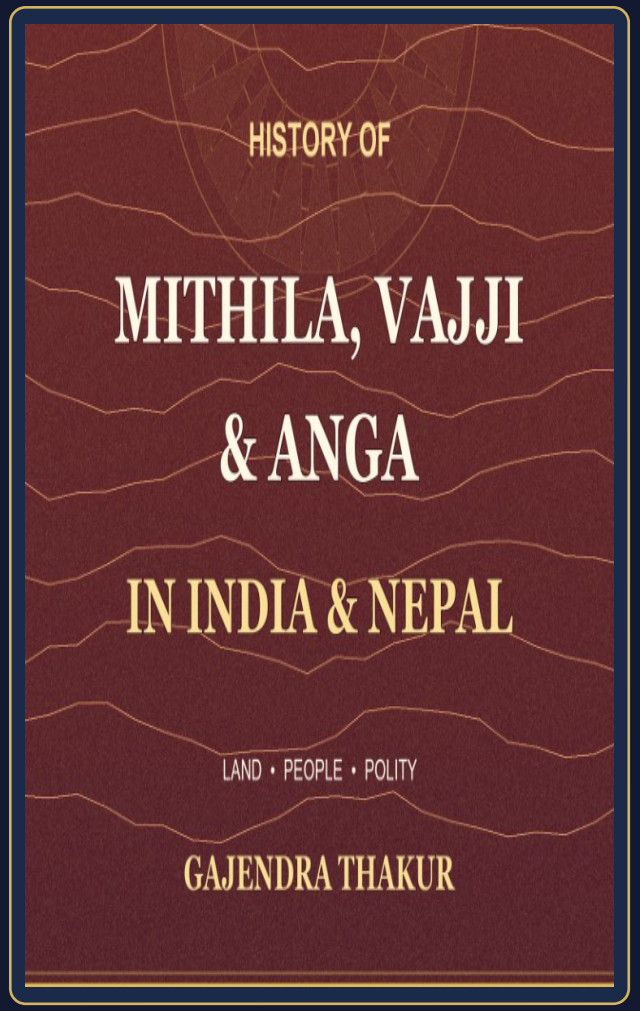
Chapter 10 changes the evidentiary scale of the book.

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 11

# Licchavi Nepal and the problem of continuity

A source-controlled history · ancient mithila, vajji & anga

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–9 — What “Licchavi Nepal” can securely mean

02 §10–18 — A connected Sanskritic court, not a copy of the Gangetic…

03 §19–28 — Aṃśuvarman and the problem of rank

04 §29–37 — Settlements, names and the geography of the Valley

05 §38–47 — Routes north and the Tibetan question

47 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# What “Licchavi Nepal” can securely mean

### What “Licchavi Nepal” can securely mean

For this chapter, “Licchavi Nepal” is first of all an inscriptional historical category.

### The epigraphic threshold and the silence before it

Mānadeva’s pillar is often called the beginning of “historical” Nepal because it creates a firm dated anchor, not because nothing existed before it.

### Changu Narayan as a dated political act

The Changu Narayan pillar is a monument, a religious object and a royal text at once.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Changu Narayan pillar is a monument, a religious object and a royal text at once.



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# Saṃvat 386 and the problem of eras

### Saṃvat 386 and the problem of eras

The conversion of the Changu Narayan date depends on identifying the era behind the numeral.

### Genealogy as history and royal rhetoric

Mānadeva's inscription names predecessors including Vṛṣadeva, Śaṅkaradeva and Dharmadeva.

### Rājyavatī and the political visibility of a royal widow

The Changu Narayan text gives Queen Rājyavatī a central role in the transition after Dharmadeva's death.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The Changu Narayan text gives Queen Rājyavatī a central role in the transition after Dharmadeva's death.



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# Campaigns east and west: power without a modern map

### Campaigns east and west: power without a modern map

Mānadeva’s pillar celebrates movement against opponents in the east and toward a western place conventionally read as Mallapuri, with assistance from his maternal uncle…

### Viṣṇu, kingship and the sacred setting

Changu Narayan is a Vaiṣṇava sacred complex, and the inscription’s language embeds Mānadeva’s dynasty within a Viṣṇu-centred royal idiom.

### Sanskrit public language and local society

The Licchavi inscriptions are predominantly in Sanskrit and use a north Indian-derived script tradition.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Licchavi inscriptions are predominantly in Sanskrit and use a north Indian-derived script tradition.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# A connected Sanskritic court, not a copy of the Gangetic plain

### A connected Sanskritic court, not a copy of the Gangetic plain

Court titles, religious vocabulary, scripts and political eulogy connect Licchavi Nepal with broader South Asian Sanskritic practices.

### The Vaishali hypothesis: why the shared name matters

The coincidence of the dynastic name is historically important and deserves explanation.

### Gupta-era Licchavi prestige and an intermediate chronological horizon

The Gupta evidence is useful precisely because it shows that “Licchavi” remained a politically valuable identity centuries after the Buddha-age Vajjian polity and before…

SOURCE INSIGHT

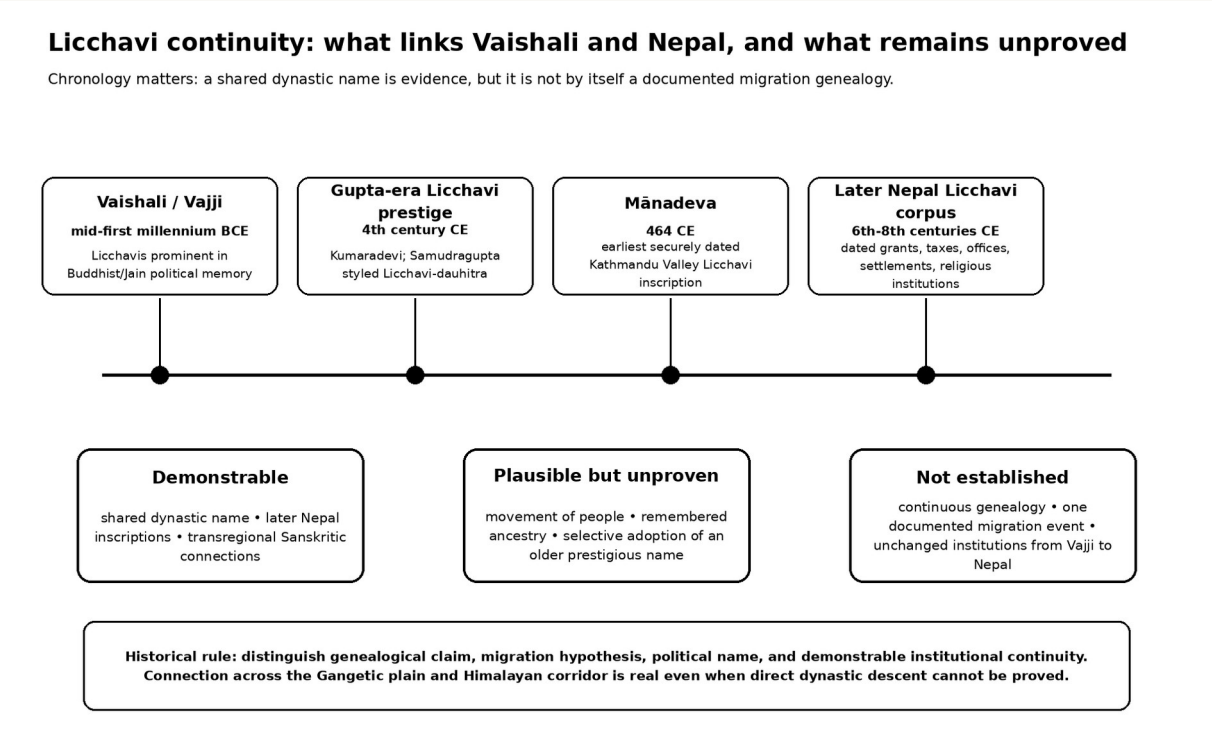
The Gupta evidence is useful precisely because it shows that “Licchavi” remained a politically valuable identity centuries after the Buddha-age Vajjian polity and…



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 20. Licchavi continuity: what links Vaishali and Nepal, and what remains unproved. The chronology…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 20. Licchavi continuity: what links Vaishali and Nepal, and what remains unproved. The chronology separates a shared dynastic name and demonstrable transregional connections from migration hypotheses and claims…



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# Later origin genealogies are evidence for memory

**Later origin genealogies are evidence for memory**

Later Nepalese inscriptions and chronicles offer more elaborate origin stories than the fifth-century records.

**Migration, name adoption and mixed ancestry are different hypotheses**

Several mechanisms could explain the recurrence of the Licchavi name.

**The Tarai and Himalayan approaches as connective space**

Whatever the dynasty’s origin, connections between the Kathmandu Valley, the Nepal Tarai and the middle Gangetic plain were structurally plausible and repeatedly…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Whatever the dynasty’s origin, connections between the Kathmandu Valley, the Nepal Tarai and the middle Gangetic plain were structurally plausible and repeatedly…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# An inscriptional kingdom, not a perfectly centralized state

### An inscriptional kingdom, not a perfectly centralized state

Licchavi royal edicts can sound comprehensive because they issue commands in the name of kings and powerful office-holders.

### Mānagṛha and the palace as an inscriptional address

Many Licchavi records are issued from named royal residences, among them Mānagṛha.

### Kailāśakūṭabhavana and the geography of changing power

Aṃśuvarman’s inscriptions are famously associated with Kailāśakūṭabhavana.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Aṃśuvarman’s inscriptions are famously associated with Kailāśakūṭabhavana.



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# Aṃśuvarman and the problem of rank

### Aṃśuvarman and the problem of rank

Aṃśuvarman emerges in the inscriptional record as an exceptionally powerful figure whose titles and practical authority changed over time.

### Jishnugupta, co-rulership and the danger of tidy dynastic charts

The seventh-century record becomes still harder to compress into a simple list of successive kings.

### Administrative words that resist easy translation

Early inscriptions refer to offices or jurisdictions such as kuṭhera, liṅgvala, śullya/solla and māpcoka.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Early inscriptions refer to offices or jurisdictions such as kuṭhera, liṅgvala, śullya/solla and māpcoka.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# Village agents and the changing language of authority

### Village agents and the changing language of authority

The land inscriptions show local intermediaries whose titles change over time.

### Pañcālī: corporate village life without a modern municipality

Pañcālī is one of the most important terms in later Licchavi land administration.

### Goṣṭhī and durable religious corporations

Goṣṭhī organizations appear in relation to temples, ritual maintenance, monasteries and endowed property.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Goṣṭhī organizations appear in relation to temples, ritual maintenance, monasteries and endowed property.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–27

# Land as the material base of royal and religious power

**Land as the material base of royal and religious power**

Licchavi grants repeatedly return to land because land linked cultivation, revenue, settlement and religious support.

**Taxes: names are firmer than rates**

The inscriptional record names several levies and obligations, but exact rates and incidence are often obscure.

**Exemption clauses as maps of ordinary state power**

A grant that exempts a village from the entry or demands of particular officials indirectly tells us what normally happened.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A grant that exempts a village from the entry or demands of particular officials indirectly tells us what normally happened.



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# Property, marriage and a rare window on women’s claims

### Property, marriage and a rare window on women’s claims

One inscription discussed by Sharma in relation to the māpcoka office preserves rules concerning a woman’s claim to her husband’s property under several circumstances…

### Settlements, names and the geography of the Valley

Licchavi inscriptions name villages, neighbourhoods, water places, shrines and palace centres.

### Water, cultivation and the Valley environment

The Kathmandu Valley’s political economy depended on irrigated and rain-fed cultivation, springs, channels, ponds and river systems.

SOURCE INSIGHT

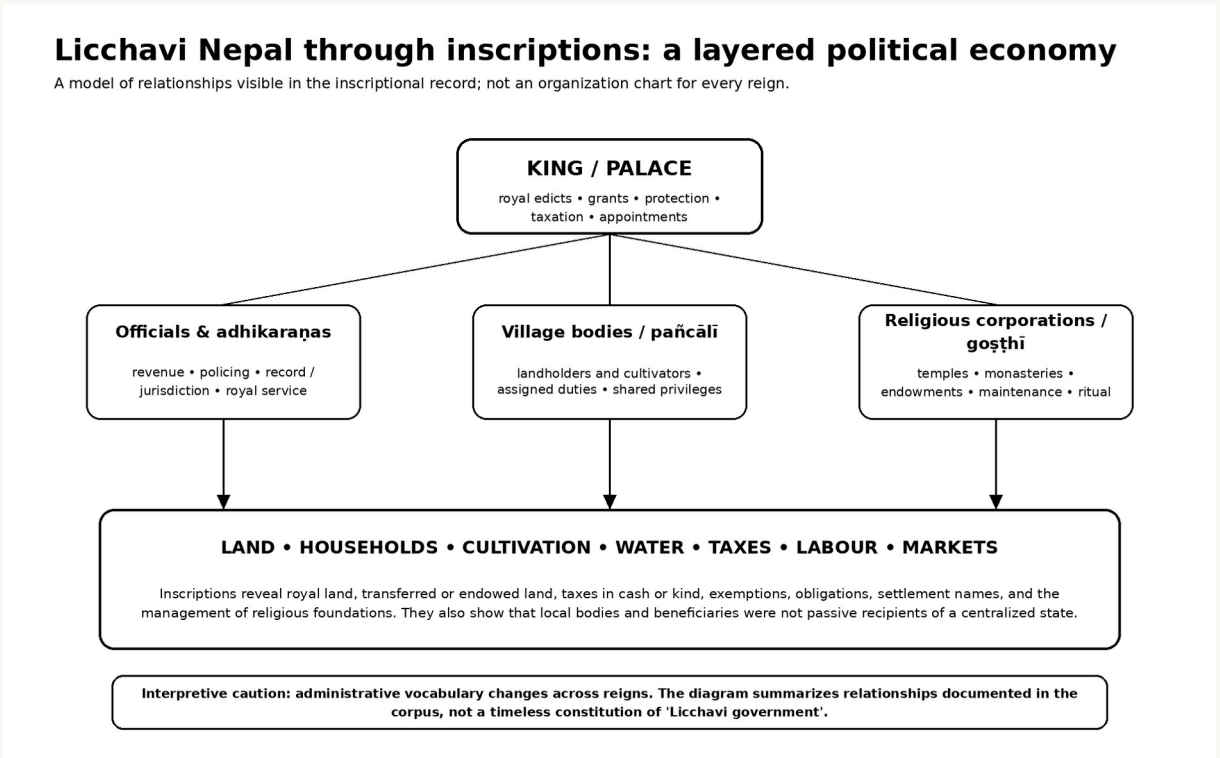
The Kathmandu Valley’s political economy depended on irrigated and rain-fed cultivation, springs, channels, ponds and river systems.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 21. Licchavi Nepal through inscriptions: a layered political economy. The diagram summarizes…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 21. Licchavi Nepal through inscriptions: a layered political economy. The diagram summarizes relationships repeatedly visible in land and religious inscriptions rather than presenting a single organization…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 31–33

# Coinage: authority, exchange and uncertain attribution

### Coinage: authority, exchange and uncertain attribution

Licchavi-period Nepal produced distinctive copper coinages with legends such as Śrī Mānāṅka, issues naming Aṃśuvarman or Jishnugupta, and religious types.

### Markets and monetization without a fully monetary economy

The existence of coins and cash-denominated levies demonstrates monetized transactions, but not a society in which all taxes, rents and exchanges were paid in money.

### Buddhist institutions in an inscriptional landscape

Buddhism in the Licchavi Valley is not known only from later Newar tradition.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Buddhism in the Licchavi Valley is not known only from later Newar tradition.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava patronage without “tolerance” as a slogan

### Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava patronage without “tolerance” as a slogan

Modern narratives often praise Licchavi Nepal for “religious tolerance.” The underlying evidence is real: inscriptions and art show patronage of multiple Hindu and…

### Stone sculpture as evidence with its own chronology

Licchavi-period sculpture is one of Nepal’s great art-historical archives.

### Changu Narayan: ancient inscription, layered monument

UNESCO describes Changu Narayan as a traditional settlement and temple ensemble preserving one of the Valley’s earliest inscriptions from the fifth century.

SOURCE INSIGHT

UNESCO describes Changu Narayan as a traditional settlement and temple ensemble preserving one of the Valley’s earliest inscriptions from the fifth century.



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# Routes to the Tarai and the Gangetic plain

### Routes to the Tarai and the Gangetic plain

Southward routes connected the Valley with the Tarai and the Ganga plain through river valleys and passes.

### Routes north and the Tibetan question

The Himalayan setting also linked the Valley northward.

### Xuanzang and Nepal from report

Xuanzang’s seventh-century account is valuable for the wider Himalayan-Gangetic world, but his Nepal information is generally treated as received report rather than…

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Xuanzang’s seventh-century account is valuable for the wider Himalayan-Gangetic world, but his Nepal information is generally treated as received report rather than…



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# Aṃśuvarman and learned reputation

### Aṃśuvarman and learned reputation

Chinese-derived traditions credit Aṃśuvarman with learning and even with a work on grammar or etymology.

### Calendars, scribes and administrative memory

The transition from the Śaka-dated records to a local era is not only a chronological technicality.

### Narendradeva and later seventh-century reconfiguration

Later seventh-century inscriptions record a restored prominence of Licchavi rulers after periods of shared or overshadowed kingship.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Later seventh-century inscriptions record a restored prominence of Licchavi rulers after periods of shared or overshadowed kingship.



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# Jayadeva II and the retrospective dynasty

### Jayadeva II and the retrospective dynasty

Jayadeva II's inscriptions are important both for later Licchavi rule and for how the dynasty represented its own past.

### When does the Licchavi period end?

Textbooks often give a neat terminal date around the mid-eighth century, while the epigraphic record and the use of Licchavi-associated eras extend later.

### Continuity into later Nepal: institutions rather than a frozen dynasty

Many features visible in Licchavi inscriptions—religious endowment, corporate management, local intermediaries, Sanskritic royal idioms and the importance of irrigated…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Many features visible in Licchavi inscriptions—religious endowment, corporate management, local intermediaries, Sanskritic royal idioms and the importance of…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 46–47

# What the Licchavi evidence contributes to a history of Mithila and the borderlands

### What the Licchavi evidence contributes to a history of Mithila and the borderlands

Licchavi Nepal belongs in this regional history because the Kathmandu Valley was linked southward to the Tarai and Gangetic world in which Videha, Vajji, Magadha and later Mithila were major historical reference points.

### Evidentiary conclusions

The history of Licchavi Nepal is unusually strong where it rests on dated inscriptions and unusually vulnerable where later origin traditions are converted into literal migration chronicles.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The history of Licchavi Nepal is unusually strong where it rests on dated inscriptions and unusually vulnerable where later origin traditions are converted into…



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# What this chapter establishes

### Continuity into later Nepal: institutions rather than a frozen dynasty

Many features visible in Licchavi inscriptions—religious endowment, corporate management, local intermediaries, Sanskritic royal idioms and the importance of…

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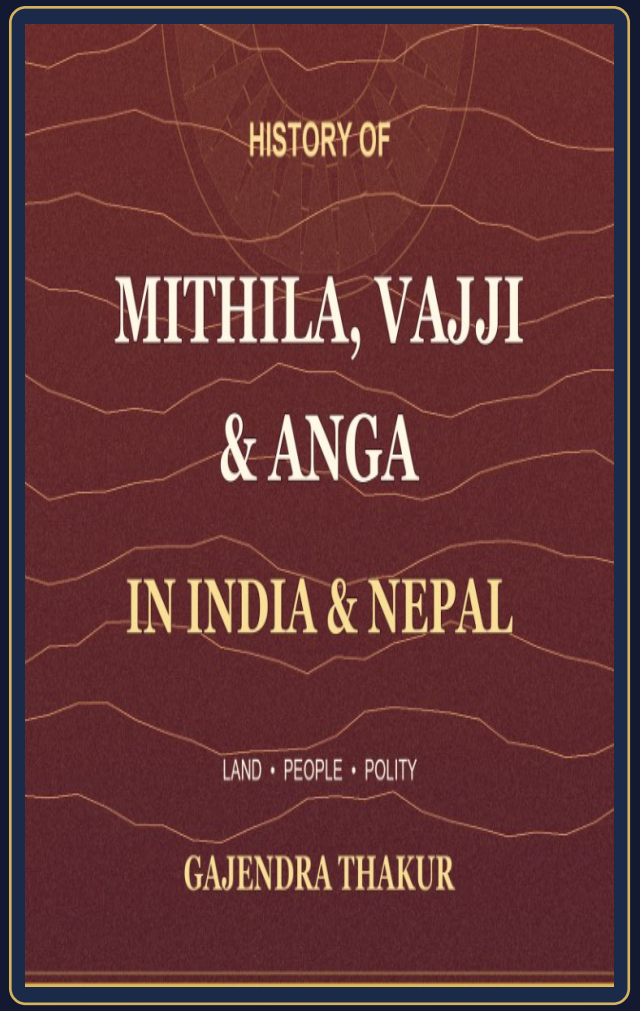
**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 12

# Tirabhukti and the early-medieval regional order

A source-controlled history · medieval period

Gajendra Thakur | Videha



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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–9 — From Videha to Tirabhukti: a change of scale

02 §10–18 — Officers in the Kaṭrā charter

03 §19–27 — A document addressed to society, not only to officials

04 §28–36 — Śaiva institutions and Pāśupata presence

05 §37–45 — The eastern edge and the Kosi problem

45 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# From Videha to Tirabhukti: a change of scale

**From Videha to Tirabhukti: a change of scale**

Tīrabhukti, later Tirhut, became a durable administrative and regional name for north Bihar, but it should not be treated as a timeless replacement for Videha or Mithila.

**The Basarh seals and the first firm administrative archive**

The excavations at Basarh, identified with ancient Vaiśālī, recovered a remarkable group of clay seals and sealings that makes Gupta-period Tīrabhukti unusually visible.

**Vaiśālī as headquarters: strong inference, bounded claim**

The Basarh record has often been summarized by saying that Vaiśālī was the capital of Tīrabhukti.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Basarh record has often been summarized by saying that Vaiśālī was the capital of Tīrabhukti.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 4–6

# Dhruvasvāminī and Govindagupta: dynastic presence in a provincial city

### Dhruvasvāminī and Govindagupta: dynastic presence in a provincial city

Dhruvasvāminī's seal is historically important because it locates imperial family identity within the Basarh archive.

### The yuvarāja establishment and divided government

Official sealings from Basarh refer to offices attached to the yuvarāja, including a kumārāmātya establishment and a military establishment.

### Bhukti, viṣaya, adhikaraṇa: vocabulary before hierarchy

Early-medieval administrative terms tempt the historian to build a neat hierarchy: empire, bhukti, viṣaya, village.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Early-medieval administrative terms tempt the historian to build a neat hierarchy: empire, bhukti, viṣaya, village.



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# Sealings as the archaeology of paperwork

**Sealings as the archaeology of paperwork**

A clay sealing survives because a document, container, door, bundle, or administrative transaction once required authentication.

**Tīrabhukti / Tirabhukti / later Tirhut. Early-medieval administrative and regional…**

The durability of the name can obscure political change.

**The Kaṭrā charter of Jīvagupta: a local eighth-century archive**

A copper plate secured from Kaṭrā in Muzaffarpur district opens a different window onto Tīrabhukti.

SOURCE INSIGHT

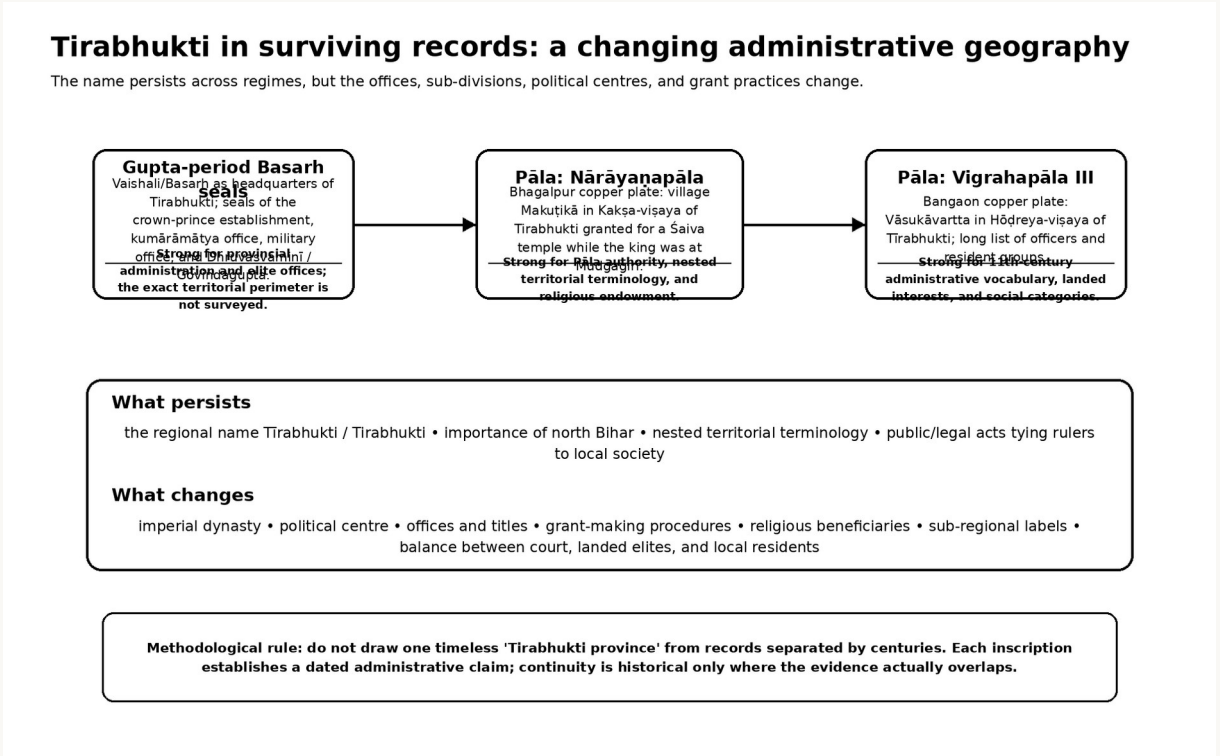
A copper plate secured from Kaṭrā in Muzaffarpur district opens a different window onto Tīrabhukti.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 22. Tirabhukti in surviving records: a changing administrative geography. The regional name persists…




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 22. Tirabhukti in surviving records: a changing administrative geography. The regional name persists from Gupta to Pāla records, while offices, sub-divisions, political centres, and grant practices change.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# Officers in the Kaṭrā charter

### Officers in the Kaṭrā charter

The Kaṭrā plate names officials whose functions include records and accounts, administration or peace-and-war business, palace access, military command, and subordinate…

### A Chāmuṇḍā temple and the material content of a grant

The Kaṭrā charter is unusually useful because the donation formula describes more than an abstract village name.

### Agrarian expansion without the fiction of empty land

Early-medieval land-grant history was once narrated as kings settling empty forest with Brahman colonists.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Early-medieval land-grant history was once narrated as kings settling empty forest with Brahman colonists.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 13–15

# The river plain and unstable boundaries

### The river plain and unstable boundaries

Boundary clauses in copper plates often sound permanent, but north Bihar's floodplain was physically mobile.

### Pāla power and the regional value of Tīrabhukti

From the eighth century onward, Pāla rulers made eastern India part of a large but changing political field extending across Bengal and Bihar.

### The Bhagalpur plate of Nārāyaṇapāla

The Bhagalpur copper plate of Nārāyaṇapāla is a major anchor because it explicitly places the granted village Makuṭikā in Kakṣa-viṣaya of Tīrabhukti.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Bhagalpur copper plate of Nārāyaṇapāla is a major anchor because it explicitly places the granted village Makuṭikā in Kakṣa-viṣaya of Tīrabhukti.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# A Buddhist dynasty and a Śaiva endowment

### A Buddhist dynasty and a Śaiva endowment

Nārāyaṇapāla's charter is a useful corrective to religious shorthand.

### Mudgagiri and administration across the Ganga

The repeated appearance of Mudgagiri or Munger as a Pāla jayaskandhāvāra in copper plates shows how military mobility and government overlapped.

### The Bangaon plate of Vigrahapāla III

The Bangaon plate, dated to the seventeenth regnal year of Vigrahapāla III, gives the most detailed Pāla-period picture used in this chapter.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Bangaon plate, dated to the seventeenth regnal year of Vigrahapāla III, gives the most detailed Pāla-period picture used in this chapter.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# A document addressed to society, not only to officials

**A document addressed to society, not only to officials**

The Bangaon charter's audience extends beyond court office-holders.

**Fields, pasture, trees, water, taxes, and exclusion**

The Bangaon plate defines the transferred half-village share through fields, boundaries, grass, pasture, mango and madhūka trees, water and dry land, pits and saline or…

**The cultivator does not disappear when revenue is transferred**

The Bangaon text specifically requires resident kṣetrakaras, cultivators, to obey the order and deliver the appropriate shares, dues, taxes, and cash payments at the…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Bangaon text specifically requires resident kṣetrakaras, cultivators, to obey the order and deliver the appropriate shares, dues, taxes, and cash payments at the…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# A migrant learned Brahman in the Bangaon plate

### A migrant learned Brahman in the Bangaon plate

The donee Śrī-Ghāṇṭūkaśarman is described with a detailed scholastic and genealogical identity.

### Migration and the making of learned regions

Later Mithila became famous for Sanskrit jurisprudence, logic, ritual studies, and scholastic institutions.

### The feudalism debate: useful questions, dangerous template

Early-medieval Indian history was profoundly shaped by debates over 'Indian feudalism'.

SOURCE INSIGHT

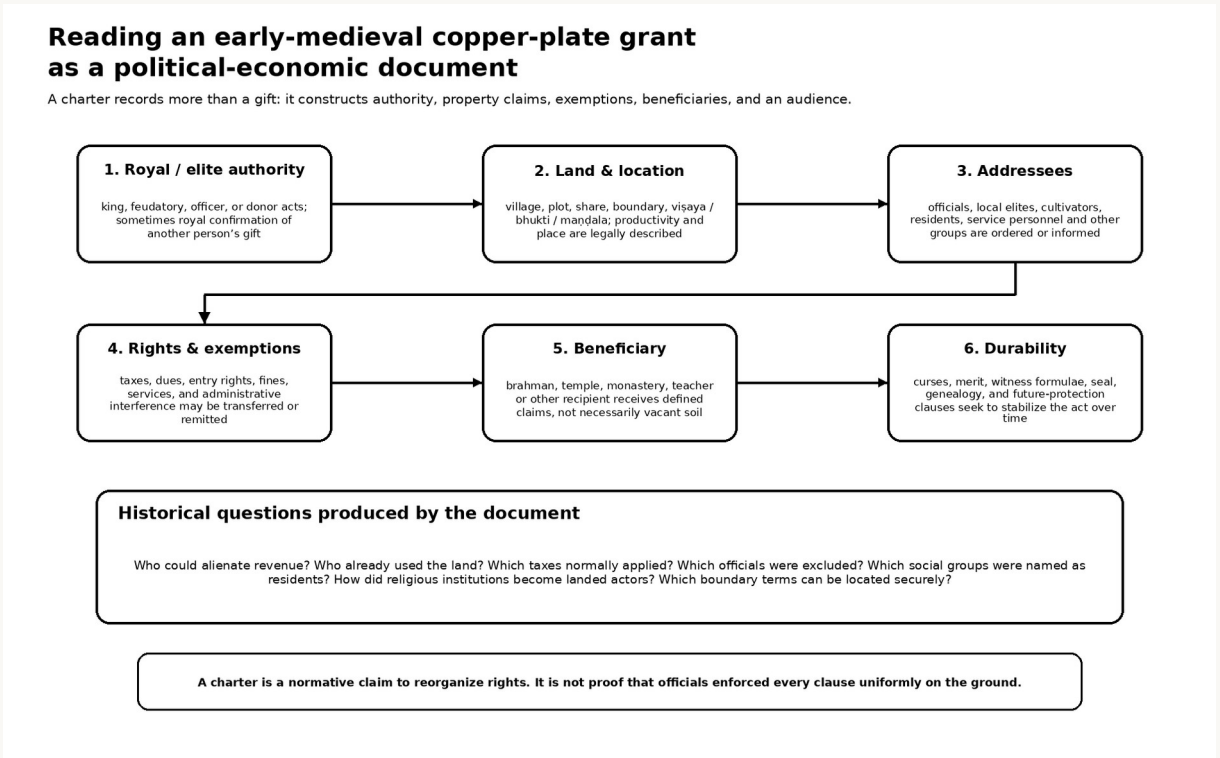
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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 23. Reading an early-medieval copper-plate grant as a political-economic document. The model treats…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 23. Reading an early-medieval copper-plate grant as a political-economic document. The model treats a charter as a reorganization of authority, resources, taxes, obligations, and social relationships rather…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–27

# Local magnates and royal ratification

### Local magnates and royal ratification

Not every early-medieval grant began as a king's personal redistribution of crown land.

### Religious institutions as landed actors

Temples and monasteries were not only ritual destinations.

### Buddhist networks beyond royal labels

The Pāla age is associated with major Buddhist institutions at Nālandā, Vikramaśīla, Odantapurī, and elsewhere, and these centres linked Bihar to Bengal, the Himalayan…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Pāla age is associated with major Buddhist institutions at Nālandā, Vikramaśīla, Odantapurī, and elsewhere, and these centres linked Bihar to Bengal, the…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Śaiva institutions and Pāśupata presence

### Śaiva institutions and Pāśupata presence

The Bhagalpur grant of Nārāyaṇapāla provides direct evidence for Śaiva institutional patronage connected with Tīrabhukti.

### Goddess worship and the Kaṭrā charter

The Chāmuṇḍā-bhaṭṭārikā grant in the Kaṭrā plate is especially valuable because goddess worship appears not as a vague literary background but as a beneficiary of a…

### Writing, Sanskrit, and the political public

Copper plates are composed in highly formal Sanskrit, often beginning with dynastic praise and ending with conventional verses threatening those who violate a gift.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Copper plates are composed in highly formal Sanskrit, often beginning with dynastic praise and ending with conventional verses threatening those who violate a gift.



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# From Gupta script to eastern regional scripts

### From Gupta script to eastern regional scripts

The palaeography of the regional inscriptions changes markedly across the centuries.

### Manuscripts and the 1019/20 Tīrabhukti colophon

A manuscript colophon copied in Nepalese script and dated to Vikrama Saṃvat 1076, corresponding to 1019-20 CE if the era is correctly identified, states that the Rāmāyaṇa…

### Which Gāṅgeyadeva ruled Tīrabhukti?

Many historians identified the Gāṅgeyadeva of the 1019-20 colophon with the Kalachuri-Chedi ruler Gāṅgeyadeva of Tripuri, whose expansion affected Varanasi and the middle…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Many historians identified the Gāṅgeyadeva of the 1019-20 colophon with the Kalachuri-Chedi ruler Gāṅgeyadeva of Tripuri, whose expansion affected Varanasi and the…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# Political competition around the Ganga in the eleventh century

### Political competition around the Ganga in the eleventh century

Whether or not every detail of the Gāṅgeyadeva identification is accepted, the early eleventh century clearly belonged to a competitive north Indian political field.

### The Bangaon plate and Pāla return or persistence

The Bangaon plate of Vigrahapāla III demonstrates Pāla authority in Tīrabhukti during the later eleventh century, regardless of how one reconstructs the intervening…

### Champaran and the Himalayan edge

The Kaṭrā grant and later regional evidence keep western and north-western Tīrabhukti visible as more than a peripheral forest zone.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Kaṭrā grant and later regional evidence keep western and north-western Tīrabhukti visible as more than a peripheral forest zone.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 37–39

# The eastern edge and the Kosi problem

### The eastern edge and the Kosi problem

The eastern reach of Tīrabhukti is harder to reconstruct because administrative names in the Kosi and adjoining zones intersect with Pundravardhana-oriented networks and…

### Markets and commercialization without an urban-decline cliché

The older 'Indian feudalism' model linked land grants with the decline of trade and urban life.

### Social stratification in the charter formula

The Bangaon plate's sequence from Brahmans and local notables to cultivators and groups such as Medas, Andhras, and Chāṇḍālas is often cited as evidence of hierarchical…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Bangaon plate's sequence from Brahmans and local notables to cultivators and groups such as Medas, Andhras, and Chāṇḍālas is often cited as evidence of…



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# Women in a male-heavy landed archive

### Women in a male-heavy landed archive

Most surviving Tīrabhukti land charters foreground male kings, officials, Brahman donees, priests, and household heads.

### Learning before the later Mithila schools

By the high medieval and early modern periods, Mithila would become one of South Asia's most famous centres of Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, Dharmaśāstra, ritual, and manuscript…

### Regional identity as accumulated practice

Tīrabhukti became durable because rulers, scribes, officials, religious institutions, and communities repeatedly used the name.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Tīrabhukti became durable because rulers, scribes, officials, religious institutions, and communities repeatedly used the name.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 43–45

# From Tīrabhukti to Tirhut

### From Tīrabhukti to Tirhut

The phonological and documentary path from Sanskrit Tīrabhukti to later Tirhut is generally accepted, but etymological explanations of the compound itself vary and should…

### The threshold of the Karnata period

By the late eleventh century, the political environment that had sustained alternating Pāla and rival claims in north Bihar was changing.

### Evidentiary conclusions

The early-medieval history of Tīrabhukti is strongest where dated administrative and donative records replace retrospective dynastic storytelling.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The early-medieval history of Tīrabhukti is strongest where dated administrative and donative records replace retrospective dynastic storytelling.



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# What this chapter establishes

### From Tīrabhukti to Tirhut

The phonological and documentary path from Sanskrit Tīrabhukti to later Tirhut is generally accepted, but etymological explanations of the compound itself vary...

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By the late eleventh century, the political environment that had sustained alternating Pāla and rival claims in north Bihar was changing.

### Evidentiary conclusions

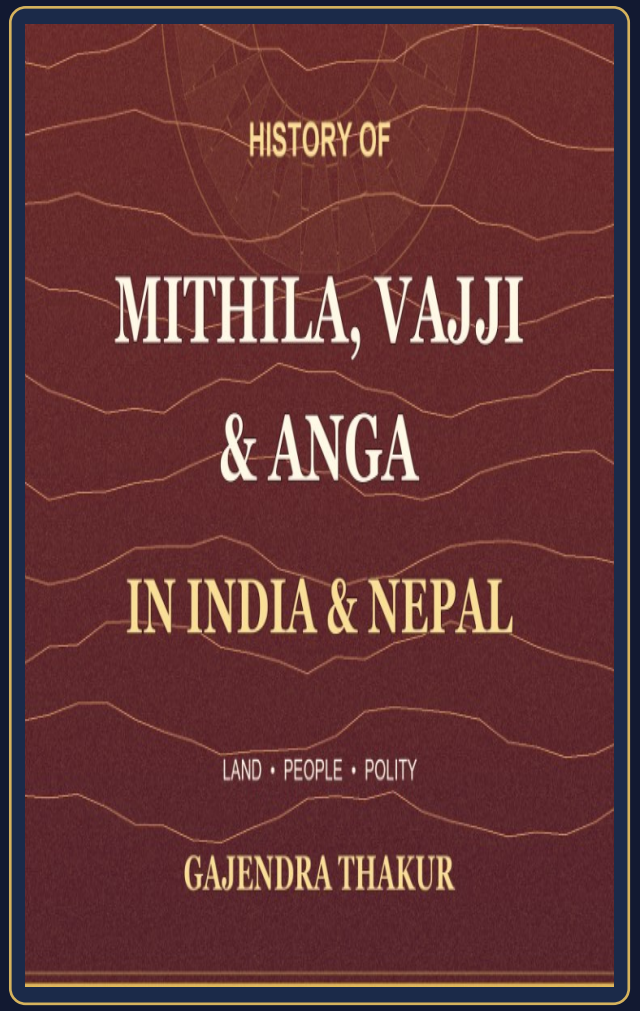
The early-medieval history of Tīrabhukti is strongest where dated administrative and donative records replace retrospective dynastic storytelling.

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 13

# The Karnatas and Simraongarh

A source-controlled history · medieval period

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–10 — A border-crossing kingdom

02 §11–20 — Harisiṃhadeva and the Tughluq conquest horizon

03 §21–31 — The court seen by a traveller

04 §32–41 — Artisans and military provisioning

05 §42–52 — The problem of dating ramparts

52 analysed sections · 3 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# A border-crossing kingdom

### A border-crossing kingdom

The Karnata polity is best understood as a kingdom whose political geography crossed the modern India–Nepal boundary rather than as a dynasty confined to one present-day…

### The 1097 horizon and what an inscription can establish

The year 1097 CE has long functioned as the conventional beginning of Nānyadeva’s rule.

### Simraongarh as capital and route node

Simraongarh was not merely a palace site. Its scale, ramparts, ditches, mounds, sculpture, architectural fragments and dispersed occupation indicate a large fortified…

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

A capital of this kind should not be imagined as an isolated walled island. Fortification can protect a court, treasury, stores and elite residence, but it also presupposes a supporting countryside.



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# Dharmasvāmin in 1236: a near-contemporary visitor

### Dharmasvāmin in 1236: a near-contemporary visitor

A rare near-contemporary window is supplied by the Tibetan monk and translator Dharmasvāmin (Chag lo tsa ba Chos rje dpal).

### Court, scholarship, and political language

Karnata Mithila became an important setting for Sanskrit scholarship, juridical writing, musicological knowledge and the development of regional literary expression.

### Agrarian revenue, households, and delegated power

The concentration of courtly life at Simraongarh depended on agrarian surplus, but the surviving sources do not provide a complete revenue manual.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This mediated structure explains why sovereignty can be both impressive and uneven.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# Panji traditions: genealogy, memory, and evidence

### Panji traditions: genealogy, memory, and evidence

Maithil panji or genealogical traditions became central to the regulation and memory of elite marriage networks, and Anshuman Pandey's study demonstrates the exceptional…

### North Bihar, the Tarai, and the Nepal Valley

Political and cultural connections with Nepal were structural rather than episodic. The Tarai did not end the political world of Mithila; it formed part of it.

### The present landscape and the problem of visual evidence

Modern photographs of Simraongarh are indispensable for documenting the present condition of the site, its shrines, vegetation, settlement and visible archaeological…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Photograph: Gaurav Dhwaj Khadka, 2019. CC BY-SA 4.0. Wikimedia Commons file page



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Figure 3. Ranibas Math and Ram-Janaki Temple at the Simraungadh site, photographed in 2019. This present-day…



FROM THE BOOK

Figure 3. Ranibas Math and Ram-Janaki Temple at the Simraungadh site, photographed in 2019. This present-day monument belongs to the archaeological landscape but should not be assigned automatically to the…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# Archaeology of the fortified capital

### Archaeology of the fortified capital

The Italian-Nepalese investigations at Simraongarh transformed discussion of the capital by placing stratigraphy beside text.

### Harisiṃhadeva and the Tughluq conquest horizon

The last major Karnata ruler, Harisiṃhadeva, occupies a prominent place in regional memory because the collapse of his court became a hinge between dynastic eras.

### From Karnata collapse to Oiniwar transition

The decades after the fall of Simraongarh demonstrate why dynastic periodization can conceal as much as it clarifies.

SOURCE INSIGHT

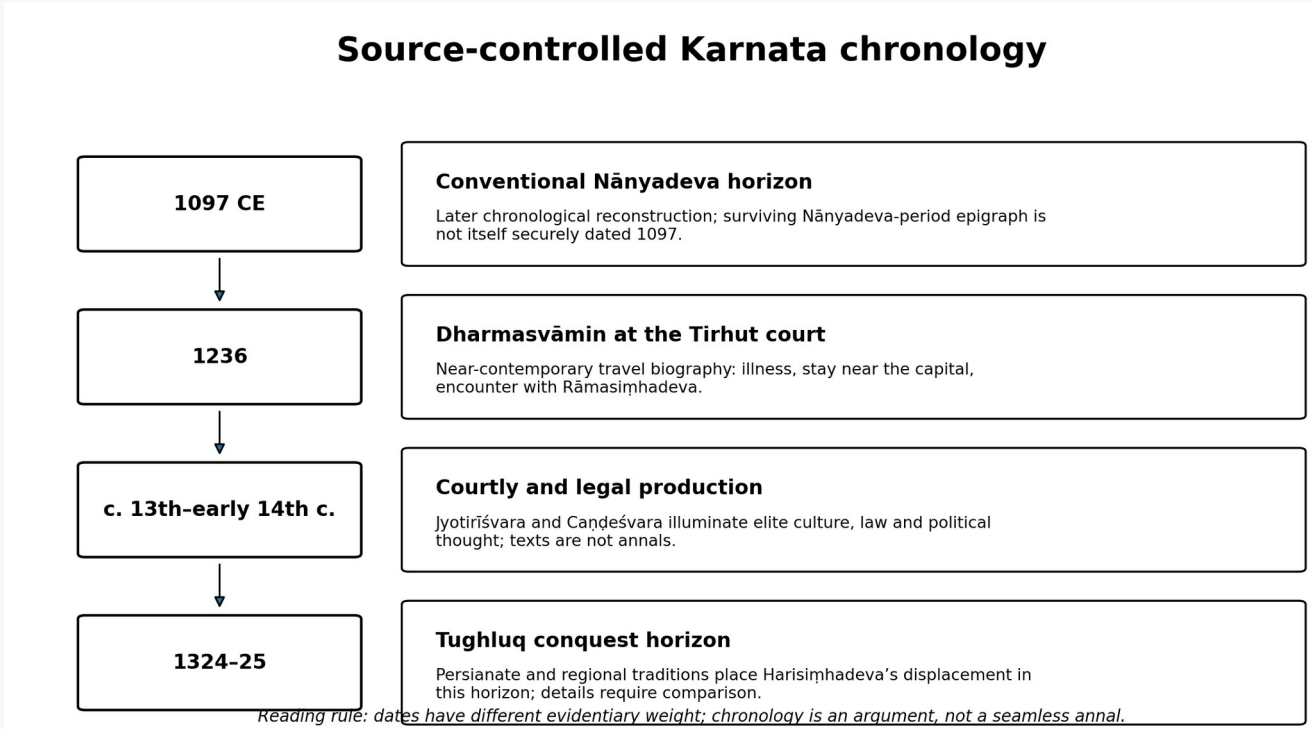
Chapter 14 therefore begins not with an abrupt restoration of an independent Mithila state, but with reconstituted authority.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 24. Source-controlled Karnata chronology. The graphic separates the conventional 1097 Nānyadeva…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 24. Source-controlled Karnata chronology. The graphic separates the conventional 1097 Nānyadeva horizon, Dharmasvāmin's 1236 visit, the late Karnata court-text horizon, and the 1324–25 Tughluq conquest horizon…

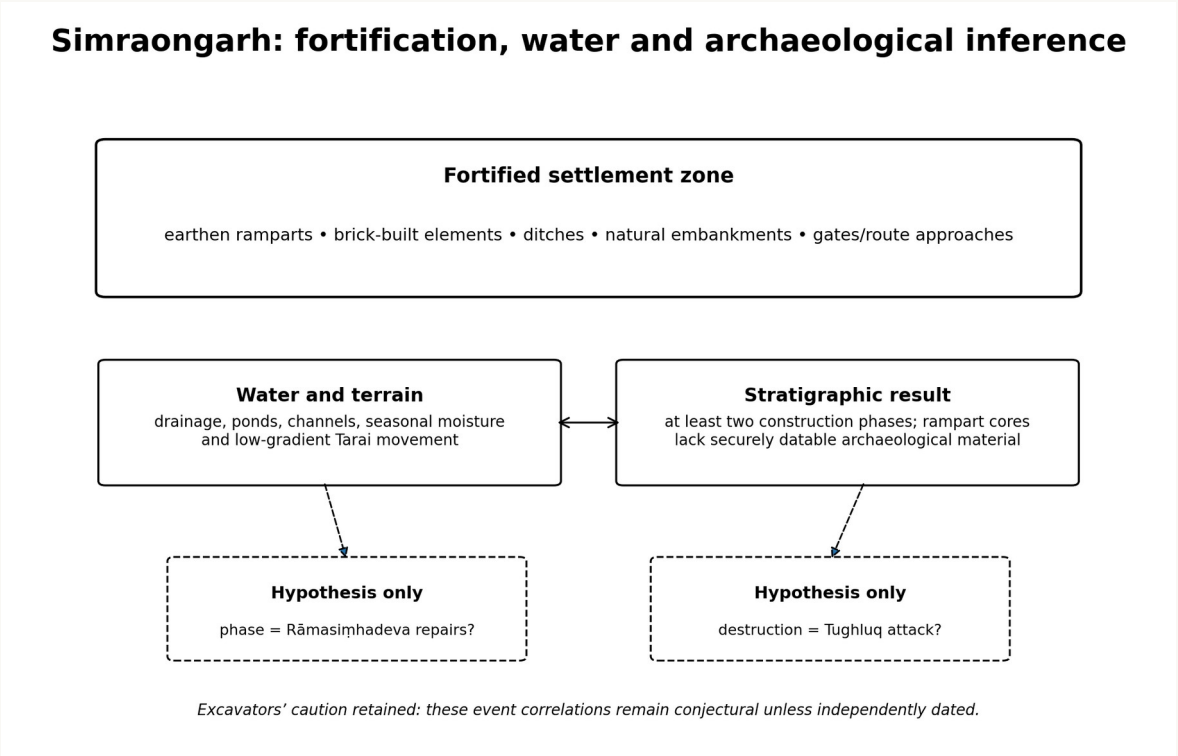
Editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026. Original schematic; no third-party image content. Sources: Petech 1984; Roerich 1959; Sinha 1979; Salomon 1998.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 25. Simraongarh fortification and hydraulic system. Excavation established at least two…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 25. Simraongarh fortification and hydraulic system. Excavation established at least two fortification phases; proposed correlations with Rāmasiṃhadeva's repairs or a Tughluq destruction event remain hypotheses…

Editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026. Original schematic; no third-party image content. Sources: Vidale, Balista, and Torrieri 1993; Vidale and Lugli 1997.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 13–15

# A dynasty label is not an ethnic map

**A dynasty label is not an ethnic map**

The label ‘Karnata’ is historically real, but it should not be made to carry more information than the sources permit.

**Political inheritance after Pāla-Sena fragmentation**

The rise of Nānyadeva belongs to a wider eastern Indian transition in which Pāla and Sena authority fragmented unevenly.

**Frontier ecology and strategic choice**

Simraongarh’s Tarai location made strategic sense because defence and communication were inseparable from ecology.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Simraongarh’s Tarai location made strategic sense because defence and communication were inseparable from ecology.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# Routes before modern borders

**Routes before modern borders**

North–south routes connecting the Gangetic plain, the Tarai and Kathmandu approaches existed long before an international boundary divided India and Nepal.

**Capital scale without population arithmetic**

The physical scale of Simraongarh confirms a major centre, but it does not license a precise medieval population estimate in the absence of settlement-density, household…

**Earthworks as labour history**

A rampart is not only a military object. Its construction required quarrying or collecting earth, transporting materials, organizing work teams, coordinating drainage and…

SOURCE INSIGHT

A rampart is not only a military object. Its construction required quarrying or collecting earth, transporting materials, organizing work teams, coordinating drainage…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# Brick, timber, bamboo, and construction knowledge

**Brick, timber, bamboo, and construction knowledge**

The fortification trench is important for its combination of earthen deposits, fired-brick elements and traces interpreted as structural use of organic materials.

**Water control without a hydraulic-state thesis**

Ponds, ditches, drains and low-lying channels belong to the defensive and domestic landscape of Simraongarh, yet they do not prove a centralized ‘hydraulic state’.

**The court seen by a traveller**

Dharmasvāmin’s encounter is unusually valuable because it records the court from the perspective of a mobile outsider.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Dharmasvāmin’s encounter is unusually valuable because it records the court from the perspective of a mobile outsider.



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# Gifts and religious patronage as political communication

### Gifts and religious patronage as political communication

The gifts reported in the Dharmasvāmin narrative are politically meaningful even without reconstructing their exact monetary value.

### Travel time and historical geography

Itineraries provide sequences and travel intervals rather than GPS coordinates.

### Rāmasiṃhadeva: repair tradition and archaeological restraint

Textual tradition associates Rāmasiṃhadeva with activity at the fortified capital, and this has encouraged attempts to identify one archaeological construction phase as…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Textual tradition associates Rāmasiṃhadeva with activity at the fortified capital, and this has encouraged attempts to identify one archaeological construction phase…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–27

# Jyotirīśvara’s social catalogue

### Jyotirīśvara’s social catalogue

Varṇaratnākara is valuable because its classificatory imagination ranges far beyond kings.

### Varṇaratnākara as genre and evidence

Genre governs historical use. An encyclopaedic descriptive work organizes the world through rhetorical convention, inherited lists and local observation. Some details may…

### Caṇḍeśvara and political hierarchy

Caṇḍeśvara’s political and legal writings are especially relevant to a period in which regional rulers negotiated hierarchy.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Caṇḍeśvara’s political and legal writings are especially relevant to a period in which regional rulers negotiated hierarchy.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Law books and administrative practice

### Law books and administrative practice

A legal digest gains historical significance when it is placed beside the institutions that needed legal expertise.

### Music, performance, and courtly status

Karnata court culture included music and performance as forms of expertise and prestige.

### Language choice at court

Sanskrit retained enormous authority in law, theology and learned composition, but the region’s communicative life was multilingual.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Sanskrit retained enormous authority in law, theology and learned composition, but the region’s communicative life was multilingual.



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# Cultivators beneath the royal narrative

### Cultivators beneath the royal narrative

Cultivators appear mostly indirectly in Karnata political history, yet they sustained the surplus on which fortified and courtly life depended.

### Artisans and military provisioning

Fortifications, weapons, transport and court consumption required masons, brick-makers, carpenters, smiths, potters, leather workers and carriers.

### Markets and grain movement

A large court created demand that linked surrounding villages to exchange nodes.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A large court created demand that linked surrounding villages to exchange nodes.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# Landed intermediaries and local chiefs

**Landed intermediaries and local chiefs**

Regional kingship depended on people who could convert a royal claim into local compliance.

**Religious endowment and the geography of authority**

Temple and monastic patronage created durable nodes of political memory.

**Lineage and matrimonial regulation**

Elite marriage linked political and scholarly households.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Elite marriage linked political and scholarly households.



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# Panji memory and later manuscript layers

### Panji memory and later manuscript layers

A panji manuscript copied centuries after the Karnata period can preserve older genealogical information while also reflecting later rearrangement, correction…

### Nepal chronicles and their chronological layers

Nepalese chronicles are indispensable for Karnata–Valley connections, especially around Harisiṃhadeva, but they are not contemporary annals in every surviving form.

### Refuge and migration after defeat

Political defeat often produces movements that are more historically durable than the battle itself.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Political defeat often produces movements that are more historically durable than the battle itself.



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# Sculpture and reused architectural fragments

**Sculpture and reused architectural fragments**

Sculptural and architectural fragments at Simraongarh show artistic production and sacred investment, but many objects have been moved, reused or recontextualized.

**Present shrines inside an archaeological landscape**

Ranibas Math and the Ram-Janaki Temple are part of the living landscape of Simraongarh.

**The problem of dating ramparts**

Earth ramparts are notoriously difficult to date when their fills contain redeposited soil and few diagnostic objects.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Earth ramparts are notoriously difficult to date when their fills contain redeposited soil and few diagnostic objects.



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# Two construction phases: what is secure

### Two construction phases: what is secure

The most important positive result of the test trench is the recognition of at least two major construction phases.

### Fire and destruction do not name an attacker

Burning, collapse or abrupt abandonment can be dramatic archaeological evidence, but they do not carry the name of an army.

### Event history and site-formation history

A conquest account asks who attacked whom and when. Site-formation analysis asks how deposits accumulated, walls were repaired, surfaces eroded and materials were reused.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

A conquest account asks who attacked whom and when.



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# Fortification beyond warfare

### Fortification beyond warfare

Walls define access and communicate authority even when no battle occurs.

### Harisiṃhadeva in regional memory

Harisiṃhadeva became a major figure in later Mithila memory because his reign marked both culmination and rupture.

### Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq and the eastern campaign

The Tughluq advance into Tirhut belongs to a broader eastern military programme.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The Tughluq advance into Tirhut belongs to a broader eastern military programme.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 49–51

# What survived the conquest

### What survived the conquest

The court at Simraongarh could fall while agrarian communities, temples, learned lineages, scribal skills and local property relations continued.

### The transition was a process, not a date

1324–25 is a useful conquest horizon, not a magical dividing line after which every institution changed.

### Methodological conclusions from Simraongarh

Simraongarh demonstrates the value of refusing source hierarchy by habit.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Simraongarh demonstrates the value of refusing source hierarchy by habit.



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# Evidentiary conclusions

**Evidentiary conclusions**

The Karnata period is securely historical, but its cleanest textbook dates are not uniformly documented.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Karnata period is securely historical, but its cleanest textbook dates are not uniformly documented.



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# What this chapter establishes

### The transition was a process, not a date

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### Evidentiary conclusions

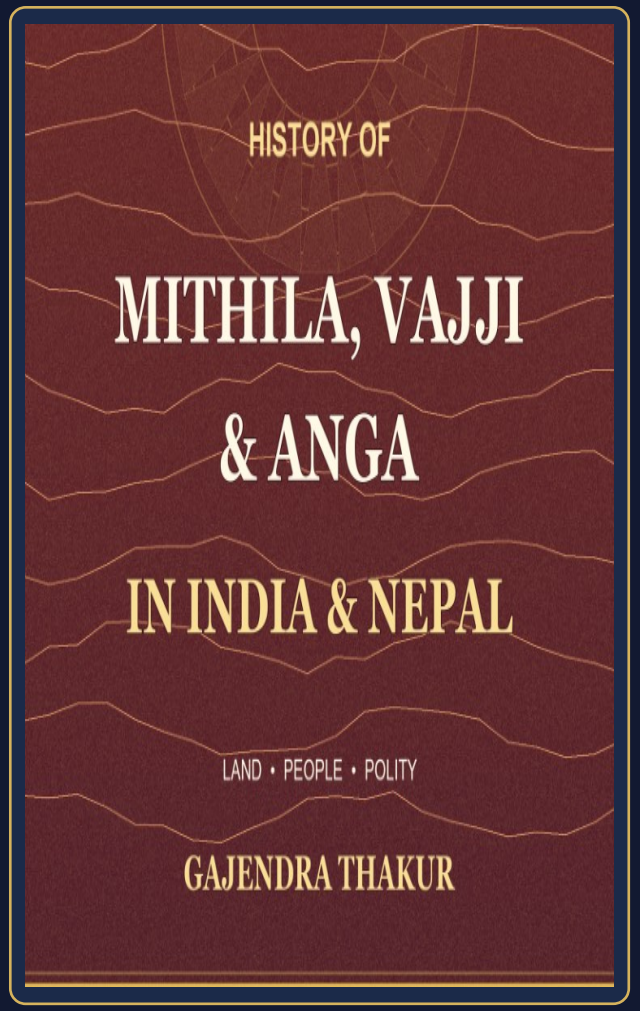
The Karnata period is securely historical, but its cleanest textbook dates are not uniformly documented.

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 14

# Oiniwar rule, Sultanate power, and political transition

A source-controlled history · medieval period

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements




**Reconstituted authority after 1324–25**

**Coinage as a material claim: Śivasiṃha and Bhairavasiṃha**

**Lakṣmaṇasena-era dates and conversion**

**Patronage and Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura without collapsing…**

**Anumati Devi and the Bhagirathpur genealogy**

45 analysed sections · 3 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# Reconstituted authority after 1324–25

### Reconstituted authority after 1324–25

The Oiniwar period should not be introduced as the automatic restoration of a sovereign Mithila kingdom immediately after the fall of the Karnatas.

### The problem of the dynastic beginning

Kāmeśvara is remembered as the progenitor of the Oiniwar line, with Oini and Sugauna appearing in later historical geography associated with the family.

### Oini, Sugauna, and a dispersed court geography

Unlike Simraongarh, the Oiniwar political landscape is not defined by one overwhelmingly visible fortified capital.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Court geography also overlapped with sacred and scholarly geography.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 4–6

# Gaṇeśvara’s death and the historical work of Kīrtilatā

### Gaṇeśvara’s death and the historical work of Kīrtilatā

Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura’s Kīrtilatā is indispensable to the early Oiniwar political narrative.

### Kīrtisiṃha, Jaunpur, and restoration

Kīrtilatā connects Kīrtisiṃha’s recovery of position with the assistance of Sultan Ibrāhīm Shāh Sharqī of Jaunpur, whose reign belongs to the first half of the fifteenth…

### Śivasiṃha and the politics of autonomy

Śivasiṃha is among the most remembered Oiniwar rulers because of his association with the later Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura and because coins bearing his name survive.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The small gold coins attributed to Śivasiṃha are especially important because coinage is a public material claim.



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# Queens, households, and succession

**Queens, households, and succession**

Oiniwar genealogical and literary traditions remember royal women as more than anonymous spouses, and Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura's courtly career is associated in later accounts…

**Sultanate interaction: Delhi, Jaunpur, and Bengal**

Three Sultanate fields matter especially for the Oiniwar period. Delhi supplied the conquest background and, in some reconstructions, recognition for the early dynasty.

**Sovereignty in gradients**

Oiniwar Mithila is a particularly useful case for abandoning an all-or-nothing model of sovereignty.

SOURCE INSIGHT

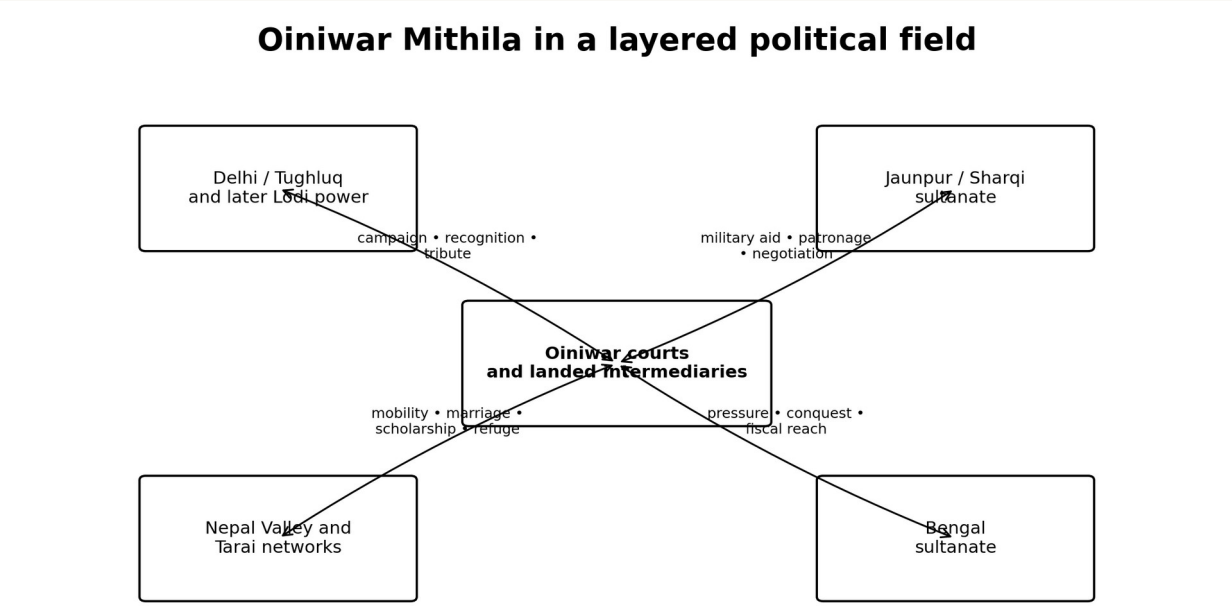
Terms such as king, zamindar, tributary, governor, ally and subordinate are therefore best treated as claims embedded in particular archives.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 26. Oiniwar Mithila in a layered political field. Arrows represent changing relations of campaign…




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 26. Oiniwar Mithila in a layered political field. Arrows represent changing relations of campaign, recognition, tribute, aid, patronage, conquest, marriage and scholarly mobility; they are not fixed modern…

Editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026. Original schematic; no third-party image content. Sources: Mishra 1953; Alam 2004; Asher and Talbot 2006; Jha 2019.



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# Coinage as a material claim: Śivasiṃha and Bhairavasiṃha

### Coinage as a material claim: Śivasiṃha and Bhairavasiṃha

Numismatic evidence provides some of the chapter’s sharpest chronological anchors.

### Kandaha, 1453: an epigraphic anchor

The Kandaha Sun Temple inscription associated with Narasiṃha is one of the rare Oiniwar epigraphic anchors.

### Bhagirathpur, 1513, and the late dynastic horizon

The Bhagirathpur inscription published by Radhakrishna Choudhary is another crucial anchor because Oiniwar chronology otherwise depends heavily on literary and…

SOURCE INSIGHT

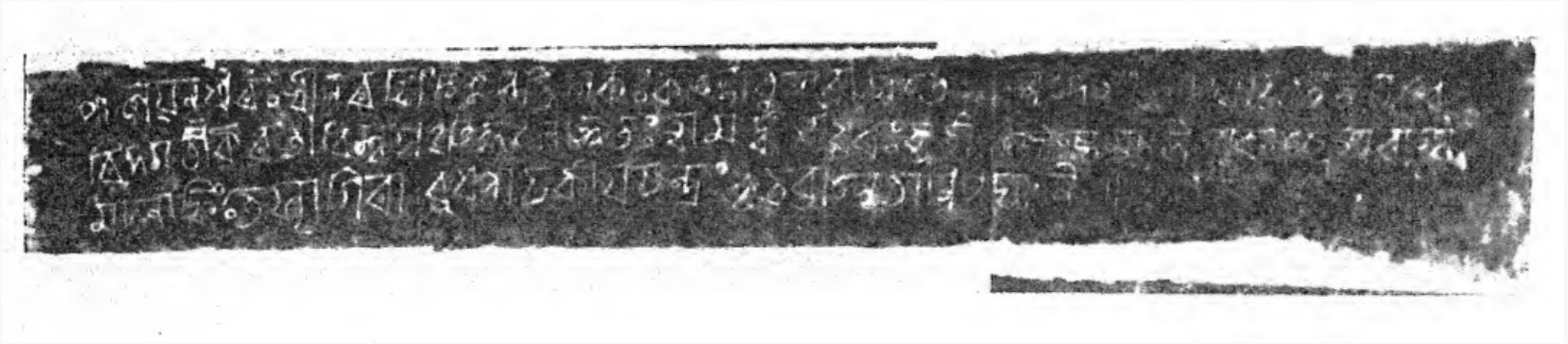
The inscription names Kansanārāyaṇa in the late Oiniwar genealogical line. Other histories use Lakṣmīnātha in describing the last ruler or final phase.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Figure 4. Image catalogued by Wikimedia Commons as an inscription of King Narsimha of the Oiniwar dynasty…



FROM THE BOOK

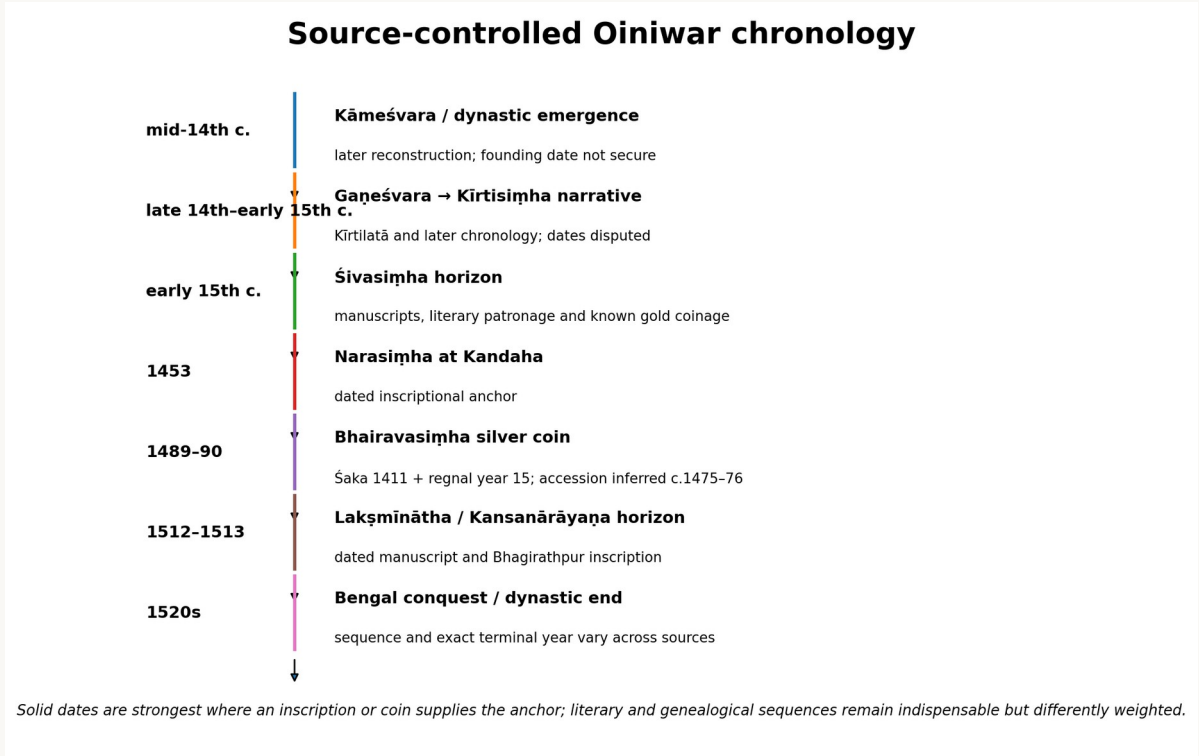
Figure 4. Image catalogued by Wikimedia Commons as an inscription of King Narsimha of the Oiniwar dynasty from Kandaha Sun Temple, Saharsa, with the date 1453. Epigraphic conclusions require the original surface or a…



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 27. Source-controlled Oiniwar chronology. The sequence assigns greater chronological weight to the…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 27. Source-controlled Oiniwar chronology. The sequence assigns greater chronological weight to the 1453 Kandaha inscription, the 1489–90 Bhairavasiṃha coin and the 1512–1513 documentary horizon than to disputed…

Editorial diagram prepared for this book, 2026. Original schematic; no third-party image content. Sources: Mishra 1953; Choudhary 1955; Sircar 1957–58; Jha 2019.



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# Writing state and order: Likhanāvalī

### Writing state and order: Likhanāvalī

Political administration survives not only in chronicles and inscriptions but also in documentary models.

### Land, labour, markets, and legal transactions

The court's political literature rests on a social world of land, labour and exchange.

### Persian and Sanskrit records in one political field

The multilingual political world of fifteenth-century Mithila cannot be divided into a Sanskrit interior and a Persian exterior.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This interaction should not be romanticized as effortless synthesis. Languages could mark unequal access to institutions and competing claims to authority.



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# Northward connections and mobile scholars

### Northward connections and mobile scholars

The Oiniwar period continued the long connections between Mithila and Nepal. Scholars, ritual specialists, manuscripts and political refugees moved across the Tarai.

### The end of Oiniwar rule and the Bengal horizon

By the early sixteenth century the political balance around Mithila was changing rapidly.

### Chronology as a source problem

Oiniwar chronology is itself part of the historical argument.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Oiniwar chronology is itself part of the historical argument.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# Lakṣmaṇasena-era dates and conversion

### Lakṣmaṇasena-era dates and conversion

Lakṣmaṇasena Saṃvat dates are central to Oiniwar history but can create false precision if their epoch or numeral is assumed silently.

### Dynastic branches and possible overlapping rule

A linear succession table assumes that only one member of the ruling family exercised royal authority at a time.

### Sultanate recognition as a political resource

Recognition by a Sultanate court could enhance rather than simply diminish local power.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Recognition by a Sultanate court could enhance rather than simply diminish local power.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# Learned lineages and fiscal service

### Learned lineages and fiscal service

Oiniwar power rested on more than royal kin. Learned Brahman families could combine ritual status, legal expertise, scribal competence and landholding. Such capacities…

### Kīrtilatā as praise and political memory

Kīrtilatā celebrates its patron’s lineage and recovery, so praise is part of the evidence rather than a defect to be removed.

### The problem of Aslān

The figure named Aslān in the Gaṇeśvara episode has often been identified as a Muslim adversary, but the literary narrative does not by itself provide a complete…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The figure named Aslān in the Gaṇeśvara episode has often been identified as a Muslim adversary, but the literary narrative does not by itself provide a complete…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–27

# Ibrāhīm Shāh Sharqī and chronological control

### Ibrāhīm Shāh Sharqī and chronological control

The reign of Ibrāhīm Shāh Sharqī supplies an external chronological frame for the Kīrtisiṃha restoration narrative.

### Jaunpur as a political marketplace

Jaunpur functioned as a military and cultural centre to which regional claimants, scholars and service elites could orient themselves.

### Śivasiṃha’s coins and the limits of numismatic inference

Coins bearing Śivasiṃha’s name prove an ability to place royal identity on precious metal.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Coins bearing Śivasiṃha’s name prove an ability to place royal identity on precious metal.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Patronage and Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura without collapsing identities

### Patronage and Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura without collapsing identities

Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura’s association with Oiniwar rulers belongs to Chapter 14 because patronage is political evidence, but his literary and intellectual achievement receives…

### Court dispersion and refuge traditions

Narratives of war often describe the court dispersing, patrons seeking refuge and scholars moving between households.

### Royal women and documentary silence

The archive names some royal women in patronage and genealogical contexts while leaving long stretches of their activity undocumented.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The archive names some royal women in patronage and genealogical contexts while leaving long stretches of their activity undocumented.



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# The script of the Kandaha record

### The script of the Kandaha record

The Kandaha inscription is important not only for Narasiṃha's date but also for the regional script tradition in which power was materialized.

### Temple endowment as political display

A temple inscription turns a religious act into a durable public statement. Patronage could bind royal genealogy to sacred space, local communities and property.

### From Narasiṃha to Bhairavasiṃha: cautious genealogy

The Bhairavasiṃha coin identifies him as son of Darpanārāyaṇa, while later genealogical traditions connect royal names through aliases and succession sequences.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The Bhairavasiṃha coin identifies him as son of Darpanārāyaṇa, while later genealogical traditions connect royal names through aliases and succession sequences.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# The Bhairavasiṃha legend as political language

### The Bhairavasiṃha legend as political language

The coin’s legend calls Bhairavasiṃha lord of Tirabhukti and identifies his royal father.

### Regnal-year arithmetic as inference

Bhairavasiṃha’s accession around 1475–76 is an inference, not a second inscription.

### Lakṣmīnātha and Kansanārāyaṇa: naming the last phase

Late Oiniwar sources do not yield one universally agreed last-ruler label.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Late Oiniwar sources do not yield one universally agreed last-ruler label.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 37–39

# Anumati Devi and the Bhagirathpur genealogy

### Anumati Devi and the Bhagirathpur genealogy

The Bhagirathpur record is particularly valuable because its construction notice is embedded in family genealogy and names Anumati Devi.

### Maithili script as an administrative archive

Regional scripts were used for more than literary display.

### Likhanāvalī and the range of document forms

Likhanāvalī models multiple kinds of communication rather than one generic royal order.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Likhanāvalī models multiple kinds of communication rather than one generic royal order.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 40–42

# Palm-leaf deeds and legal practice

### Palm-leaf deeds and legal practice

The surviving Tirhut deeds studied by Mahes Raj Pant are especially important because they are transactions rather than literary models.

### Slavery and archival asymmetry

The deeds recording the purchase of enslaved persons expose a social relation largely absent from courtly praise.

### Routes to Bengal, Jaunpur, and Nepal

Oiniwar political survival depended on corridors in several directions.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Oiniwar political survival depended on corridors in several directions.



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# Sultanate expansion and fiscal space

### Sultanate expansion and fiscal space

When a Sultanate expanded, the most consequential change could be fiscal before it became cultural.

### Why 1526 should remain qualified

The year 1526 is widely repeated as the end of Oiniwar rule, but its evidentiary status differs from the dated 1513 inscription or 1489–90 coin.

### Evidentiary conclusions

Oiniwar history is strongest when written around anchors rather than a polished king-list.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Oiniwar history is strongest when written around anchors rather than a polished king-list.



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# What this chapter establishes

### Sultanate expansion and fiscal space

When a Sultanate expanded, the most consequential change could be fiscal before it became cultural.

### Why 1526 should remain qualified

The year 1526 is widely repeated as the end of Oiniwar rule, but its evidentiary status differs from the dated 1513 inscription or 1489–90 coin.

### Evidentiary conclusions

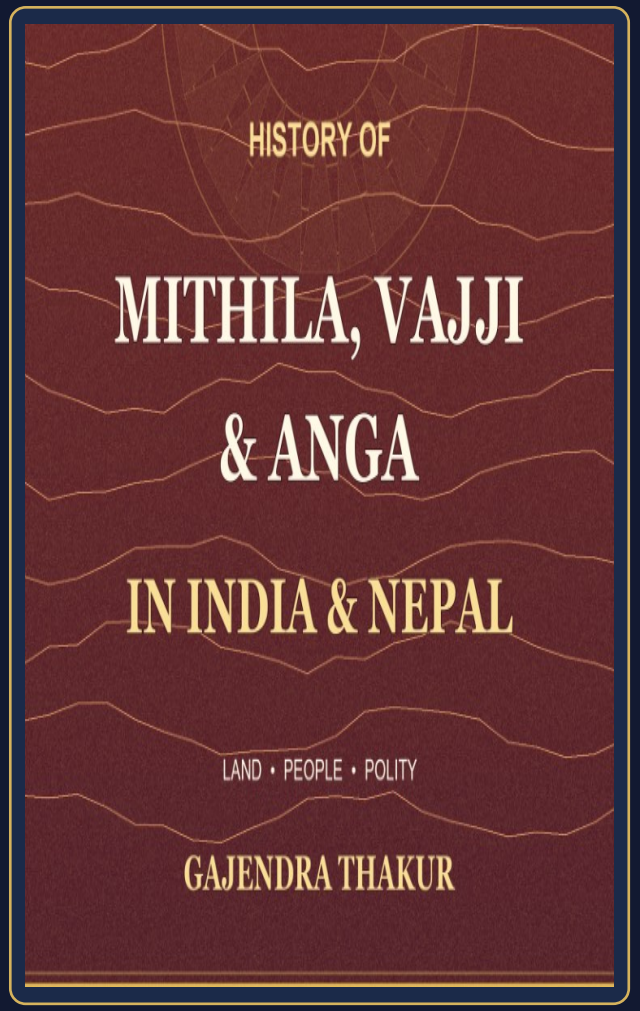
Oiniwar history is strongest when written around anchors rather than a polished king-list.

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 15

# Two Vidyāpatis: Maithili, Sanskrit learning, and law

A source-controlled history · medieval period

Gajendra Thakur | Videha



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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements




**Governing distinction: two Vidyāpatis**

**Jyotirīśvara as chronological control**

**Kīrtipatākā and the problem of incomplete transmission**

**Jyotirīśvara and the Varṇaratnākara ecology**

**Permanent Settlement era and the politics of rank**

45 analysed sections · 3 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 1–3

# Governing distinction: two Vidyāpatis

**Governing distinction: two Vidyāpatis**

This history adopts a two-Vidyāpati reconstruction as a governing rule of attribution.

**Why the distinction is historically necessary**

Conflation produces more than a literary inconvenience.

**Evidence hierarchy for literary biography**

The evidence used here is ranked rather than flattened.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This hierarchy does not privilege written evidence because oral culture is unimportant.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 4–6

# A shared name is not a shared identity

### A shared name is not a shared identity

Vidyāpati literally functions as a learned or honorific name and was not unique to one historical person.

### Mahākavi Vidyāpati: the earlier Padāvalī horizon

In the Parallel History reconstruction, Mahākavi Vidyāpati belongs before Jyotirīśvara and represents an early Maithili song tradition whose later fame became so great…

### Padāvalī as an independent corpus

The Padāvalī should be examined first as a corpus with its own transmission.

SOURCE INSIGHT

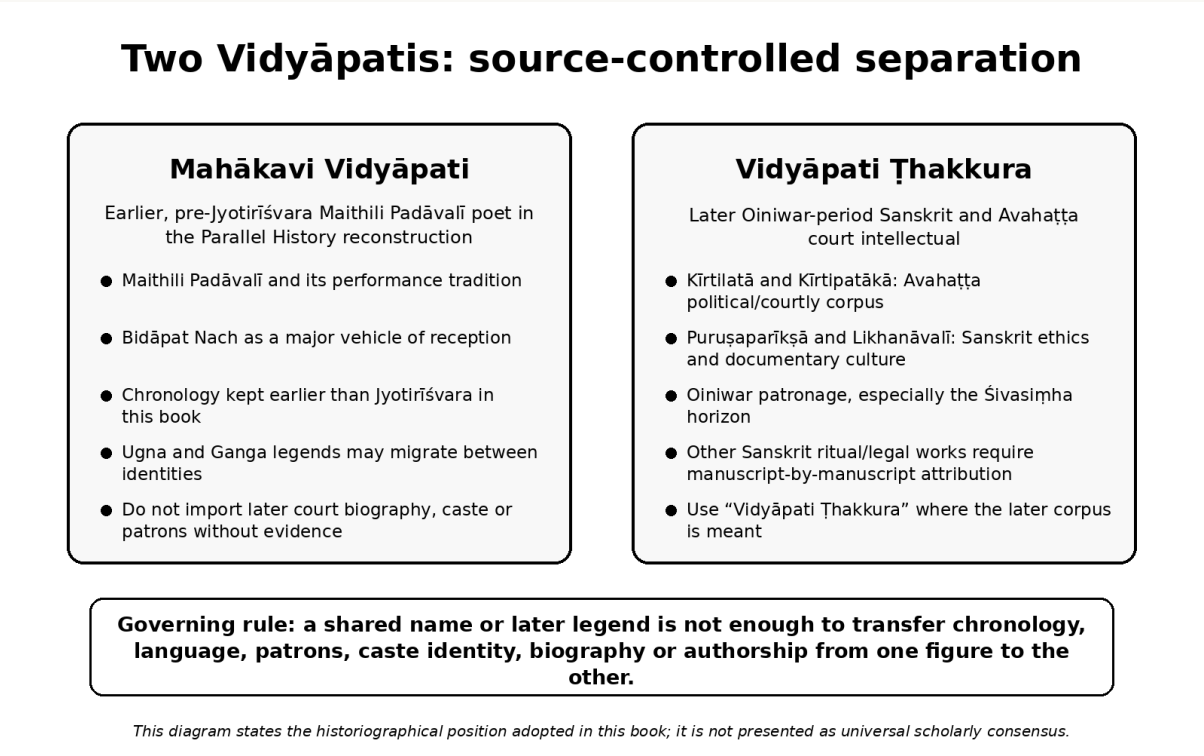
Separating the Padāvalī from the later Ṭhakkura corpus does not diminish either.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 28. Two Vidyāpatis: source-controlled separation. The diagram states the historiographical position…




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 28. Two Vidyāpatis: source-controlled separation. The diagram states the historiographical position adopted in this book and distinguishes it from universal scholarly consensus.



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# The pre-Jyotirīśvara chronology as an adopted thesis

**The pre-Jyotirīśvara chronology as an adopted thesis**

The Parallel History source dossier places Mahākavi Vidyāpati before Jyotirīśvara, whose life is conventionally situated around the late thirteenth and early fourteenth…

**Śrīdharadāsa and the early name horizon**

Śrīdharadāsa's Saduktikarṇāmṛta was compiled in 1205 CE and is an important chronological control for the circulation of Sanskrit verse and poet names in eastern India.

**The Abhinavagupta reference: limited and explicitly qualified**

The Parallel History discussion also invokes a Vidyāpati reference in the Abhinavagupta textual horizon.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This is an example of source control rather than hesitation. A thesis is strengthened, not weakened, when uncertain supports are labelled accurately.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# Jyotirīśvara as chronological control

### Jyotirīśvara as chronological control

Jyotirīśvara's Varṇaratnākara belongs to the Karnata/transition intellectual horizon and is indispensable to the history of Maithili prose, performance vocabulary and...

### Bidāpat Nach as a performance archive

The Bidāpat Nach tradition is central to the Parallel History because it preserved Vidyāpati songs through embodied performance among communities often absent from elite...

### Oral transmission and textual instability

A song tradition does not remain unchanged merely because performers value continuity.

SOURCE INSIGHT

For the two-Vidyāpati problem, this means that a late manuscript containing an old song cannot by itself settle authorship, and a fifteenth-century-style spelling in a copied Padāvalī does not...



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# Ugna: a legend that crossed identities

### Ugna: a legend that crossed identities

The Ugna-Mahādeva story—Śiva serving the poet in disguise so that he may hear his songs—is one of the most powerful narratives of Vidyāpati devotion.

### The Ganga legend and transferred biography

A comparable problem occurs with stories concerning Vidyāpati and the Ganga.

### Caste, village and retrospective genealogy

The two-Vidyāpati distinction also prevents social identities from being transferred without evidence.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This method matters beyond one author. Genealogy is a historical source, but a genealogy copied or reorganized centuries later can naturalize categories that were themselves products of later social…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura: the later Oiniwar intellectual

### Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura: the later Oiniwar intellectual

The later Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura belongs securely to the political and intellectual world explored in Chapter 14.

### Self-attribution and the Ṭhakkura designation

The title and colophon tradition of works such as Puruṣaparīkṣā is especially important because the author is identified as Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura in a courtly setting.

### Kīrtilatā: political narrative, not lyric biography

Kīrtilatā is read here as a work of the later Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The text must nevertheless be handled as court literature. Praise, restoration narrative and political exemplarity shape its representation of events.



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# Kīrtipatākā and the problem of incomplete transmission

### Kīrtipatākā and the problem of incomplete transmission

Kīrtipatākā is likewise associated with the later Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura and the Avahaṭṭa courtly corpus.

### Puruṣaparīkṣā: ethics, kingship and social observation

Puruṣaparīkṣā is a Sanskrit collection of exemplary and counter-exemplary narratives concerned with heroism, intelligence, skill, political conduct and the testing of…

### Likhanāvalī: writing, documents and administrative imagination

Likhanāvalī is one of the most revealing works attributed to Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This distinction opens important historical questions. Who needed letters?



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# Gorakṣavijaya and mixed performance registers

### Gorakṣavijaya and mixed performance registers

Gorakṣavijaya is associated in later scholarship with Vidyāpati and with a musical-dramatic setting involving Nātha figures.

### Other Sanskrit works and attribution caution

A substantial group of Sanskrit ritual, devotional, geographical and legal works has been attributed to the conventional Vidyāpati: texts concerning Ganga, Śiva, Durga…

### Language by genre rather than by identity myth

The later Ṭhakkura corpus is multilingual, but multilinguality should be mapped by genre.

SOURCE INSIGHT

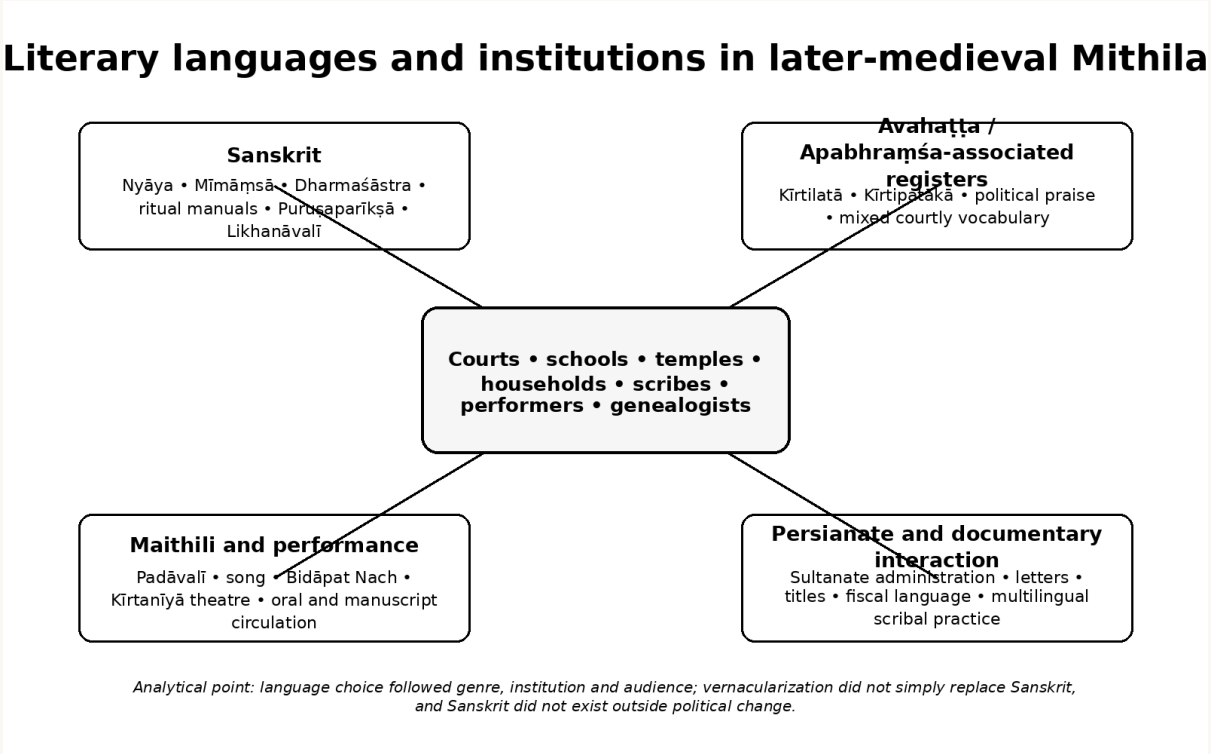
This approach is more precise than describing a single genius as simultaneously ‘the Sanskrit poet’ and ‘the Maithili folk poet’ and then using that composite identity to explain an entire cultural…



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 29. Literary languages and institutions in later-medieval Mithila. Language choice followed genre…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 29. Literary languages and institutions in later-medieval Mithila. Language choice followed genre, institution and audience rather than a simple Sanskrit-to-vernacular replacement model.



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# Avahaṭṭa and political narration

### Avahaṭṭa and political narration

The Avahaṭṭa works associated with Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura are especially important because they stand between classical literary genealogies and emerging regional forms…

### Sanskrit cosmopolitanism without isolation

Sanskrit remained a language of enormous authority in Mithila.

### Maithili was not invented by one poet

The history of Maithili cannot be reduced to a single founder.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Mahākavi Vidyāpati remains central in the Parallel History as a major early poet. Centrality, however, is not the same as solitary invention.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Jyotirīśvara and the Varṇaratnākara ecology

### Jyotirīśvara and the Varṇaratnākara ecology

Varṇaratnākara is one of the richest witnesses to the social and linguistic environment of medieval Mithila.

### Kīrtanīyā drama and the social life of texts

Kīrtanīyā drama demonstrates that literary history is also performance history.

### Documentary culture and the state

The history of law and state formation in Mithila must include the craft of writing.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Pankaj Jha's comparison with Persian epistolary traditions is especially valuable because it rejects a civilizational partition in which Sanskrit represents timeless religion and Persian represents…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 31–33

# Law, dharma and social authority

### Law, dharma and social authority

Mithila’s reputation for Dharmaśāstra was built through generations of digests, commentaries and ritual manuals.

### Inheritance, property and household power

Texts associated with the later Vidyāpati tradition include discussions of division and property.

### Marriage rules: norm, genealogy and lived practice

Marriage linked ritual status to property and political alliance.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This distinction becomes crucial in the history of the Panji system.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# Panji genealogies: medieval archive, later rankings

### Panji genealogies: medieval archive, later rankings

Anshuman Pandey’s dissertation demonstrates that Maithil Brahmin identity can be studied through an unusually rich genealogical corpus extending across centuries and…

### Śrotriya: an old word and a later sub-caste are not the same thing

Śrotriya is an old Sanskrit term associated with Vedic learning and learned qualification.

### Madhav Singh, branch books and chronological correction

Tradition connects a major reorganization of genealogical ranking and Śākhā-pustak or branch-book compilation with Maharaja Madhav Singh.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Panji-based reconstruction adopted here places the effective branch-book and Śrotriya sub-caste formation around c.1800, within or immediately around Madhav Singh’s era.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 37–39

# Permanent Settlement era and the politics of rank

**Permanent Settlement era and the politics of rank**

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries transformed landed authority in north Bihar.

**Nepal comparison as a control against back-projection**

Mithila's historical region extends across the later India-Nepal boundary, making Nepal an important comparative control.

**Nyāya and the making of a scholastic region**

Mithila became one of the great centres of Nyāya and, later, Navya-Nyāya. The achievement was collective and institutional.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This history matters to Chapter 15 because the later literary court existed beside highly specialized scholastic institutions.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 40–42

# Mīmāṃsā, Dharmaśāstra and legal reasoning

### Mīmāṃsā, Dharmaśāstra and legal reasoning

Mīmāṃsā supplied methods for interpreting authoritative texts, resolving apparent conflicts and reasoning about injunction.

### Manuscripts, copying and attribution

A medieval work normally reaches the historian through copies, not the author's desk.

### Women patrons, queens and household authority

The Oiniwar literary world cannot be reconstructed solely through male rulers.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The two-Vidyāpati distinction again matters: a later queen's association with Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura is not proof that she patronized the earlier Padāvalī poet.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 43–45

# Eastern Indian reception and the making of one iconic Vidyāpati

### Eastern Indian reception and the making of one iconic Vidyāpati

Vidyāpati songs became deeply influential in Bengal and other eastern Indian devotional and literary cultures.

### Modern commemoration, portraiture and memory

Modern statues, portraits, festivals, institutions and anniversary publications show the enormous symbolic power of Vidyāpati.

### Conclusion: a source-controlled parallel literary history

The central conclusion is methodological. Mithila's literary history becomes more coherent when corpora are separated before they are combined. This book therefore…

SOURCE INSIGHT

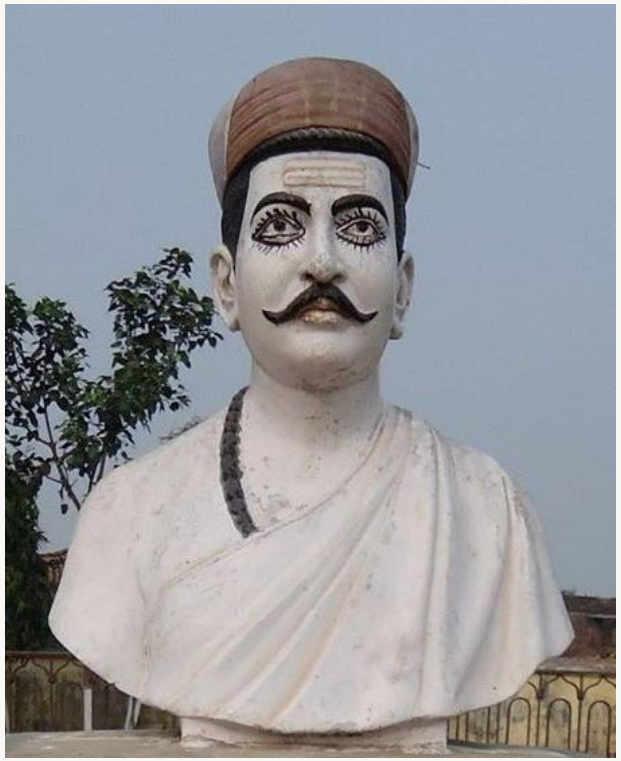
The same source-control principle governs social history.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Figure 5. Modern commemorative statue conventionally identified with Vidyapati at Bisfi, photographed in…



FROM THE BOOK

Figure 5. Modern commemorative statue conventionally identified with Vidyapati at Bisfi, photographed in 2004. In this book it illustrates modern memory, which often merges the earlier Padāvalī poet and later Vidyāpati…



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# What this chapter establishes

### Eastern Indian reception and the making of one iconic Vidyāpati

Vidyāpati songs became deeply influential in Bengal and other eastern Indian devotional and literary cultures.

### Modern commemoration, portraiture and memory

Modern statues, portraits, festivals, institutions and anniversary publications show the enormous symbolic power of Vidyāpati.

### Conclusion: a source-controlled parallel literary history

The central conclusion is methodological. Mithila's literary history becomes more coherent when corpora are separated before they are combined. This book...

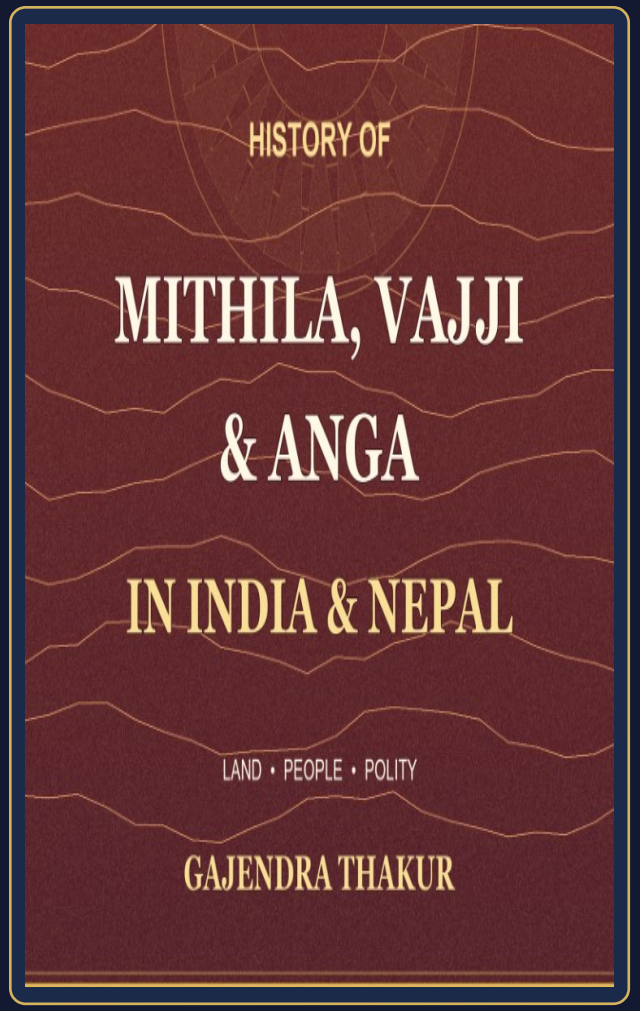
**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 16

# Mughal-era Tirhut, Anga, and early-modern institutions

A source-controlled history · medieval period

Gajendra Thakur | Videha



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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements




**From Oiniwar collapse to Mughal provincial government**

**Provincial borders were interfaces, not sealed lines**

**The Ganga as administrative and commercial infrastructure**

**The 1665-1666 Mahinath documentary horizon**

**Market towns and changing urban hierarchies**

48 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# From Oiniwar collapse to Mughal provincial government

### From Oiniwar collapse to Mughal provincial government

The sixteenth century did not replace a bounded medieval kingdom with a uniformly administered Mughal province in a single act.

### The 1580 provincial reorganization and the making of Subah Bihar

Akbar's administrative reorganization, conventionally dated to 1580, treated Bihar as one of the empire's major provinces.

### Source hierarchy for the Mughal period

The source base is richer than for the Karnata and Oiniwar centuries, but richer does not mean transparent.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The safest reconstruction begins with dated documents and contemporary administrative texts, then uses later narratives to explain memory, institutional continuity or claims that require checking.



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# The Āʾīn-i Akbarī as administrative evidence

### The Āʾīn-i Akbarī as administrative evidence

Abu'l-Fazl's Āʾīn-i Akbarī is indispensable because it describes Akbar's empire through regulations, ranked offices, territorial divisions, assessed resources and...

### Sarkār Tirhut: the 74-mahal administrative field

The Āʾīn lists Sarkār Tirhut with seventy-four mahals, measured land of 266,464 bighas and 2 biswas, assessed revenue of 19,179,777½ dams, and notional military resources...

### How to read the Āʾīn numbers

The dam was an accounting and monetary unit, and bigha was a land measure whose practical realization depended on the imperial system and local measurement.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Military figures require equal caution. The listed cavalry and infantry should not be imagined automatically as permanent barracked forces stationed inside Tirhut. They represented the military...



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# Sarkār Munger and the eastern Bihar corridor

### Sarkār Munger and the eastern Bihar corridor

The Āʾīn describes Sarkār Munger as a much larger fiscal-military unit in assessed terms: thirty-one mahals, a revenue figure recorded in the standard translation as...

### Bhagalpur inside the Mughal administrative geography

Colonial gazetteer reconstruction, drawing on the Āʾīn and later revenue records, places Bhagalpur within the limits of Sarkār Munger during Akbar's reign.

### Purnea, the old Kosi boundary, and a frontier between provinces

The Purnea frontier complicates any simple Bihar-only narrative.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Purnea's faujdar combined strong military responsibilities with fiscal authority because the zone had to defend and negotiate a frontier.



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# Provincial borders were interfaces, not sealed lines

### Provincial borders were interfaces, not sealed lines

The Bihar-Bengal and Bihar-Morang interfaces were zones where imperial categories overlapped with routes, tribute relationships, military campaigns, seasonal movement and…

### Administrative scale: subah, sarkar, mahal and village

Mughal territorial administration worked through nested scales, but the nesting was not a rigid modern bureaucracy.

### The faujdar and the geography of coercion

The faujdar embodied the military dimension of district or frontier government.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

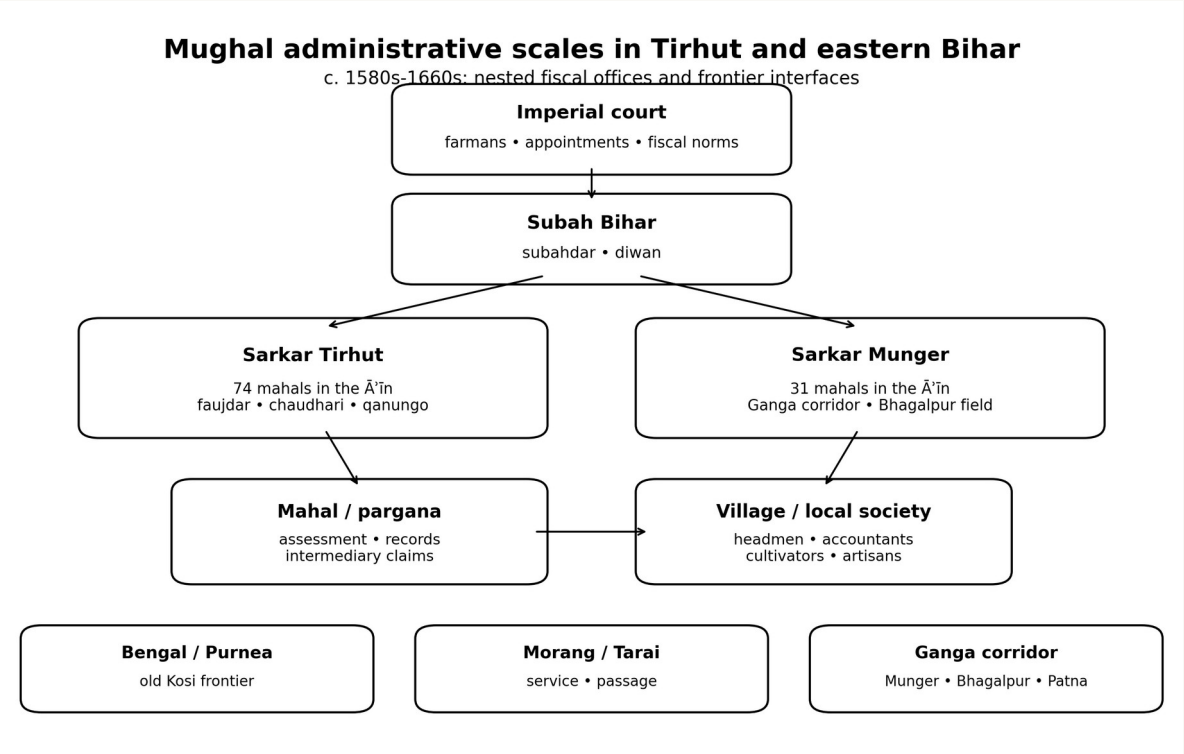
Frontier warfare also created opportunities for local chiefs. Assistance to imperial forces could be rewarded with robes of honour, insignia, hereditary rights or enlarged fiscal claims.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 30. Mughal administrative scales in Tirhut and the eastern Bihar frontier, c. 1580s-1660s. The…




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 30. Mughal administrative scales in Tirhut and the eastern Bihar frontier, c. 1580s-1660s. The diagram separates nested fiscal offices from frontier interfaces and local rights.



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# Chaudharī and qānūngō: offices that could generate regional power

### Chaudharī and qānūngō: offices that could generate regional power

The chaudharī and qānūngō were central to the fiscal order because they linked the state to local revenue knowledge and collection.

### Village officers, cultivators and the unseen majority

Imperial documents are rich in offices but much thinner on ordinary households.

### Zamindari was not modern freehold ownership

Mughal zamindari denoted a bundle of hereditary, fiscal, political and customary claims whose content varied widely.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This distinction is essential for Darbhanga. A farman confirming zamindari, milkiyat, settlement or chaudhurai rights enlarged the house's position, but the legal vocabulary must be interpreted term…



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# Jagir, khalsa and overlapping fiscal claims

### Jagir, khalsa and overlapping fiscal claims

Imperial revenue could be assigned as jagir to support officers or retained in khalsa for the crown, while zamindars and village right-holders continued to possess…

### Measurement, hast-o-bud and the aspiration to know cultivation

Seventeenth-century revenue instructions preserved in the Darbhanga documentary tradition emphasize measurement of cultivated and fallow land, correction of hast-o-bud…

### Taccavi, arrears and agrarian risk

Taccavi or agricultural advance appears in Mughal administrative discourse as a means of assisting cultivators and expanding production.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

At the same time, arrears could turn fiscal risk into political conflict. An intermediary expected to deposit revenue might carry liability forward or face pressure from higher authorities.



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# Sayir, markets and non-land revenue

### Sayir, markets and non-land revenue

Agrarian assessment did not exhaust the fiscal world. Sayir and related imposts drew revenue from markets, transit, crafts or commercial activity.

### The Ganga as administrative and commercial infrastructure

The Ganga connected Patna, Munger, Bhagalpur and the approaches to Bengal.

### Kosi, Gandak and the instability of fiscal landscapes

North Bihar's great rivers could move across the floodplain, destroy villages, create new land and alter routes.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This environmental instability is not a reason to dismiss Mughal fiscal records; it is a reason to read them dynamically.



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# Patna and provincial integration

### Patna and provincial integration

Patna's emergence as the principal centre of Subah Bihar gave the province an administrative and commercial focus.

### Currency, accounting and the monetization of claims

The Ā'īn expresses assessments in dams, and Mughal administration increasingly connected agrarian surplus to standardized monetary accounting.

### The Khandavala house: separating documentary history from foundation legend

Later Darbhanga tradition tells several versions of how Mahesh Thakur or his disciple impressed Akbar and received Tirhut.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The source-controlled conclusion is narrower and stronger: the Khandavala house rose through recognized Mughal fiscal offices and hereditary rights in Tirhut, and those rights expanded over the…



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# Mahesh Thakur and the first phase of fiscal authority

### Mahesh Thakur and the first phase of fiscal authority

Mahesh Thakur is remembered as a Sanskrit scholar and as the founder of the lineage later called Darbhanga Raj.

### No instantaneous independent kingdom

The strongest recent institutional study of Bihar's zamindars characterizes Darbhanga's rise as gradual: from an Akbar-era official position to increasingly extensive...

### Seventeenth-century grants and the hereditary turn

Under Jahangir and Shah Jahan, family members continued to receive or defend fiscal rights, including nankar and related claims recorded in later archival summaries.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Hereditary consolidation did not eliminate imperial intervention. Confirmations, grants and disputes still required recognition from above, while provincial officers could enforce revenue demands.



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# Sundar Thakur, records and the problem of later copies

### Sundar Thakur, records and the problem of later copies

The 1652 mahzarnama associated with Sundar Thakur is frequently used in reconstructions of the family's earlier rights because it refers retrospectively to the position…

### The 1665-1666 Mahinath documentary horizon

A much firmer anchor comes from Aurangzeb-era documentation. A farman of the mid-1660s and a letter dated December 1666 concern Mahinath Thakur's services and rights.

### Morang and imperial frontier service

Aurangzeb's December 1666 letter to the governor of Bihar refers to the role of Mahinath Thakur's men, including his brother Narapati/Nirpat Thakur in modern…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The campaign also demonstrates that the northern frontier was not governed by a single regional actor.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 31–33

# The 110-pargana problem: extent without a modern boundary map

### The 110-pargana problem: extent without a modern boundary map

Modern summaries of the Aurangzeb-era grant commonly describe a total of 110 parganas: 103 in the Bihar-side grouping of Tirhut and Munger and seven in Bengal-side Purnea…

### Darbhanga as a broker between empire and locality

By the later seventeenth century, the Khandavala house had become more than a local record-keeping family.

### Learned status, patronage and political legitimacy

The Khandavala family's reputation for Sanskrit learning became part of its political identity.

SOURCE INSIGHT

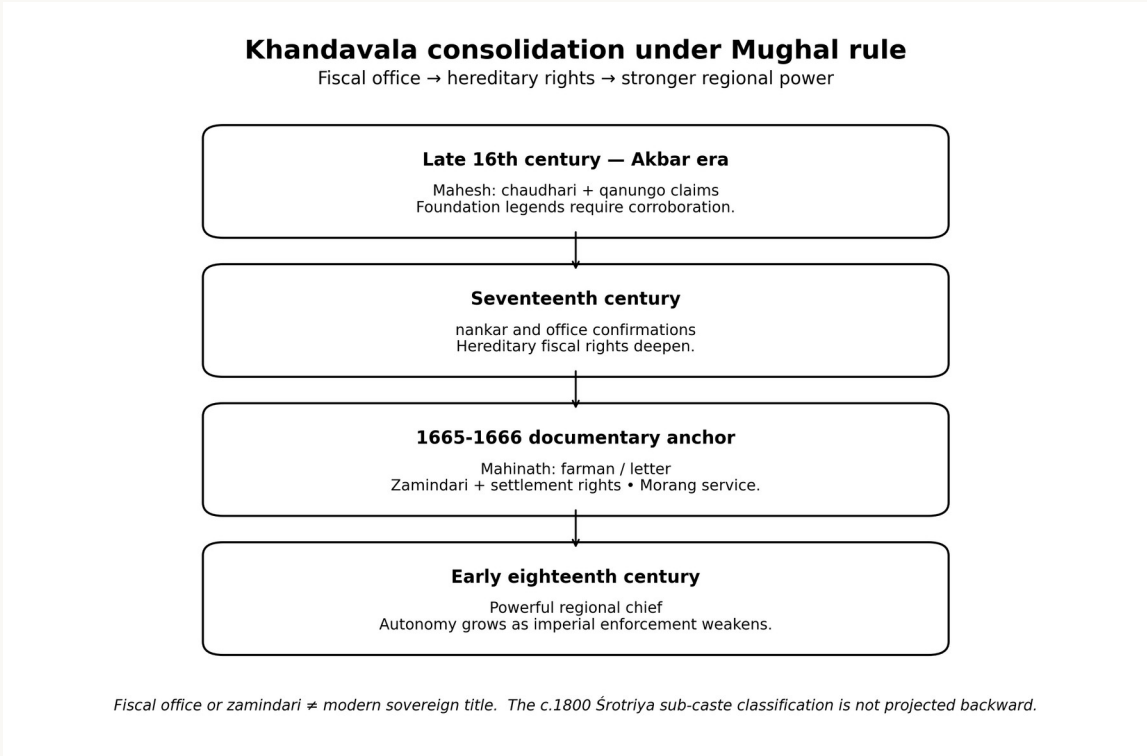
Early-modern Mithila thus continued the multilingual institutional world described in Chapter 15.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 31. Khandavala institutional consolidation under Mughal rule. The trajectory distinguishes fiscal…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 31. Khandavala institutional consolidation under Mughal rule. The trajectory distinguishes fiscal office, hereditary zamindari rights, frontier service and later political autonomy from a claim of instantaneous…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# Persian documentation and Sanskrit-Maithili institutions

**Persian documentation and Sanskrit-Maithili institutions**

Farmans, official correspondence and revenue records belonged to a Persianate administrative sphere, while Sanskrit intellectual lineages and Maithili literary production…

**Panji genealogy and the danger of backward social classification**

Genealogical records are valuable for kinship, marriage networks and claims of descent, but their categories changed over time.

**Households, women and inheritance behind the fiscal archive**

The fiscal archive privileges male office-holders, but hereditary authority depended on households, marriages, adoption, widowhood, inheritance and the management of…

SOURCE INSIGHT

A responsible history therefore resists turning the absence of women from farmans into an absence from political economy.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 37–39

# Religious endowments and landed rights

### Religious endowments and landed rights

Temples, mathas, learned households and ritual specialists could receive land or revenue assignments, linking religious institutions to agrarian production.

### Artisans, service groups and the production of regional wealth

Revenue histories can make agriculture appear to be the whole economy.

### Market towns and changing urban hierarchies

Patna, Munger, Bhagalpur and numerous smaller market centres formed a hierarchy that changed with river routes, garrisons, administrative offices and commercial…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The same caution applies to Darbhanga. Its later prominence as the seat of a vast estate should not be projected unchanged into the earliest Khandavala phase. The family's centres and the political…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 40–42

# Munger fort, military geography and the road to Bengal

### Munger fort, military geography and the road to Bengal

Munger's fortified position on the Ganga gave it importance during conflicts linking Bihar and Bengal.

### Frontier authority in Purnea

Purnea developed a distinctive faujdari order because of its position on the Bengal-Bihar-Morang frontier.

### Morang, Tarai routes and the Nepal connection

The seventeenth-century Morang references continue a long history of movement between the Gangetic plain, Tarai and Himalayan valleys.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This helps connect Chapter 16 with the book's broader India-Nepal frame.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 43–45

# The early eighteenth century: provincial power and stronger zamindars

### The early eighteenth century: provincial power and stronger zamindars

By the early eighteenth century, Mughal provincial politics became more autonomous as imperial succession crises, military expenditure and regional competition altered…

### 1733 and the administrative attachment of Bihar to Bengal

In 1733, the Mughal centre placed Bihar under the Bengal subadar, ending the earlier pattern of Bihar as a separately governed subah.

### Autonomy, arrears and the limits of late Mughal enforcement

As provincial enforcement weakened or became more negotiated, powerful zamindars could withhold revenue, bargain over arrears or act with increasing local independence.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This distinction is especially useful for Darbhanga.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 46–48

# 1765 as an institutional threshold, not an instant social revolution

**1765 as an institutional threshold, not an instant social revolution**

The East India Company's acquisition of the diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765 transformed the authority under which revenue was claimed.

**What Mughal rule changed - and what it did not**

Mughal rule changed the scale and vocabulary of government.

**Conclusion: early-modern Mithila and Anga as connected jurisdictions**

The Mughal period is best understood through connected jurisdictions.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The rise of Darbhanga Raj belongs inside that same history.



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# What this chapter establishes

### 1765 as an institutional threshold, not an instant social revolution

The East India Company's acquisition of the diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765 transformed the authority under which revenue was claimed.

### What Mughal rule changed - and what it did not

Mughal rule changed the scale and vocabulary of government.

### Conclusion: early-modern Mithila and Anga as connected jurisdictions

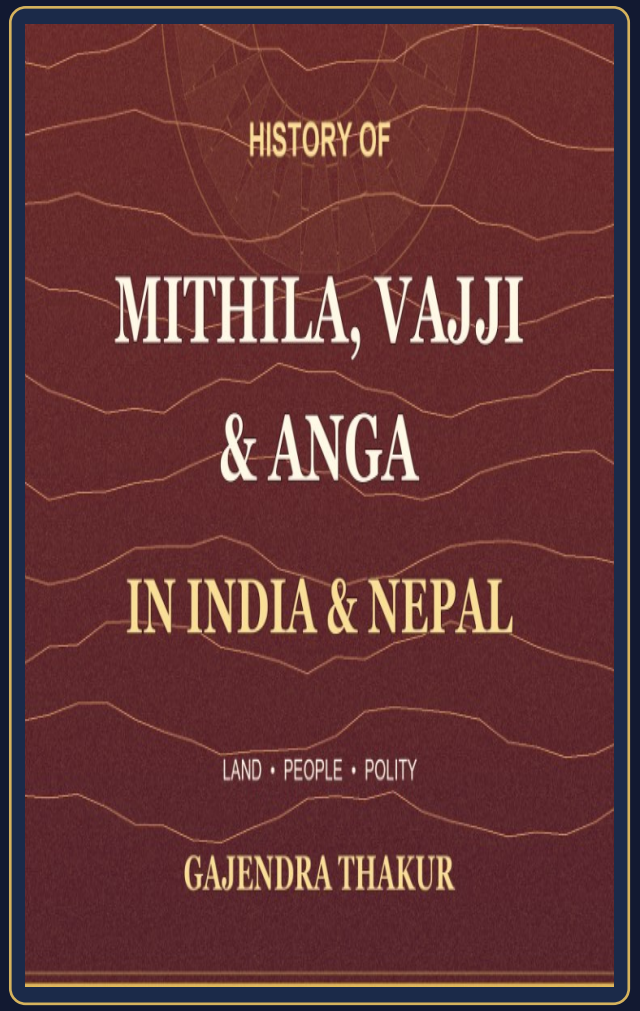
The Mughal period is best understood through connected jurisdictions.

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 17

# Company rule, Permanent Settlement, and Darbhanga Raj

A source-controlled history · modern period

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements



01 §1–11 — Revenue before representation

02 §12–22 — Property became more alienable, but not socially simple

03 §23–34 — Why 1600 Śaka / 1678 cannot be accepted automatically

04 §35–45 — Cadastral survey and the manufacture of a record-of-rights

05 §46–57 — 1912: Bihar and Orissa as a new province

57 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# Revenue before representation

### Revenue before representation

The East India Company acquired fiscal authority in Bihar before it created representative institutions or a modern public administration.

### 1765: the dīwānī and a new revenue sovereign

The Mughal emperor Shah Alam II's grant of the dīwānī of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the Company in 1765 supplied a legal-political basis for Company revenue collection.

### The limits of the 'dual government' shorthand

The years after 1765 are often summarized as a period of 'dual government', with revenue power and nominal executive responsibility separated.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The years after 1765 are often summarized as a period of 'dual government', with revenue power and nominal executive responsibility separated.



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# The famine of 1770 and the fiscal state

### The famine of 1770 and the fiscal state

The great famine of 1770 exposed the vulnerability of a revenue regime whose information, transport and relief capacities were limited.

### 1772 and the drive toward direct supervision

Warren Hastings' revenue reorganization of 1772 marked a turn toward more direct Company supervision.

### Revenue experiments before permanence

The Permanent Settlement was not conceived in one step.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Permanent Settlement was not conceived in one step.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# The Bihar decennial settlement, 1789

### The Bihar decennial settlement, 1789

Regulation I of 1793 looked backward to the decennial settlement rules issued for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

### 22 March 1793: what Regulation I actually declared

The Proclamation of 22 March 1793, enacted through Bengal Regulation I, notified zamindars, independent talukdars and other actual proprietors that the jama assessed...

### What the Permanent Settlement fixed - and what it did not

Permanence applied to the government's assessed jama on recognized revenue-paying estates.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Permanence applied to the government's assessed jama on recognized revenue-paying estates.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# Actual proprietors, zamindars, talukdars and chaudharīs

### Actual proprietors, zamindars, talukdars and chaudharīs

Regulation VIII of 1793 stated that settlement was to be concluded with 'actual proprietors of the soil', whatever their denomination, including zamindars, talukdars and...

### Revenue sale and the chronology of the 'sunset law'

The Permanent Settlement made punctual payment decisive because government refused routine remission for seasonal calamity and provided for sale of land when revenue fell...

### Property became more alienable, but not socially simple

A fixed state demand and sale for arrears made revenue-paying estates more readily transferable through auction, inheritance, mortgage and court decree.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A fixed state demand and sale for arrears made revenue-paying estates more readily transferable through auction, inheritance, mortgage and court decree.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 13–15

# Darbhanga before 1793: a fiscal house, not a princely state

**Darbhanga before 1793: a fiscal house, not a princely state**

By the late eighteenth century the Khandavala house had accumulated extensive revenue authority, landed claims, titles and political prestige.

**Madhav Singh, c.1775-1807: a reign of transition**

Raja Madhav Singh (also written Madho Singh) ruled approximately from 1775 to 1807, a chronology that is crucial for source control.

**The Permanent Settlement dispute and the reduction of political status**

A later memorial by Maharaja Rameshwar Singh, discussed in recent scholarship, represented the Permanent Settlement as a drastic reduction of the family's former...

SOURCE INSIGHT

A later memorial by Maharaja Rameshwar Singh, discussed in recent scholarship, represented the Permanent Settlement as a drastic reduction of the family's former...



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# Why '1,500 villages' must be cited as a claim

### Why '1,500 villages' must be cited as a claim

The figure of roughly 1,500 villages retained by Madho Singh appears in later Darbhanga accounts and in modern scholarship drawing on those accounts.

### 1800: a surviving Darbhanga settlement horizon

A Patna High Court reference decided in 1924 preserves an unusually useful retrospective documentary detail.

### Parganas, jagirs and revenue-free land after 1793

Permanent settlement operated alongside separate rules for jagirs, dependent taluks and revenue-free or lakhraj land.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

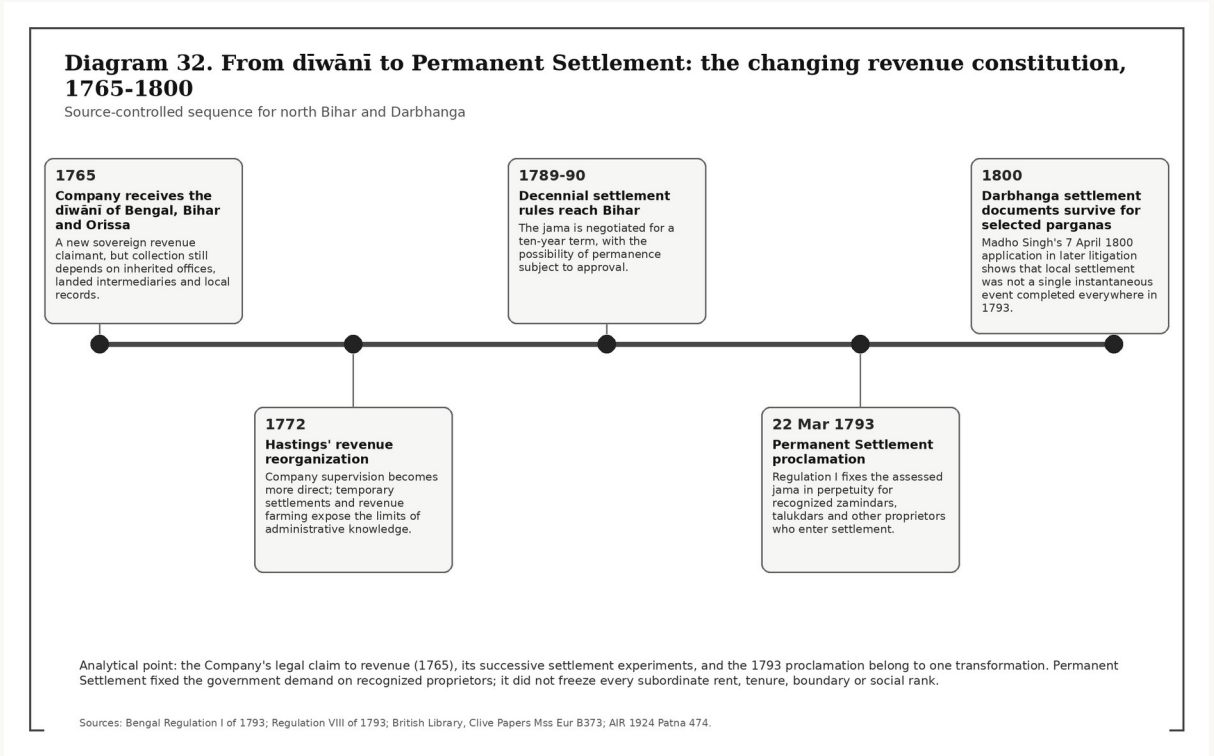
Permanent settlement operated alongside separate rules for jagirs, dependent taluks and revenue-free or lakhraj land.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 32. From dīwānī to Permanent Settlement: the changing revenue constitution, 1765-1800. The sequence…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 32. From dīwānī to Permanent Settlement: the changing revenue constitution, 1765-1800. The sequence distinguishes the 1765 fiscal claim, successive settlement experiments, the 1793 proclamation, and the later..



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# The archive as a field of property

**The archive as a field of property**

As rights became litigable, documents themselves acquired new economic power.

**Panji history must be separated from Permanent Settlement mythology**

The Panji system is older than British rule. Genealogical registration, mūla identity and marriage regulation therefore cannot be explained as creations of Cornwallis....

**The word śrotriya and the later Śrotriya sub-caste are not the same thing**

Śrotriya is an old Sanskritic term associated with Vedic learning or qualified learned status.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Śrotriya is an old Sanskritic term associated with Vedic learning or qualified learned status.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# The c.1800 Śrotriya reconstruction adopted in this volume

### The c.1800 Śrotriya reconstruction adopted in this volume

On the basis of the digitized Panji corpus and the Parallel History reconstruction used in this project, this volume places the emergence of Śrotriya as a distinct...

### Why 1600 Śaka / 1678 cannot be accepted automatically

Some retrospective traditions assign the relevant Śākhā-pustak or Śrotriya reclassification to 1600 Śaka, equated with 1678 CE.

### Why a '1760 order of Madhav Singh' is chronologically impossible as stated

A second tradition associates the compilation of branch books or rank reorganization with an order of Madhav Singh in 1760.

SOURCE INSIGHT

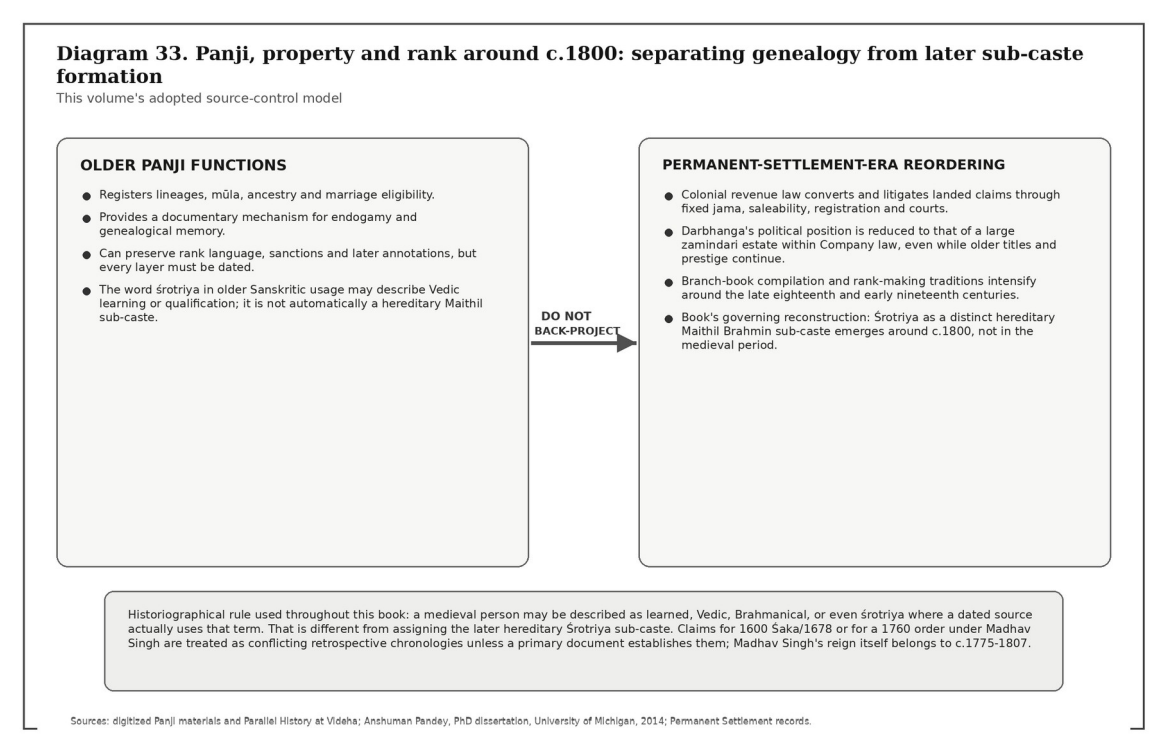
A second tradition associates the compilation of branch books or rank reorganization with an order of Madhav Singh in 1760.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 33. Panji, property and rank around c.1800: separating genealogy from later sub-caste formation. The…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 33. Panji, property and rank around c.1800: separating genealogy from later sub-caste formation. The diagram prevents the older Sanskritic word śrotriya or the medieval Panji institution from being treated as…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–27

# Genealogical upgradation and the politics of rank

### Genealogical upgradation and the politics of rank

The Panji materials reproduced in the Parallel History include documents interpreted as genealogy-based upgradation orders, including cases in which payment is said to…

### Permanent Settlement and the social uses of genealogy

The coincidence of fixed-revenue property, litigation and intensified genealogical classification does not by itself prove that Cornwallis created a caste.

### A comparative caution: Nepal is not a control group without evidence

Mithila extends across a modern international border, but British Permanent Settlement did not.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Mithila extends across a modern international border, but British Permanent Settlement did not.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Diagrammatic source control: two transformations, not one timeless order

### Diagrammatic source control: two transformations, not one timeless order

The two diagrams in this chapter separate legal chronology from social chronology.

### Courts, procedure and the conversion of memory into evidence

Colonial civil courts converted disputes over inheritance, revenue, tenure and endowment into files governed by procedural rules.

### Babuana, maintenance estates and divided rights

Darbhanga family litigation also reveals the layered nature of property within the Raj.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Darbhanga family litigation also reveals the layered nature of property within the Raj.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 31–33

# The Permanent Settlement did not end state intervention

**The Permanent Settlement did not end state intervention**

Fixing the jama did not create a laissez-faire countryside. Government regulated revenue sales, rent-free land, succession, courts, police and later tenancy relations.

**Raiyats below the settlement**

The Permanent Settlement did not grant cultivators the same perpetual fixation that it granted the government's demand on zamindars.

**Rent, abwabs and the struggle over legal dues**

Colonial legislation repeatedly distinguished lawful rent from additional cesses and unauthorized exactions, but the boundary was difficult to police.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Colonial legislation repeatedly distinguished lawful rent from additional cesses and unauthorized exactions, but the boundary was difficult to police.



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# The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885

### The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885

The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 attempted to codify relations among landlords, tenure-holders and raiyats after nearly a century of post-Permanent Settlement disputes.

### Cadastral survey and the manufacture of a record-of-rights

Survey and settlement operations in Darbhanga district between 1896 and 1903 mapped plots, classified tenures, recorded rents and identified persons recognized under...

### Measurement, literacy and unequal evidentiary power

The record-of-rights shifted future disputes toward those who could read maps, maintain receipts, employ pleaders and contest entries within the prescribed time.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The record-of-rights shifted future disputes toward those who could read maps, maintain receipts, employ pleaders and contest entries within the prescribed time.



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# Darbhanga Raj under the Court of Wards, 1860-1879

### Darbhanga Raj under the Court of Wards, 1860-1879

Darbhanga Raj entered the Court of Wards in 1860 and remained under supervised management until 1879.

### The Court of Wards as an 'institutional shelter'

Anand Yang's analysis of the Court of Wards in Bihar emphasizes its broader function as a protective institution for landed families deemed unable to manage estates...

### Managerial reform and the problem of whose efficiency

Official reports praised the financial improvement of Darbhanga during the Court of Wards period, including reduced debt, more systematic collection and investment in...

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Official reports praised the financial improvement of Darbhanga during the Court of Wards period, including reduced debt, more systematic collection and investment in...



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# Lakshmishwar Singh and the post-1879 landed public sphere

### Lakshmishwar Singh and the post-1879 landed public sphere

When Lakshmishwar Singh assumed control in 1879, the Raj entered a new phase in which landed wealth was converted into philanthropy, education, religious patronage…

### From household retainers to estate bureaucracy

By the late nineteenth century Darbhanga Raj required a chief manager, circle managers, tahsildars, accountants, lawyers, survey staff and local agents.

### The estate's dispersed geography

Darbhanga Raj was geographically dispersed rather than a compact sovereign territory.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Darbhanga Raj was geographically dispersed rather than a compact sovereign territory.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 43–45

# Roads, irrigation, schools and hospitals as estate power

**Roads, irrigation, schools and hospitals as estate power**

Court of Wards reports and later estate records document expenditure on roads, bridges, irrigation, schools and medical institutions.

**Markets, fisheries, ferries and non-crop income**

A great zamindari drew income from more than field rent.

**Commercial crops and the limits of estate statistics**

Indigo, sugarcane, tobacco, oilseeds, rice and other crops linked north Bihar to changing commercial circuits.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Indigo, sugarcane, tobacco, oilseeds, rice and other crops linked north Bihar to changing commercial circuits.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 46–48

# 1912: Bihar and Orissa as a new province

### 1912: Bihar and Orissa as a new province

The creation of the province of Bihar and Orissa in 1912 changed the administrative setting within which Darbhanga Raj operated.

### Peasant protest against Darbhanga Raj, 1919-20

Stephen Henningham's study of the 1919-20 movement led by Swami Vidyanand demonstrates that north Bihar's agrarian politics had a specifically local history.

### Estate records and the problem of surveillance

The same archives that allow historians to reconstruct peasant protest also show how a large estate could classify tenants as loyal or disloyal, gather intelligence…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The same archives that allow historians to reconstruct peasant protest also show how a large estate could classify tenants as loyal or disloyal, gather intelligence…



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# Caste, language and the search for a region

### Caste, language and the search for a region

Late colonial Darbhanga patronage became intertwined with Sanskrit learning, Maithili language politics, caste organizations and claims about the historical unity of...

### Darbhanga titles, royal style and the absence of princely-state sovereignty

Members of the Darbhanga house used and received titles such as Raja, Maharaja and Maharajadhiraja, maintained palaces and ceremonial institutions, and could exercise...

### Colonial knowledge and the Buchanan-Hamilton surveys

Francis Buchanan-Hamilton's early nineteenth-century surveys of Bihar recorded crops, markets, communities, crafts, roads, rivers and antiquities at remarkable...

SOURCE INSIGHT

Francis Buchanan-Hamilton's early nineteenth-century surveys of Bihar recorded crops, markets, communities, crafts, roads, rivers and antiquities at remarkable...



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 52–54

# Gazetteers: indispensable late compilations, not eyewitnesses to 1793

**Gazetteers: indispensable late compilations, not eyewitnesses to 1793**

District gazetteers assembled historical, geographic and administrative information for Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Purnea, Monghyr and Bhagalpur.

**Reading Darbhanga Raj records against the grain**

Clive Dewey emphasized the value of the Darbhanga Raj records for the history of Mithila.

**From political authority to cultural authority**

Permanent Settlement narrowed the constitutional position of the Darbhanga house while leaving it resources from which new forms of influence could grow.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Permanent Settlement narrowed the constitutional position of the Darbhanga house while leaving it resources from which new forms of influence could grow.



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# The c.1800 turning point in the Parallel History

### The c.1800 turning point in the Parallel History

For the Parallel History framework of this book, c.1800 is therefore not a decorative date.

### What continuity means after 1793

Continuity after Permanent Settlement does not mean that precolonial institutions survived unchanged.

### Conclusion: property, genealogy and the colonial reconstitution of power

Company rule reconstituted power in Mithila and Anga through revenue, property, courts and records.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The same period also altered the social uses of documentary tradition.



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# What this chapter establishes

### The c.1800 turning point in the Parallel History

For the Parallel History framework of this book, c.1800 is therefore not a decorative date.

### What continuity means after 1793

Continuity after Permanent Settlement does not mean that precolonial institutions survived unchanged.

### Conclusion: property, genealogy and the colonial reconstitution of power

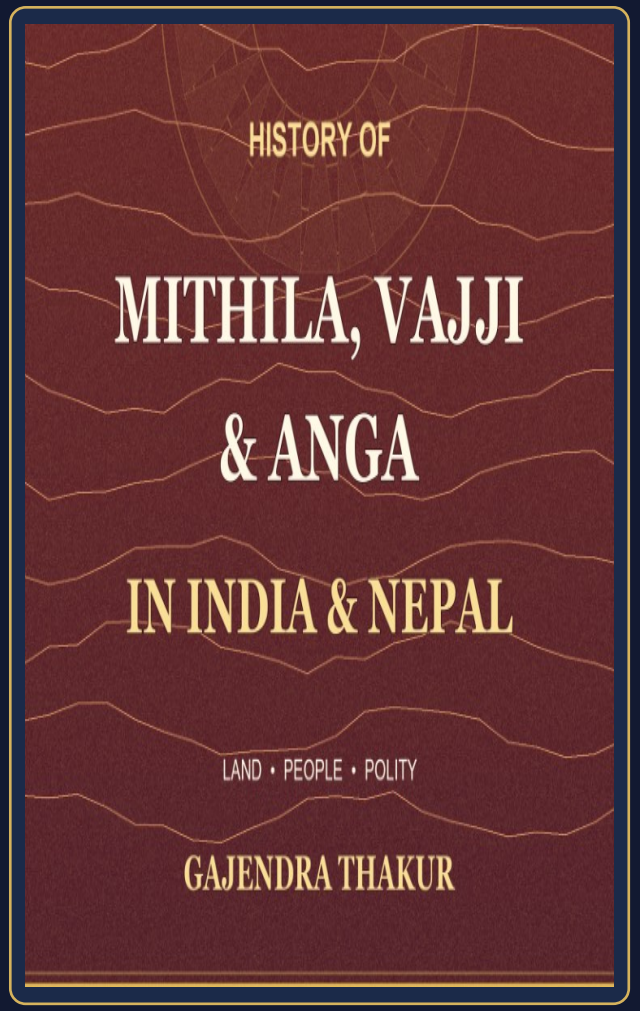
Company rule reconstituted power in Mithila and Anga through revenue, property, courts and records.

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 18

# Agrarian society, markets, caste, and labour

A source-controlled history · modern period

Gajendra Thakur | Videha



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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–10 **Beyond the self-contained village**

02 §11–21 **Caste shaped access without mechanically determining…**

03 §22–32 **After indigo: commercial agriculture did not disappear**

04 §33–43 **Kosi and diara: property on moving ground**

05 §44–54 **Scarcity, famine, and household strategies**

54 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# Beyond the self-contained village

### Beyond the self-contained village

The agrarian history of Mithila, Vajji-country, and Anga cannot be reconstructed from the image of an isolated, self-sufficient village.

### The archive is socially uneven

Settlement reports, rent cases, estate papers, gazetteers, censuses, agricultural vocabularies, and statutes were produced for different purposes.

### Agrarian zones were not identical

North Bihar's alluvial plains, the Kosi belt, the Ganga corridor, Bhagalpur-Munger tracts, and the margins toward Purnea and the Tarai differed in flood risk, soils…

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This chapter therefore uses comparison without flattening regional difference.



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# A hierarchy of agrarian rights

### A hierarchy of agrarian rights

Colonial Bihar's countryside was not divided simply between zamindars and peasants.

### The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 as a classificatory event

Act VIII of 1885 made distinctions among landlords, tenure-holders, raiyats, and under-raiyats legally consequential and gave occupancy rights a more formal statutory…

### Record-of-rights: description and intervention

The Darbhanga survey and settlement operations of 1896-1903 produced cadastral mapping and records-of-rights on a scale that made landholding, rents, tenures, and…

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

A record-of-rights can therefore be simultaneously accurate in a legal-administrative sense and incomplete as a social history.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# Rent receipts and the everyday law of possession

**Rent receipts and the everyday law of possession**

For cultivators, a rent receipt could become more than proof of payment: it could help establish continuity of occupation and resist an attempt to recategorize or evict.

**Rent, cesses, and the boundary between legal and illegal exaction**

Agrarian conflict often turned not only on the nominal rent but on additional demands: cesses, service expectations, fees, perquisites, or charges disputed as abwabs.

**Sharecropping and the limits of statutory visibility**

Cultivation through crop-sharing arrangements formed part of the agrarian economy, but the exact legal position of sharecroppers could vary with contract, locality, crop…

SOURCE INSIGHT

For historical reconstruction the safest procedure is to identify what the source actually records: a share of produce, a lease, an under-raiyat interest, labour supplied for cultivation, or another…



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# Diagram 34: rights were layered rather than binary

**Diagram 34: rights were layered rather than binary**

Original analytical diagram for this volume. Sources: Bengal Tenancy Act 1885; J. H. Kerr; Anand A. Yang; Gyan Prakash.

**Caste shaped access without mechanically determining occupation**

Caste structured access to land, water, schooling, credit, ritual standing, local office, and protection, but colonial censuses and gazetteers often hardened flexible or...

**The Śrotriya correction must remain chronological**

This volume does not project Śrotriya backward as a fixed Maithil Brahmin sub-caste into medieval agrarian society.

SOURCE INSIGHT

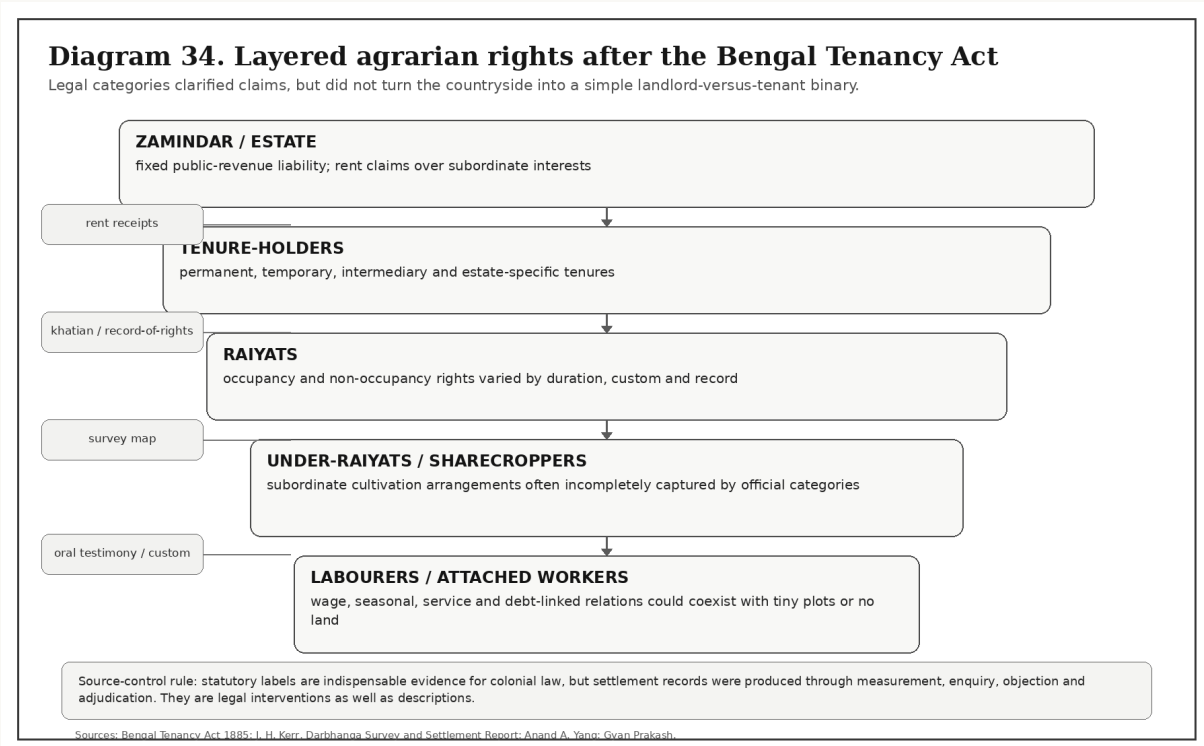
Accordingly, later genealogical rankings may illuminate how colonial-period elites represented ancestry and marriageability, but they cannot be used by themselves to populate earlier centuries with...



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 34. Layered agrarian rights after the Bengal Tenancy Act.




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 34. Layered agrarian rights after the Bengal Tenancy Act.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 13–15

# Service relations were not one timeless jajmani system

**Service relations were not one timeless jajmani system**

Village services could connect cultivators and landholders with barbers, washermen, potters, smiths, carpenters, leather workers, priests, watchmen, herders, and others...

**Women worked in the agrarian economy even when titles did not show it**

Women's labour entered sowing, transplanting, weeding, processing, animal care, fuel and water collection, food preparation, household manufacture, marketing, and...

**Household labour and life-cycle pressure**

Agrarian decisions were made within households that faced changing numbers of workers and dependants over the life cycle.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Credit taken for seed or rent belonged to the same household economy as loans for marriage, funerals, or survival after a bad harvest.



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# Grierson and the material vocabulary of cultivation

### Grierson and the material vocabulary of cultivation

George A. Grierson's Bihar Peasant Life, prepared in 1885, is unusually valuable because it catalogued implements, soils, crop operations, irrigation, livestock, land…

### The agricultural year was a calendar of labour

Ploughing, seed-bed preparation, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, threshing, storage, irrigation, and animal care distributed labour demand unevenly through the year.

### Crop diversity was a strategy as well as a statistic

Rice dominated many wet and lowland environments, but wheat, barley, pulses, oilseeds, millets, maize, sugarcane, tobacco, fibres, vegetables, and other crops entered…

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Commercialization did not mean a linear transition from 'subsistence' to 'cash crops.' Households could sell grain and still be food-insecure, cultivate a commercial crop on part of a holding, or…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# Cattle, ploughs, and access to productive capital

### Cattle, ploughs, and access to productive capital

Bullocks and plough equipment were productive assets, but ownership was unequal. Small cultivators could borrow, hire, share, or exchange animal power and implements.

### Irrigation was local, ecological, and political

Wells, tanks, channels, embankments, field bunds, and river-fed systems operated at different scales.

### Indigo and coercive commercial agriculture

Tirhut and adjoining north Bihar formed part of the nineteenth-century indigo world in which European factories, advances, contracts, landlords, amlas, and raiyats were…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Indigo was not the whole rural economy, nor did every factory operate identically.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# After indigo: commercial agriculture did not disappear

**After indigo: commercial agriculture did not disappear**

The decline of natural indigo in the face of synthetic dyes and changing political conditions altered factory landscapes and contract relations, but did not return the…

**Credit joined production, rent, consumption, and crisis**

Agrarian households borrowed for seed, cattle, rent, food, ceremonies, litigation, migration, and recovery after crop failure.

**Kamia and kamiauti: bondage must be located, not generalized**

Gyan Prakash's study of kamiauti in southern Bihar demonstrates how debt advances could create long-term labour ties between kamias and maliks and how colonial law tried…

SOURCE INSIGHT

It should not, however, be generalized automatically to every district of Mithila or Anga.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–27

# The Bihar and Orissa Kamiauti Agreement Act, 1920

**The Bihar and Orissa Kamiauti Agreement Act, 1920**

The 1920 Kamiauti Agreement Act attempted to restrict the enforceability of debt-bondage arrangements in Bihar and Orissa.

**Agricultural labour was differentiated**

Landless and near-landless labourers worked under daily, seasonal, harvest-share, attached, household-service, or debt-linked arrangements.

**Artisans belonged to the agrarian economy**

Weavers, potters, smiths, carpenters, basket makers, oil pressers, leather workers, and other artisans were not external to the village economy.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Changes in imported cloth, railway transport, factory goods, crop demand, and credit altered rural craft economies unevenly.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Haats and bazaars made the countryside porous

**Haats and bazaars made the countryside porous**

Periodic haats enabled small quantities of produce, livestock, salt, cloth, utensils, and other goods to circulate without requiring a permanent urban marketplace.

**Fairs and pilgrimage were economic infrastructures**

Melas and pilgrimage centres assembled temporary populations requiring food, transport, animals, lodging, ritual goods, entertainment, and credit.

**River transport remained important beside roads and railways**

The Ganga and its tributaries moved grain, salt, timber, passengers, livestock, and information through eastern Bihar.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Transport history must therefore be reconstructed as changing combinations of boat, cart, pack animal, road, railway, and foot travel.



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# Anga and the Bhagalpur market field

### Anga and the Bhagalpur market field

Colonial Bhagalpur's economy linked the Ganga riverfront, district markets, weaving and craft production, agricultural hinterlands, and routes toward the Kosi-Purnea zone.

### Purnea: frontier, market, and agrarian mosaic

Purnea combined alluvial agriculture, riverine tracts, market towns, forest and grazing margins, and routes toward north Bengal and the Himalayan foothills.

### Kosi and diara: property on moving ground

River erosion, channel migration, and accretion could destroy fields, create new land, cut villages off from markets, and move the physical object over which a legal…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Kosi diara settlement reports for Bhagalpur and Purnea are exceptionally valuable because they document administrative attempts to map and settle rights in a landscape known to be unstable.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# Accretion and erosion redistributed opportunity and loss

**Accretion and erosion redistributed opportunity and loss**

Newly deposited land could become valuable, while erosion could erase cultivated plots and weaken a household's claim to livelihood.

**Floods were recurrent conditions, not exceptional interruptions**

In the north Bihar plains, inundation could fertilize fields, replenish wetlands, disrupt transport, damage crops, spread disease, and force temporary movement.

**Common lands, grazing, fisheries, and river access**

Agrarian livelihoods depended on resources that were not reducible to privately cropped fields: grazing grounds, ponds, fisheries, riverbanks, reeds, fuel, fodder, and…

SOURCE INSIGHT

When survey and settlement converted customary access into mapped categories, some users gained legal recognition and others could lose flexibility.



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# Diagram 35: circulation was part of agrarian survival

**Diagram 35: circulation was part of agrarian survival**

Original analytical diagram for this volume. Sources: Anand A. Yang; George A. Grierson; Ray Hardatta Prasad.

**Mobility as livelihood strategy**

Seasonal labour, movement into the Tarai, service in towns, pilgrimage, and long-distance migration formed part of household strategies well before the contemporary era.

**Calcutta and the eastward labour corridor**

Calcutta's docks, mills, construction, transport, domestic service, and informal economy drew workers from Bihar.

SOURCE INSIGHT

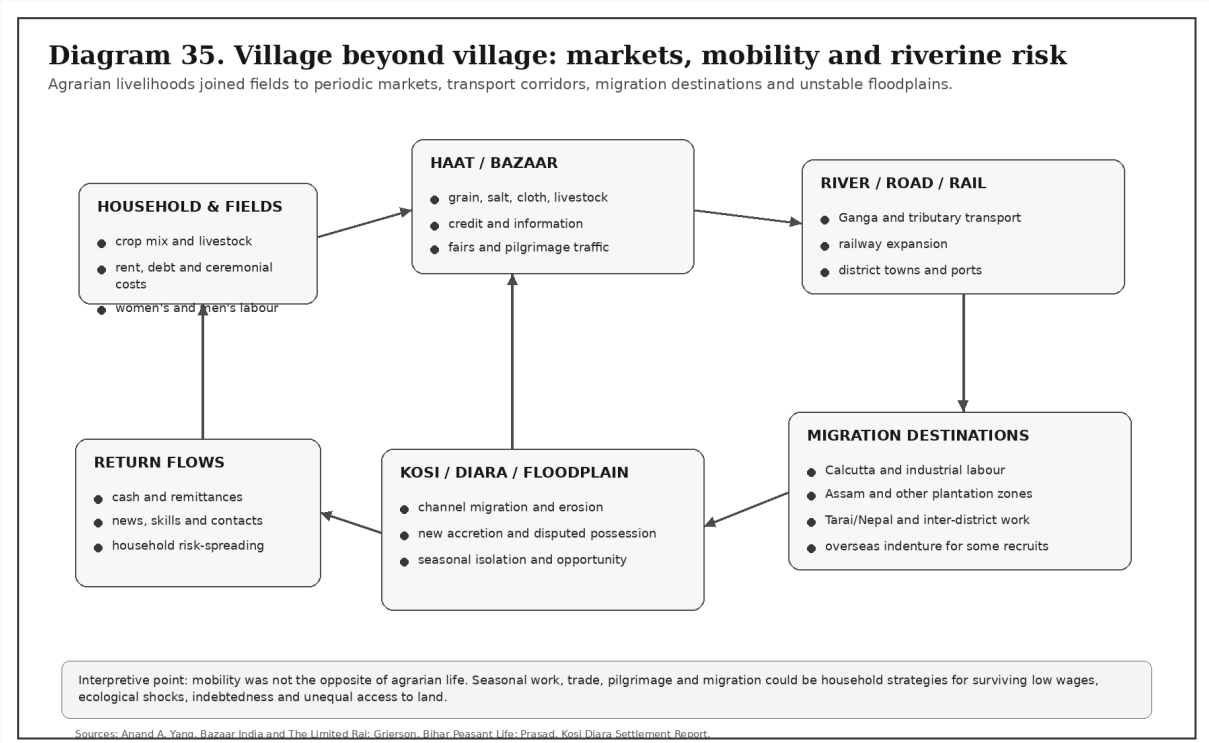
Circular migration could diversify household income while leaving women, elders, and other family members to manage cultivation and domestic responsibilities.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 35. Village beyond village: markets, mobility and riverine risk.




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 35. Village beyond village: markets, mobility and riverine risk.



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# Assam and plantation recruitment

### Assam and plantation recruitment

From the nineteenth century, colonial labour recruitment connected parts of Bihar and neighbouring regions to Assam's plantation economy.

### Overseas indenture and the wider horizon of migration

From the nineteenth century, recruitment from Bihar also fed overseas indentured labour systems in Mauritius, the Caribbean, Fiji, and other colonies.

### Migration redistributed gendered work

When working-age men migrated seasonally or for longer periods, women and other household members could assume greater responsibility for cultivation, livestock, debt…

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Migration history must therefore be reconstructed from both destination records and the households that remained in the village.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 43–45

# Wages, food, and the problem of comparison

### Wages, food, and the problem of comparison

Colonial reports sometimes recorded agricultural wages in cash or grain, but comparisons across years are difficult unless prices, payment in kind, meals, work duration…

### Scarcity, famine, and household strategies

Bad harvests and food-price shocks did not affect all rural households equally.

### Markets were also spaces of regulation and surveillance

Colonial officials and landlords sought to regulate market tolls, weights, policing, sanitation, assembly, and sometimes the location of trade.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Political organizers recognized the same spatial advantage.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 46–48

# Caste associations and agrarian claims

**Caste associations and agrarian claims**

Late-colonial caste associations, petitions, genealogies, and claims to status often intersected with struggles over education, office, land, and political representation.

**Peasant politics was not socially homogeneous**

The word 'peasant' can unite cultivators against landlord or state demands while concealing differences between substantial occupancy raiyats, smallholders...

**From protest to organized kisan politics**

The north Bihar agitation of 1919-20 preceded the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha founded in 1929.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Because Chapter 17 already reconstructs the Darbhanga episode in detail, the present chapter uses it to connect everyday tenancy conflict with the later emergence of explicitly agrarian political...



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 49–51

# Colonial knowledge could reinforce hierarchy while exposing it

**Colonial knowledge could reinforce hierarchy while exposing it**

Settlement officers, census officials, gazetteer compilers, and ethnographers often wrote through assumptions about caste, tribe, landlord, tenant, productivity, and…

**Statistics require denominator discipline**

A district total for cultivated acreage, tenancy classes, caste population, wages, or migration is only meaningful when its date, territorial boundary, unit, method, and…

**The countryside was connected before it was modernized**

Roads, railways, courts, cadastral surveys, and commercialization transformed rural Bihar, but they did not create connectivity from nothing.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The historical change lies in the scale, speed, legal form, and political control of circulation.



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# Continuity after Permanent Settlement was selective

**Continuity after Permanent Settlement was selective**

The Permanent Settlement preserved major landed intermediaries while changing the legal basis of their relationship to the state.

**Agrarian society across Mithila, Vajji, and Anga: a relational model**

A relational reconstruction begins with households and plots but follows rights upward to estates and courts, goods outward to haats and regional markets, labour toward…

**Conclusion: land was never only land**

Agrarian history is a history of claims over soil, crop, water, labour, credit, mobility, genealogy, and evidence.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The strongest interpretation is therefore neither a romantic village community nor a single model of colonial exploitation.



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# What this chapter establishes

### Continuity after Permanent Settlement was selective

The Permanent Settlement preserved major landed intermediaries while changing the legal basis of their relationship to the state.

### Agrarian society across Mithila, Vajji, and Anga: a relational model

A relational reconstruction begins with households and plots but follows rights upward to estates and courts, goods outward to haats and regional markets…

### Conclusion: land was never only land

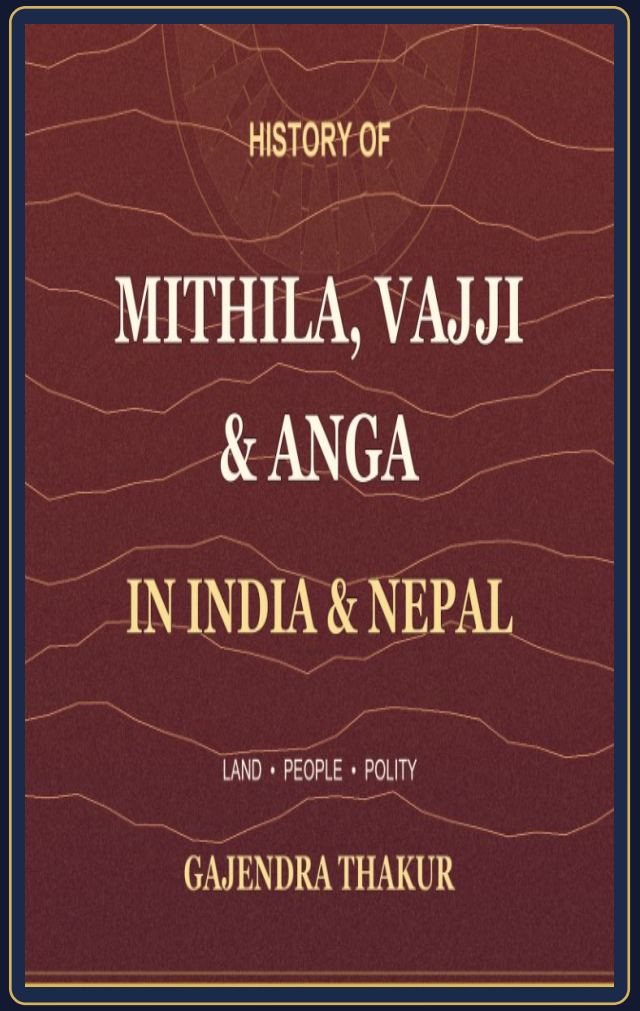
Agrarian history is a history of claims over soil, crop, water, labour, credit, mobility, genealogy, and evidence.

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 19

# Rivers, calamity, transport, and the colonial state

A source-controlled history · modern period

Gajendra Thakur | Videha



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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–10 — **A floodplain governed through records**

02 §11–21 — **Roads and railways became hydraulic structures**

03 §22–32 — **From confidence to engineering scepticism**

04 §33–43 — **Markets after the railway**

05 §44–54 — **Bridges, rails and communications after the earthquake**

54 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 1–3

# A floodplain governed through records

### A floodplain governed through records

Colonial rule in north Bihar and the eastern Ganga plain encountered a landscape in which rivers altered fields, roads, ferries, administrative boundaries, and taxable…

### Rivers were infrastructure before railways

The Ganga, Gandak, Bagmati, Kosi, Mahananda, and their distributaries carried boats, supplied fisheries, watered fields, deposited silt, and created ferries and market…

### The Kosi as a moving river system

The Kosi occupied a broad alluvial fan and repeatedly shifted among channels across the north Bihar plain.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Settlement reports and later geomorphological work allow course change to be reconstructed, but each map belongs to its own date and survey purpose.



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# Bagmati, Kamla, Gandak and the multiplicity of flood regimes

**Bagmati, Kamla, Gandak and the multiplicity of flood regimes**

North Bihar did not experience one uniform flood regime.

**The Ganga, chars and diaras**

Along the Ganga and its tributaries, accretion and erosion produced chars and diaras whose legal and fiscal status could be disputed.

**Alluvion and diluvion as legal problems**

River-made land forced the colonial state to translate dynamic floodplain processes into property categories.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This juridical layer is important because the physical river and the cadastral river were not always the same object.



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# Permanent Settlement and hydraulic responsibility

### Permanent Settlement and hydraulic responsibility

The Permanent Settlement fixed government revenue demands on recognized estates but did not produce a simple rule for who must maintain every embankment, drainage cut, or...

### The Bengal Embankment Act of 1873

The Bengal Embankment Act, 1873, was enacted on 24 December 1873. It provided a statutory framework for government action relating to embankments and associated land.

### Zamindars as hydraulic intermediaries

Praveen Singh shows that zamindars became central intermediaries in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century flood control in north Bihar.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This relationship was neither simple partnership nor permanent opposition.



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# Indigo, plantations and private bunds

### Indigo, plantations and private bunds

Commercial agriculture could create its own hydraulic priorities.

### Roads and railways became hydraulic structures

Raised roads and railway embankments crossed natural drainage lines and therefore acted as hydraulic structures as well as transport routes.

### Insufficient waterways and the archive of complaint

Selections from colonial railway records cited by Praveen Singh include files from 1896-1905 concerning insufficient waterways on the Tirhut State Railway.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Complaints do not prove that every reported flood was caused by a railway embankment.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 13–15

# Flood reports as an administrative genre

### Flood reports as an administrative genre

The Bihar State Archives' digitized collection on colonial floods demonstrates how routine reporting developed across the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

### The floods of 1871

The Bihar State Archives catalogue preserves multiple files from 1871 on floods in Tirhut and Purnea, including damage from the Bagmati and heavy rain.

### The Kosi bund file of 1895

The Bihar State Archives catalogue includes an 1895 file on the erection of bunds along the Kosi River.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This distinction matters because later flood-control histories can compress separate local bunds into a single imagined system.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# River movement and the Nepal-British boundary

### River movement and the Nepal-British boundary

A 1907 Bihar archival file concerns changes in a river course forming part of the boundary between Nepal and British territory in the Patna Division.

### Floods of 1913 and the expansion of public debate

Floods in Bihar and Orissa in 1913 generated official reports and legislative questions about damage and prevention.

### The 1915-1917 flood-control questions

Bihar and Orissa council questions from 1915-1917, preserved in the state archive catalogue, asked about flood prevention, past flood history, relief measures, and…

SOURCE INSIGHT

This did not make policy democratic in a modern sense. Representation remained limited, and many floodplain residents lacked direct institutional voice.



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# Surveying the diaras

### Surveying the diaras

Diaras demanded repeated measurement because the terrain itself changed.

### The Kosi Diara surveys of the 1920s

Nalinindra Lal Bose's report on the Kosi Diara area of Purnea and Ray Hardatta Prasad's later report on Bhagalpur and Purnea provide unusually detailed colonial attempts…

### Local knowledge and engineering knowledge

Cultivators, boatmen, fishers, ferrymen, estate staff, and village officials accumulated practical knowledge of channels, drainage paths, breach points, and seasonal…

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The two knowledge systems were not simply opposites. Officials relied on local testimony, while villagers could use engineering language in petitions.



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# From confidence to engineering scepticism

### From confidence to engineering scepticism

Praveen Singh's reconstruction shows that by the 1930s some engineers had become strongly sceptical of attempts to confine north Bihar rivers and favoured removing…

### Flood control as distribution, not elimination

No embankment eliminated flood risk for an entire basin. It redistributed the timing, depth, location, and political visibility of water.

### Diagram 36: colonial river governance as a feedback system

Original analytical diagram for this volume. Sources: Harrison 1875; Hill 1997; Singh 2008; Bihar State Archives flood collection.

SOURCE INSIGHT

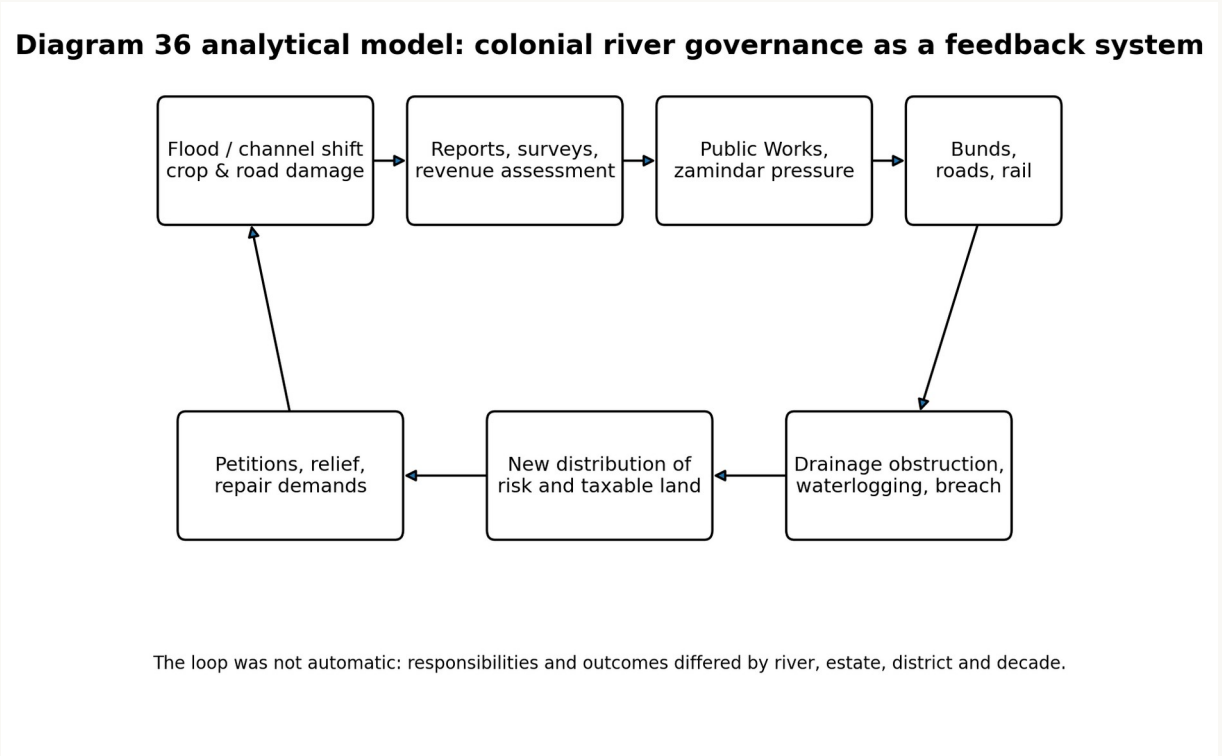
Original analytical diagram for this volume. Sources: Harrison 1875; Hill 1997; Singh 2008; Bihar State Archives flood collection.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 36. Colonial river governance as a feedback system.




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 36. Colonial river governance as a feedback system.



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# The 1873-1874 Bihar famine

### The 1873-1874 Bihar famine

The famine crisis of 1873-1874 exposed the vulnerability of north Bihar to crop failure, high prices, and weak transport.

### Relief works and the making of the famine line

The official history of the East Central Railway identifies the Dalsinghsarai-Samastipur-Darbhanga route as the 'Famine Line.' Construction began in the famine context...

### From temporary relief line to Tirhut State Railway

The famine line did not remain an isolated emergency track.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

That transformation also changed land values, market orientation, travel time, and administrative access.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Railway expansion and uneven integration

### Railway expansion and uneven integration

Railways allowed grain, cash crops, passengers, mail, and officials to move farther and faster, but access depended on distance from stations and the condition of feeder...

### Railway ferries and broken lines

Before major bridges spanned every large river, railway systems relied on ferries to connect discontinuous sections.

### The Kosi and the railway frontier

Railway extension toward the Kosi and Nepal frontier was constrained by the same river mobility that made transport desirable.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Transport policy thus reproduced the central hydraulic dilemma: building a fixed line across a mobile landscape demanded continuing maintenance and sometimes redirected water.



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# Roads, bridges and district government

**Roads, bridges and district government**

Metalled roads and bridges expanded the reach of district headquarters, courts, police, schools, markets, and medical relief.

**Transport and pilgrimage**

Railways and roads altered pilgrimage to Janakpur, Simraongarh-area shrines, Ganga ghats, and other sacred centres by shortening some journeys and changing where…

**Markets after the railway**

Railway stations became new points of aggregation for grain, oilseeds, livestock, cloth, salt, and migrant labour.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The chapter treats railway expansion as a change in transaction costs rather than as automatic development.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# Disaster and the politics of repair

### Disaster and the politics of repair

Flood or famine transformed routine public works into urgent political questions.

### Malaria, drainage and waterlogging

Colonial debate about drainage increasingly linked stagnant water, embankments, and public health.

### Weather observation and the numerical state

Rain gauges, river observations, crop estimates, price series, and damage returns expanded the numerical archive of calamity.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A number in a government report is therefore evidence of both an event and a reporting system.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 37–39

# Maps, gauges and the production of a manageable river

### Maps, gauges and the production of a manageable river

Survey maps and water-level observations translated mobile rivers into lines, levels, and sections that engineers could compare.

### Calamity archives and social invisibility

Administrative disaster files often privilege taxable land, public buildings, roads, and officially registered deaths.

### The earthquake of 15 January 1934

On 15 January 1934 a major earthquake devastated large areas of north Bihar and Nepal.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The chapter uses the exact date as secure while avoiding the uncritical transfer of later magnitude estimates into the contemporary record.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 40–42

# Ground failure on the alluvial plain

### Ground failure on the alluvial plain

The 1934 memoir documented fissuring, subsidence, sand and water eruptions, and severe ground disturbance in parts of the Ganga plain.

### Darbhanga and the earthquake

Darbhanga lay within the severely affected north Bihar zone. Estate buildings, public structures, houses, roads, and communications all entered the reconstruction archive.

### Muzaffarpur and the central damage tract

Muzaffarpur and adjoining areas were among the tracts closely documented in scientific and administrative accounts of the earthquake.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Local variation cautions against assigning a single intensity or damage ratio to an entire district.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 43–45

# Monghyr, Bhagalpur and the eastern field

### Monghyr, Bhagalpur and the eastern field

The earthquake's effects extended into the eastern Ganga region, including Monghyr district, which receives specific treatment in the Geological Survey memoir.

### Bridges, rails and communications after the earthquake

The Geological Survey memoir includes dedicated observations on bridges and other engineered structures.

### Relief administration in 1934

W. B. Brett's 1935 report documents measures taken by the Bihar and Orissa government through the end of 1934.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Such reports show administrative capacity, but they also define eligibility.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 46–48

# Reconstruction and new building practices

### Reconstruction and new building practices

Earthquake reconstruction encouraged renewed attention to structural design, building materials, and public works standards.

### Earthquake memory and the politics of evidence

Photographs, palace ruins, official reports, memoirs, and oral recollection created different memories of 1934.

### Famine, flood and earthquake were not one category

Colonial administration increasingly grouped calamities within systems of relief and public works, but famine, flood, and earthquake operated through different physical…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Comparing them is useful for studying state capacity and inequality, not for erasing their differences.



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# Calamity as a test of the colonial state

**Calamity as a test of the colonial state**

Disasters exposed the gap between claims of administrative order and the physical limits of government.

**From colonial debates to postcolonial river engineering**

By the 1940s north Bihar's flood problem had accumulated a long archive of embankment controversy, drainage complaints, surveys, and proposals.

**Source control: event, report and retrospective interpretation**

This chapter uses three evidentiary levels. Dated laws, archival files, railway openings, survey operations, and the 1934 earthquake provide firm chronological anchors....

SOURCE INSIGHT

Keeping these levels separate prevents a common error in environmental history: turning a later diagnosis into a statement that colonial officials already possessed the same explanation at the time...



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# Diagram 37: calamity, transport and state-building chronology

**Diagram 37: calamity, transport and state-building chronology**

Original analytical diagram for this volume. Sources: Bengal Embankment Act 1873; East Central Railway historical note; Bihar State Archives; Prasad 1932; Dunn et al. 1939.

**What changed by the end of colonial rule**

By 1947 the region possessed denser transport networks, more formalized flood administration, wider cadastral coverage, and a much larger archive of engineering knowledge…

**Chapter conclusion: mobility, risk and state power**

The history of rivers and calamity cannot be separated from the history of transport.

SOURCE INSIGHT

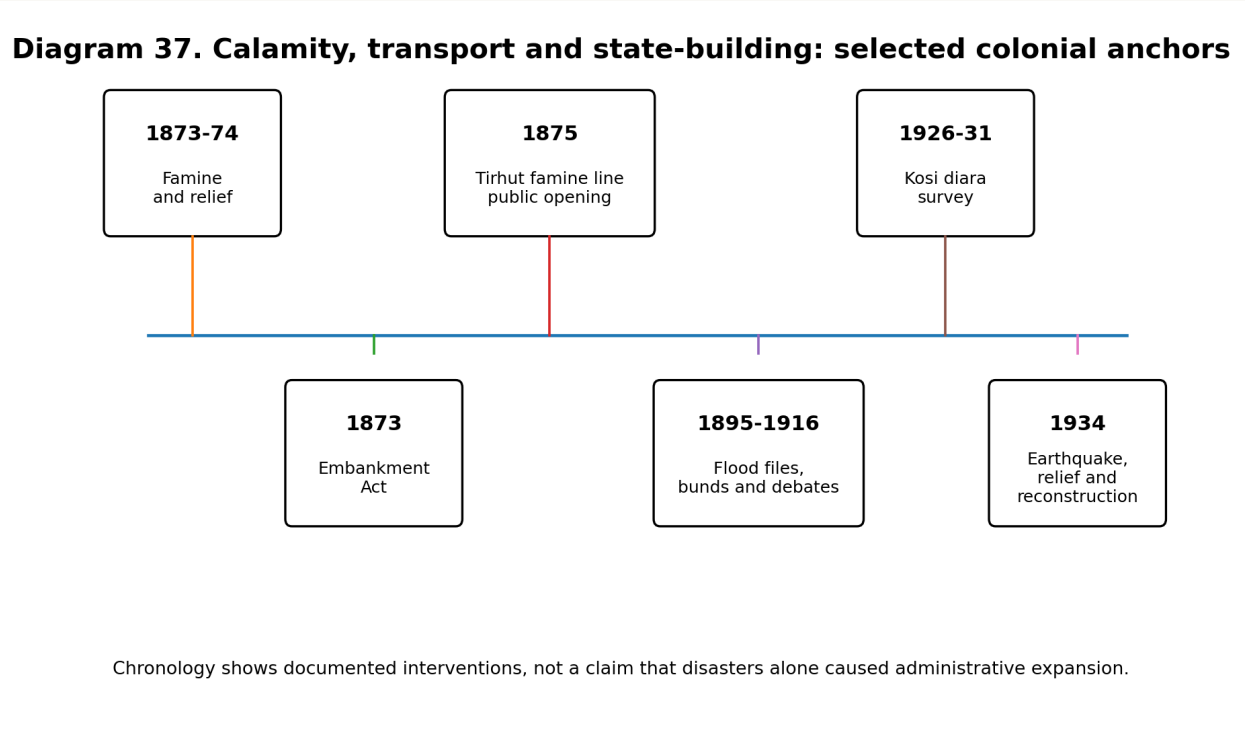
The most durable lesson is not that technology failed or succeeded once and for all. Every intervention redistributed access and risk.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 37. Calamity, transport and state-building: selected colonial anchors.




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 37. Calamity, transport and state-building: selected colonial anchors.



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# What this chapter establishes

### Diagram 37: calamity, transport and state-building chronology

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### What changed by the end of colonial rule

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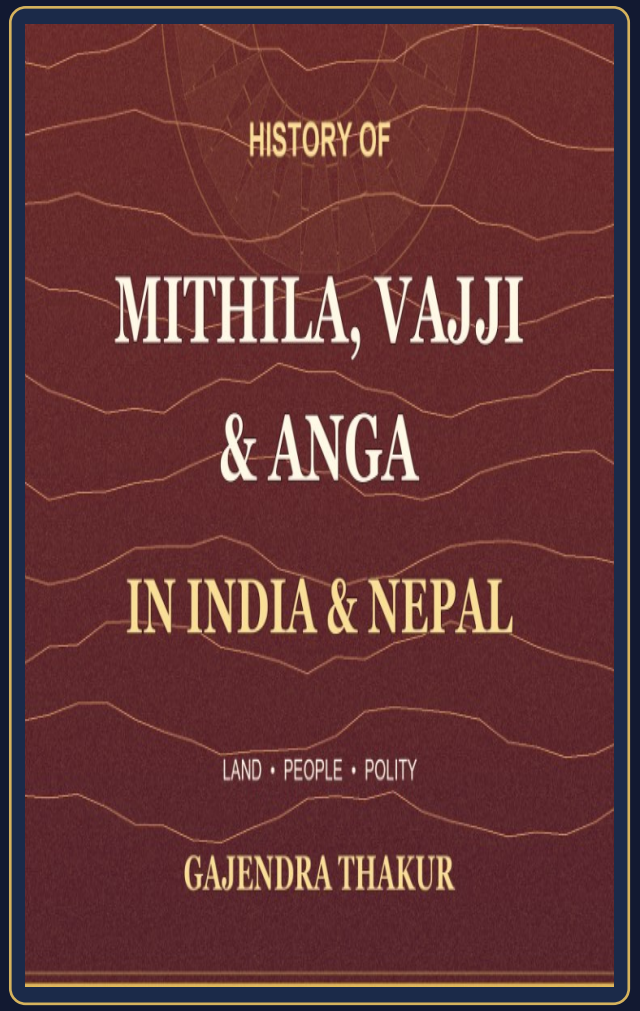
The history of rivers and calamity cannot be separated from the history of transport.

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 20

# Education, print, language, reform, and nationalism

A source-controlled history · modern period

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–13 — **Colonial education and older learning**

02 §14–26 — **1912: Bihar and Orissa as a new provincial arena**

03 §27–40 — **Print did not end manuscript or performance**

04 §41–53 — **Reform: marriage, education, expenditure, and social…**

05 §54–67 — **Language activism in the 1930s**

67 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# Colonial education and older learning

### Colonial education and older learning

Tols, pathshalas, maktabs, Persianate instruction, household teaching, temple- and monastery-linked learning, occupational apprenticeship, and courtly scholarship all...

### Education before school statistics

Official returns measure schools, pupils, grants, teachers, attendance, and examination results.

### Tols and Sanskrit scholastic networks

Mithila's Sanskrit scholastic reputation survived the growth of English education.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Their persistence also complicates a simple 'traditional versus modern' binary.



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# Pathshalas, village schools, and practical literacy

### Pathshalas, village schools, and practical literacy

Village schools taught forms of reading, writing, calculation, account keeping, and elementary religious or literary material.

### Maktabs, madrasas, Arabic-Persian learning, and Urdu

Muslim educational life cannot be reduced to colonial schools.

### English education and new careers

English education acquired value because the colonial state, courts, universities, professions, railways, municipalities, and commercial institutions rewarded particular…

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The result was the growth of a credentialed middle stratum without the disappearance of landed power.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# The wider policy frame: 1835, 1854, and the university system

**The wider policy frame: 1835, 1854, and the university system**

Macaulay's 1835 minute, the government's English-education policy, and Wood's Despatch of 1854 belong to the all-India institutional background rather than to Mithila...

**Court of Wards administration and educational reorganization, 1860-1879**

Darbhanga Raj came under the Court of Wards from 1860 to 1879.

**Darbhanga Raj as an educational patron**

Darbhanga Raj became an important patron of schools, scholarships, Sanskrit learning, and later higher education.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The scale of patronage should not be converted into a claim that the estate created modern education single-handedly.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# Raj schools, grants, and an archival vocabulary of schooling

### Raj schools, grants, and an archival vocabulary of schooling

The Darbhanga Raj educational archive contains references to English schools, middle schools, vernacular schools, Sanskrit institutions, stipends, teachers, inspections…

### Girls, women, and the unequal opening of formal education

Formal education for girls expanded slowly and unevenly.

### Caste, class, and access to credentials

The expansion of schools did not dissolve caste or class hierarchy.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Conversely, the limited documentary visibility of Dalit, labouring, pastoral, artisanal, and many cultivating communities should not be interpreted as an absence of knowledge.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 13–15

# Education, migration, and the geography of opportunity

### Education, migration, and the geography of opportunity

Students and scholars moved between Mithila, Patna, Calcutta, Benares, Allahabad, Jaipur, and other centres.

### 1912: Bihar and Orissa as a new provincial arena

The creation of the province of Bihar and Orissa in 1912 changed the administrative scale at which education, language, representation, and regional grievance were debated.

### Patna University and the reorganization of higher education

The Patna University Act of 1917 established and incorporated a university at Patna, and the Act came into force on 1 October 1917.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The university's creation altered educational geography but did not instantly democratize higher education.



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# Calcutta University recognition of Maithili in 1917

### Calcutta University recognition of Maithili in 1917

In 1917 Calcutta University, under the wider vernacular initiative associated with Asutosh Mookerjee, recognized Maithili within its Indian-vernacular framework and made…

### Grierson and the classificatory power of the Linguistic Survey

George A. Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India, volume V, part II, described Maithili within the eastern Indo-Aryan field and documented speech varieties through the…

### A language was not created by being surveyed

The existence of Maithili literature, speech communities, manuscript traditions, and older grammatical consciousness long predates the Linguistic Survey.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

At the same time, modern language politics depended on new documentary forms—maps, grammars, printed specimens, examinations, censuses, and association resolutions.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# Naming varieties without turning them into timeless borders

**Naming varieties without turning them into timeless borders**

Colonial linguists recorded regional variation across north Bihar and adjoining areas.

**Tirhuta, Kaithi, Devanagari, and script as institution**

Maithili manuscript culture used Tirhuta or Mithilakshar, while Kaithi had important documentary and scribal uses and Devanagari became increasingly prominent in print…

**Printing technology and the material problem of type**

Printing a language required more than authors. Presses needed fonts, compositors, paper, capital, distributors, proofreaders, and readers willing to pay.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The spread of Devanagari in Maithili print was therefore partly a history of infrastructure.



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# Presses within and beyond Mithila

### Presses within and beyond Mithila

By the turn of the twentieth century Maithili-related books were printed in Darbhanga, Bhagalpur, Benares, Jaipur, and other centres.

### Maithil Hit Sadhan and the Jaipur connection

Maithil Hit Sadhan began publication from Jaipur in 1905 under Maithil intellectual networks there.

### Mithila Moda and the problem of first-issue dates

Sources differ slightly on the first-year dating of Mithila Moda, commonly placing its emergence in 1905 or 1906.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The journal's early multilingual or bilingual character also shows that modern Maithili print developed within overlapping Hindi, Sanskrit, and regional literary circuits.



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# Mithila Mihir: 1908 or 1909, and why the difference matters

### Mithila Mihir: 1908 or 1909, and why the difference matters

Modern scholarship dates the beginning of Mithila Mihir variously to 1908 and 1909.

### Bilingual and trilingual beginnings

Several early Maithili journals printed Hindi, Sanskrit, or mixed linguistic material alongside Maithili.

### Print did not end manuscript or performance

Songs, ritual texts, drama, oral narrative, genealogical materials, letters, and scholastic works continued to circulate outside print.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The historian must therefore resist treating the first printed edition as the origin of a work.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Grammar, dictionary, and textbook as instruments of standardization

### Grammar, dictionary, and textbook as instruments of standardization

Grammars, dictionaries, readers, and schoolbooks transformed linguistic argument into teachable form.

### Maithil Mahasabha, 1910: organization and limitation

The Maithil Mahasabha was founded in 1910 and became a major institution in early twentieth-century regional public life.

### Caste organization and the making of a regional public

Caste associations could fund education, circulate information, reform marriage practices, and create new forms of public organization.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The language of 'Maithil society' in a journal or resolution must therefore be read with attention to institutional membership.



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# Panji, rank, and the c.1800 Śrotriya correction

### Panji, rank, and the c.1800 Śrotriya correction

This volume maintains the distinction established in Chapters 15-18: medieval and early-modern Panji genealogy must not be used to project a fixed Śrotriya hereditary…

### Rameshwar Singh, orthodoxy, and public patronage

Maharaja Rameshwar Singh combined educational and cultural patronage with a public role in orthodox Hindu institutions.

### The 1921 native-state memorial

In 1921 Rameshwar Singh submitted a memorial seeking recognition of Mithila as a native state under his rule.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The proposal should not be merged with later language-based demands for Mithila.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# From rank-based region to language-based region

**From rank-based region to language-based region**

By the 1930s a more explicitly language-centred conception of Mithila gained strength.

**The modern 'Vidyāpati' symbol and the book's two-Vidyāpati reconstruction**

Twentieth-century journals, festivals, literary histories, and language campaigns frequently invoked 'Vidyāpati' as a single emblem of Maithili antiquity and cultural…

**Vidyāpati festivals as memory institutions**

Commemorative festivals transform literature into public memory through speeches, songs, portraits, processions, prizes, and school programmes.

SOURCE INSIGHT

For the historian, the festival tells us most securely about the period that organized it: which past was chosen, which language was celebrated, which social groups led the event, and which…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 37–39

# Print and the recovery—or invention—of literary canons

### Print and the recovery—or invention—of literary canons

Editors of anthologies and histories made older works newly available by locating manuscripts, choosing readings, modernizing spelling, and assigning authorship.

### Women in the printed public sphere

Women appeared in the late-colonial public sphere as students, teachers, donors, reform subjects, readers, writers, political workers, and members of households whose…

### Non-elite print and the problem of literary respectability

Cheap pamphlets, chapbooks, songs, plays, caste publications, calendars, and locally printed booklets often circulated below the threshold of elite literary preservation.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Their survival is uneven because libraries and literary histories did not preserve every ephemeral publication.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 40–42

# Hindi, Urdu, Maithili, and overlapping public spheres

**Hindi, Urdu, Maithili, and overlapping public spheres**

Language politics in Bihar was not a two-sided contest between Hindi and Maithili alone.

**Reform: marriage, education, expenditure, and social discipline**

Reform debates addressed child marriage, widowhood, marriage expenditure, education, caste rules, religious observance, and household conduct.

**Public health, disaster relief, and civic association**

Floods, famine, epidemics, and the 1934 earthquake created arenas in which students, landlords, religious bodies, local committees, doctors, and nationalist organizations…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Yet humanitarian action should not be romanticized. Relief could be unequal, politically competitive, and tied to patronage.



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# Nationalism before mass mobilization

### Nationalism before mass mobilization

Before Non-Cooperation, Bihar's public politics included constitutional associations, newspapers, local conferences, swadeshi activity, students, lawyers, and smaller...

### Bhagalpur, 28 August 1920: a provincial conference at the threshold of Non-Cooperation

The Bihar Provincial Conference met at Bhagalpur on 28 August 1920 under Rajendra Prasad's presidency.

### Non-Cooperation in Darbhanga and Madhubani

Contemporary official reports describe Darbhanga district, including Madhubani subdivision, becoming a significant centre of Non-Cooperation during 1920-21.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The movement was uneven. Initial hesitation, local leadership struggles, and differences between town and countryside are visible in the same reports that later record mass enthusiasm.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 46–48

# Khilafat and composite political mobilization

**Khilafat and composite political mobilization**

Khilafat committees and Muslim religious-political networks formed part of the Non-Cooperation coalition in Bihar.

**Students, lawyers, and the politics of withdrawal**

Non-Cooperation asked students to reconsider government education and lawyers to reconsider colonial courts.

**Khadi, print, and everyday nationalism**

Nationalist politics circulated through cloth, songs, badges, pamphlets, meetings, subscriptions, and public ritual as well as formal resolutions.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Everyday nationalism was not socially uniform. A symbolic boycott could be easier for a prosperous household than for a labourer buying the cheapest available cloth.



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# Agrarian grievance inside nationalist mobilization

### Agrarian grievance inside nationalist mobilization

In Tirhut the Non-Cooperation movement intersected with older tensions over rent, cesses, indigo, market prices, and zamindari authority.

### The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, 1929, and class organization

The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha emerged in late 1929 and became an important vehicle for campaigns over rents, debt, bakasht land, and landlord power.

### Civil Disobedience and the changing repertoire of protest

The 1930s expanded the repertoire of boycott, procession, salt-related protest, tax resistance, picketing, arrest, and volunteer organization.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Civil Disobedience also trained cadres and normalized political imprisonment. Schools, hostels, bars, markets, and railway stations became spaces through which political messages circulated.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 52–54

# Print, censorship, and the colonial archive of sedition

### Print, censorship, and the colonial archive of sedition

The colonial state monitored newspapers, pamphlets, speeches, student associations, and political correspondence.

### The 1934 earthquake and the politics of public service

The Bihar-Nepal earthquake of 15 January 1934 disrupted schools, roads, railways, offices, homes, and print networks across north Bihar.

### Language activism in the 1930s

By the 1930s Maithili language activism increasingly emphasized literature, teaching, examinations, grammar, publication, and regional cultural history.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The language movement was still internally stratified.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 55–57

# Mithila Mihir and the production of historical consciousness

### Mithila Mihir and the production of historical consciousness

Mithila Mihir did more than report events. It serialized historical and cultural arguments, reviewed books, discussed language, and linked contemporary problems with…

### Separate-Mithila arguments and the 1940s

Arguments for a separate Mithila territory became more explicit in the 1940s.

### Quit India, 1942: student-led disruption in Darbhanga

District reports on the Quit India movement record student demonstrations across Darbhanga from 10 August 1942, followed by wider disruption of transport, communications…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Students were crucial because schools and colleges concentrated young people able to communicate rapidly across towns and villages.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 58–60

# Rural spread, repression, and local initiative in 1942

**Rural spread, repression, and local initiative in 1942**

By mid-August 1942 mobilization in Darbhanga had moved beyond school demonstrations into rural action.

**Bhagalpur, Munger, Tirhut, and a connected provincial politics**

The history of nationalism in this volume is not restricted to Darbhanga.

**Religion, caste, and nationalism without false unity**

Nationalist mobilization did not erase caste ranking, landlord-tenant conflict, communal tension, or gender inequality.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A responsible narrative therefore avoids both celebratory unity and retrospective communal determinism.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 61–63

# The archive of those who did not publish

**The archive of those who did not publish**

Many cultivators, labourers, domestic workers, women, artisans, and migrants entered the historical record only when counted, arrested, taxed, litigating, migrating, or...

**Education and print as infrastructures of both hierarchy and dissent**

Schools, examinations, presses, and associations strengthened bureaucratic and elite power by defining credentials, correct language, and respectable public speech.

**Diagram 38: education, print and political public formation**

Original analytical diagram for this volume. Sources: Jha 1972; Grierson 1903; Patna University Act 1917; Chakravartty 2024; Kamat 2023.

SOURCE INSIGHT

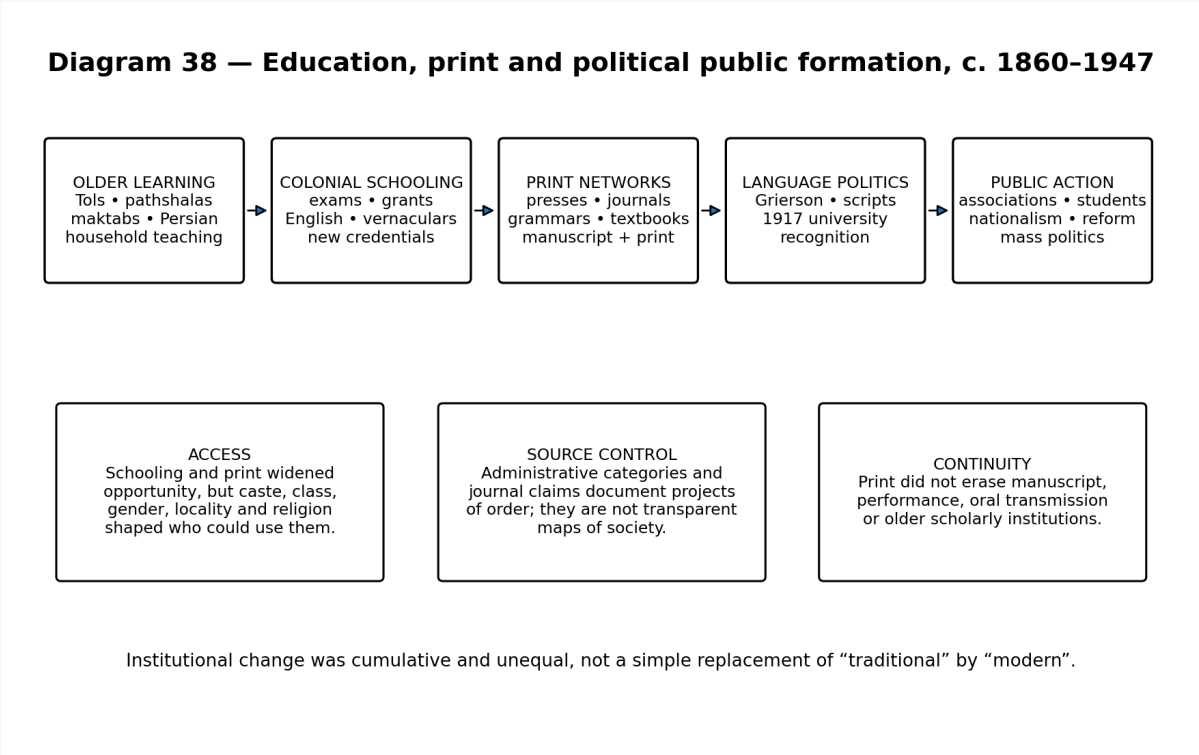
Original analytical diagram for this volume. Sources: Jha 1972; Grierson 1903; Patna University Act 1917; Chakravartty 2024; Kamat 2023.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 38. Education, print and political public formation, c. 1860-1947.




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 38. Education, print and political public formation, c. 1860-1947.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 64–66

# Diagram 39: competing projects of Mithila in the late-colonial public sphere

### Diagram 39: competing projects of Mithila in the late-colonial public sphere

Original analytical diagram for this volume. Sources: Chakravartty 2024; Kamat 2023; Jha 1977; Darbhanga Raj educational records; Bihar movement records....

### Source-control rules for modern identity history

Four distinctions govern this chapter. First, a language survey is not the origin of a language. Second, a caste or landlord association is not the whole population....

### 1947 as political threshold and institutional inheritance

Independence in 1947 ended British sovereignty but inherited universities, school systems, district administration, census categories, print networks, tenancy records...

SOURCE INSIGHT

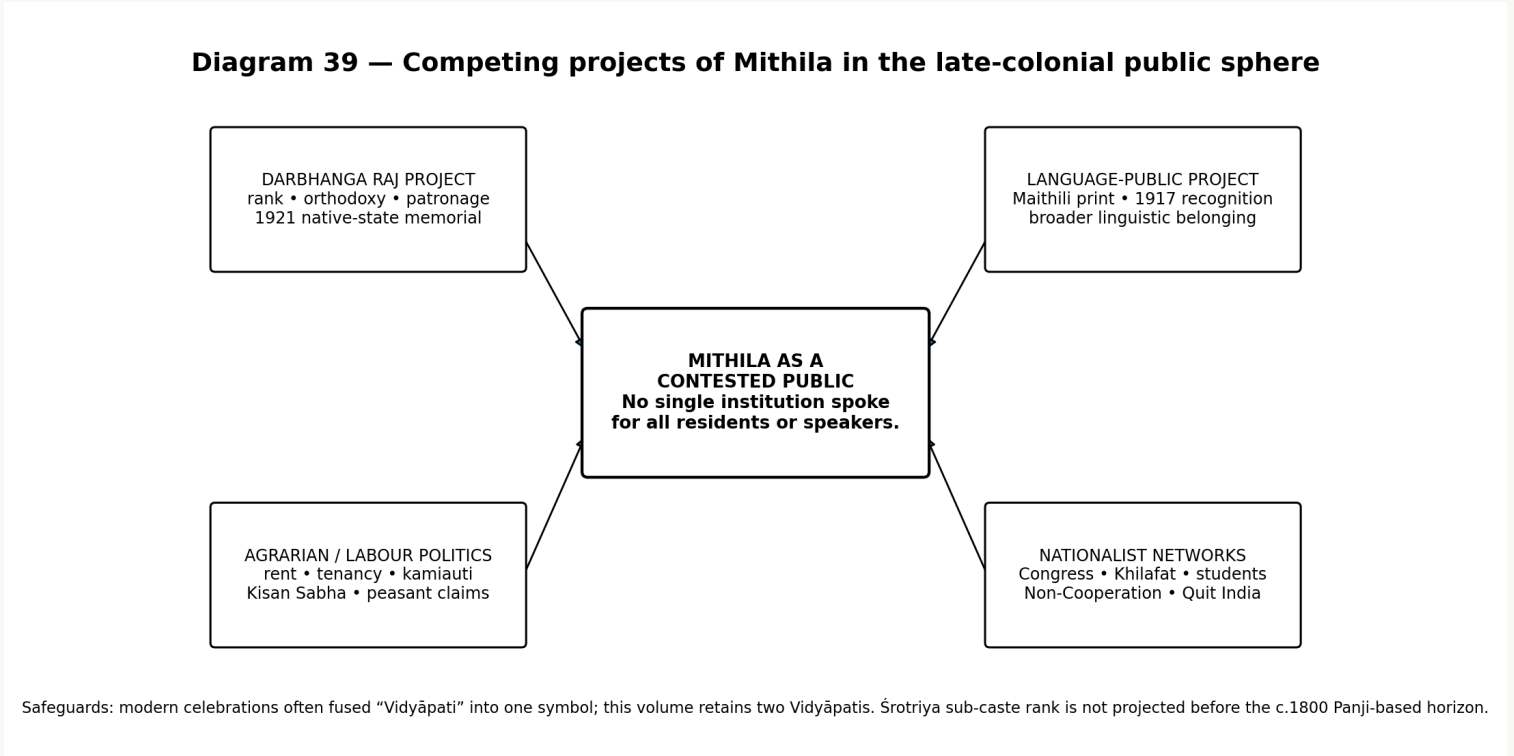
Postcolonial language recognition and educational policy therefore began on an institutional terrain already shaped by the struggles described here.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 39. Competing projects of Mithila in the late-colonial public sphere.




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 39. Competing projects of Mithila in the late-colonial public sphere.



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# Chapter conclusion: publics, not a single public

**Chapter conclusion: publics, not a single public**

Between the mid-nineteenth century and independence, Mithila and eastern Bihar experienced not one modernization but several overlapping transformations.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The central historical fact is plurality. Darbhanga Raj, Maithil Mahasabha, Mithila Mihir, university authorities, Kisan Sabha organizers, Congress and Khilafat workers, students, women, Muslim…



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# What this chapter establishes

### Source-control rules for modern identity history

Four distinctions govern this chapter. First, a language survey is not the origin of a language. Second, a caste or landlord association is not the whole…

### 1947 as political threshold and institutional inheritance

Independence in 1947 ended British sovereignty but inherited universities, school systems, district administration, census categories, print networks, tenancy…

### Chapter conclusion: publics, not a single public

Between the mid-nineteenth century and independence, Mithila and eastern Bihar experienced not one modernization but several overlapping transformations.

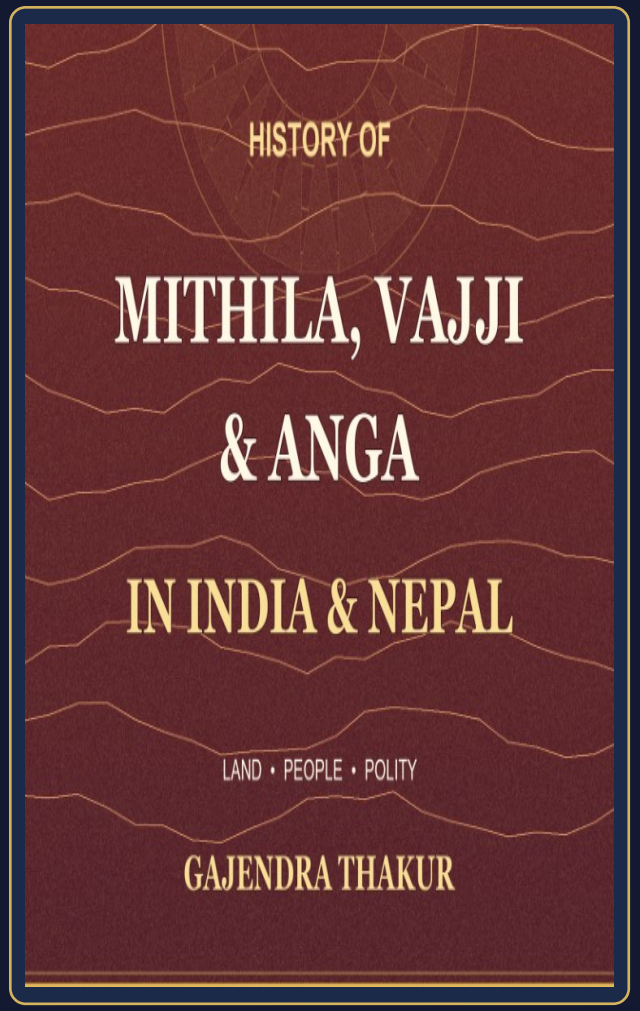
**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 21

# The Nepal Tarai, Rana rule, and the border to 1951

A source-controlled history · modern period

Gajendra Thakur | Videha



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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–11 — Tarai as frontier and homeland

02 §12–22 — Diagram 40: Treaty-defined border change and political…

03 §23–34 — Reclamation before Rana rule

04 §35–45 — The Nepal Government Railway and Raxaul–Birgunj–Amlekhganj

05 §46–57 — The March 1947 Biratnagar labour strike

57 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# Tarai as frontier and homeland

### Tarai as frontier and homeland

The Nepal Tarai was never merely an empty frontier awaiting settlement from the hills.

### “Tarai” as an ecological and administrative category

The word Tarai could describe lowland terrain, a revenue region, a forest belt, or a frontier of particular districts depending on date and document.

### Border before border

Before the nineteenth-century treaty regime, routes, political influence, forests, estates, pilgrimage, and kinship crossed what later became an international frontier.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The frontier became progressively more consequential as treaties, surveys, customs posts, courts, land records, and police practices attached different legal effects to each side.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 4–6

# The Anglo-Nepalese War and the Treaty of Sugauli

### The Anglo-Nepalese War and the Treaty of Sugauli

The Treaty of Sugauli was signed on 2 December 1815 after the Anglo-Nepalese War.

### Article III and river-defined cessions

Sugauli's cession clauses used the Kali, Rapti, Gandak, Kosi/Coosah, Mechi and Teesta as reference lines for large territorial descriptions.

### Ratification and implementation in March 1816

The surviving treaty text records the exchange at Makwanpur on 4 March 1816.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Implementation required evacuation, administrative takeover, and boundary work.



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# The December 1816 supplementary Tarai restoration

### The December 1816 supplementary Tarai restoration

A memorandum presented on 8 December 1816 proposed restoring substantial Tarai lands between the Kosi/Coosah and Gandak and between the Gandak and Rapti.

### Tirhut and Saran in the 1816 supplementary text

The December memorandum expressly excepted disputed lands in the districts of Tirhut and Saran from automatic restoration.

### Boundary commissioners, exchanges, and the “straight line” problem

The supplementary terms envisaged commissioners investigating the frontier and allowed exchanges where existing grants or ownership claims would otherwise create…

SOURCE INSIGHT

This is a reminder that boundary history is also property history.



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# Rivers as legal boundaries in moving floodplains

**Rivers as legal boundaries in moving floodplains**

North Bihar and the adjoining Tarai are alluvial landscapes in which channels migrate and avulse.

**The 1860 Naya Muluk restoration**

A second major territorial adjustment followed Nepalese assistance to the British during the uprising of 1857.

**Diagram 40: Treaty-defined border change and political transition, 1815–1951**

Original analytical diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026.

SOURCE INSIGHT

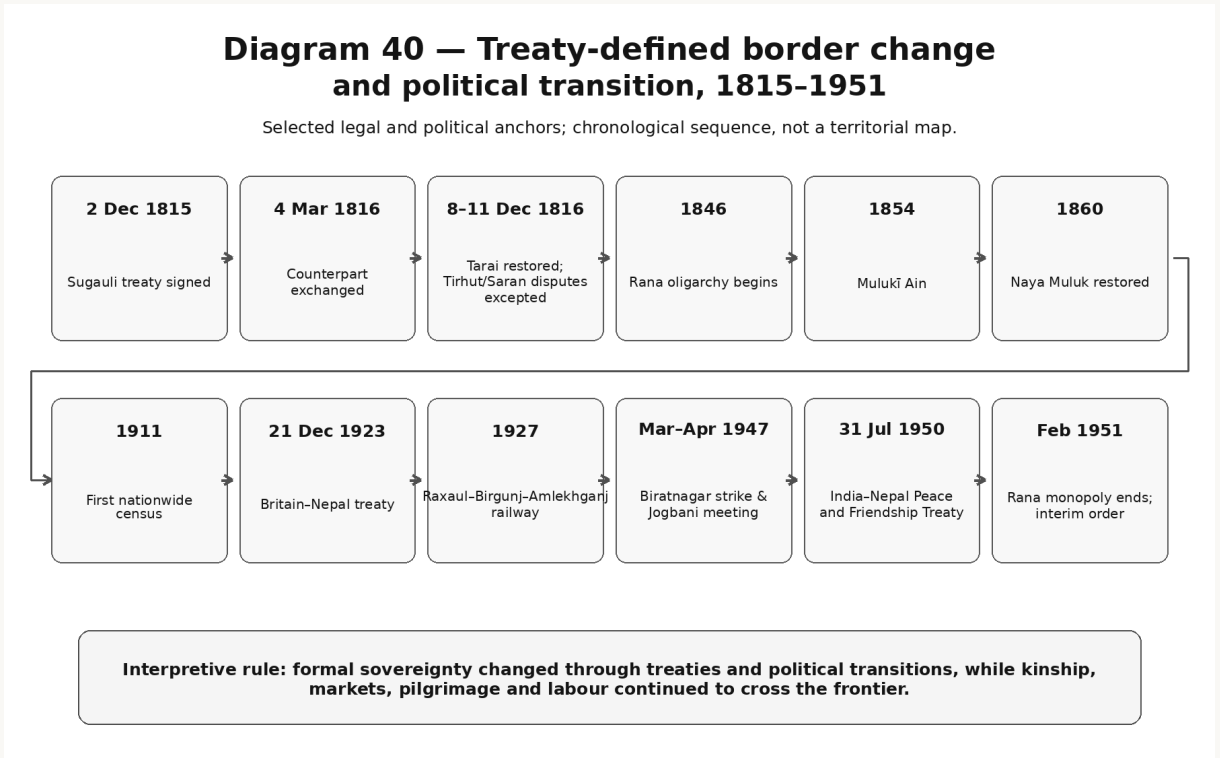
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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 40. Selected legal and political anchors in the making of the Nepal–India/British India frontier...




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 40. Selected legal and political anchors in the making of the Nepal–India/British India frontier, 1815–1951. The diagram is chronological, not a territorial map.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 13–15

# 1857, Jang Bahadur, and imperial alliance

### 1857, Jang Bahadur, and imperial alliance

Jang Bahadur Rana's military support for the British during the 1857 uprising strengthened an already close strategic relationship.

### Rana oligarchy after 1846

After the political upheaval of 1846, hereditary Rana prime ministers dominated the machinery of government while the Shah monarchy continued.

### Shah monarchy under Rana prime ministers

The continued Shah kingship under Rana prime-ministerial dominance matters for constitutional language.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Later democratic narratives understandably describe 1951 as the fall of Rana autocracy, but the institutional transition should not be simplified into the birth of the Nepalese state.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# The Mulukī Ain of 1854 and legal centralization

### The Mulukī Ain of 1854 and legal centralization

The Mulukī Ain of 1854, formulated under Jang Bahadur Rana, was an ambitious national legal code covering state and court organization, criminal and private law...

### Caste hierarchy: code is not census

The Mulukī Ain organized legal consequences through ranked caste-status categories and purity rules.

### Land as fiscal infrastructure

Rana-era government depended heavily on rights over land, revenue, labour and forest resources.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Tarai's expansion of taxable cultivation made land policy especially important.



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# Raikar: revenue-paying land

**Raikar: revenue-paying land**

Raikar generally referred to land subject to state revenue.

**Birta: privileged grants and political economy**

Birta grants transferred land or revenue rights under privileged conditions and became important instruments of reward and elite accumulation.

**Jagir, guthi, and service-linked assignments**

Jagir linked revenue or land rights to office and service, while guthi property supported religious, charitable or institutional purposes under varying arrangements.

SOURCE INSIGHT

These categories formed a political economy of assignment rather than a simple market in private freehold.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# Nepalese jimidar and the danger of translating “zamindar”

**Nepalese jimidar and the danger of translating “zamindar”**

Terms rendered as jimidar or zamindar in Nepalese records should not be assumed to carry the same bundle of rights as a Permanent Settlement zamindar in Bihar.

**Reclamation before Rana rule**

Expansion of cultivated land in the eastern Tarai predated the Rana oligarchy.

**Reclamation incentives, contractors, and local intermediaries**

Agricultural expansion often required intermediaries who recruited cultivators, advanced resources, cleared land or guaranteed revenue.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The state’s objective of increasing taxable cultivation did not guarantee secure tenure for everyone who performed the labour of clearance.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–27

# Forest as revenue, timber, and territorial resource

**Forest as revenue, timber, and territorial resource**

Tarai forests supplied timber, fuel, grazing, hunting grounds, elephant habitats and other resources.

**Long-settled Tarai communities and the archive of absence**

Tharu and other long-established communities demonstrate why the plains cannot be narrated only as a history of migrants arriving from India or hills.

**Malaria: ecology without determinism**

Malaria profoundly affected settlement, seasonal movement, labour and official perceptions of the Tarai.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Officials frequently described the plains as unhealthy or dangerous while towns, markets and established communities continued to exist there.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Tharu malaria research and its limits

### Tharu malaria research and its limits

Late twentieth-century biomedical studies reported markedly lower malaria morbidity among sampled Tharu populations than among sympatric non-Tharu groups and investigated…

### Migration from British India and within Nepal

Cultivation, trade, rent opportunities, labour demand and political patronage drew migrants into the Tarai from adjoining British Indian districts and from other parts of…

### The eastern Tarai as a multilingual social field

The eastern and central Tarai included Maithili, Bhojpuri, Urdu, Nepali, Tharu languages and other speech traditions in overlapping markets, households, schools, courts…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The chapter therefore avoids reading a later census language category backward as if it were the only social identity available in the nineteenth century.



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# Maithili across a state boundary

### Maithili across a state boundary

Maithili literary and social networks crossed the international frontier, particularly between north Bihar and the eastern-central Tarai.

### Janakpur: pilgrimage, town, and border-connected centre

Janakpur linked sacred geography with markets, transport, education and regional identity.

### Border markets, customs, and everyday sovereignty

Customs posts, excise, policing and legal jurisdiction made the boundary materially visible, yet nearby markets depended on movement across it.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Sovereignty at the border was therefore exercised by selecting, taxing, documenting or prohibiting particular movements rather than by preventing all movement.



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# Currency, credit, and merchant networks

### Currency, credit, and merchant networks

Commercial exchange required currency conversion, credit, brokerage and trust across jurisdictions.

### The Nepal Government Railway and Raxaul–Birgunj–Amlekhganj

The narrow-gauge Nepal Government Railway opened in 1927 between the Indian railhead at Raxaul and Amlekhganj through Birgunj.

### Jaynagar–Janakpur railway and the problem of exact opening dates

The narrow-gauge line from the Indian rail network at Jaynagar into the Janakpur area was originally associated with timber traffic and later became important for…

SOURCE INSIGHT

At least one later World Bank transport history gives a different early date for the Janakpur system.



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# Railheads and asymmetric access to Kathmandu

### Railheads and asymmetric access to Kathmandu

Before all-weather road connection to Kathmandu, the Tarai railways did not remove the topographical break between plains and valley.

### The first nationwide census of 1911

Nepal's official census history identifies 1911 as the first population census covering the country, followed at roughly ten-year intervals.

### The limits of the Rana-era censuses

Official retrospective assessments emphasize that the pre-1952/54 censuses lacked the concepts, definitions, classifications and field organization of later modern…

SOURCE INSIGHT

These counts remain valuable administrative evidence, but precision must match their design.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 40–42

# Diagram 41: Rana-era Tarai — state, land, mobility, and border institutions

**Diagram 41: Rana-era Tarai — state, land, mobility, and border institutions**

Original analytical diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026.

**Counting and the politics of social categories**

Later census scholarship notes that language, religion and caste/ethnicity were not published with the same systematicity as in later democratic-era censuses.

**The Britain–Nepal Treaty of 1923**

The treaty signed at Kathmandu on 21 December 1923 replaced and confirmed parts of the earlier British–Nepal relationship.

SOURCE INSIGHT

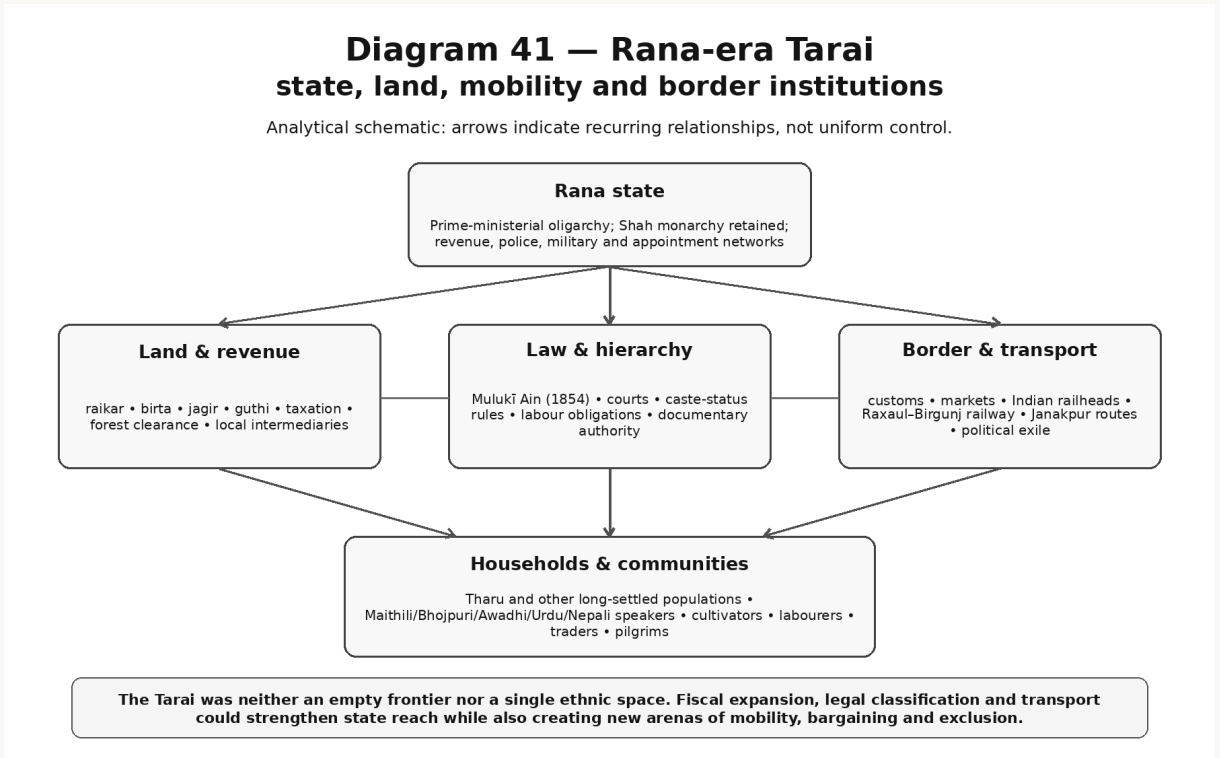
The treaty did not erase asymmetry in arms, trade, transit or imperial strategy.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 41. Analytical model of recurring relationships among Rana state institutions, land and revenue…




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 41. Analytical model of recurring relationships among Rana state institutions, land and revenue, legal hierarchy, border transport, and Tarai households and communities.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 43–45

# Independence in treaty language and dependence in infrastructure

### Independence in treaty language and dependence in infrastructure

Rana Nepal maintained independent treaty personality while relying heavily on British Indian ports, railways and markets.

### Schools, language, and access to the state

Education under Rana rule remained restricted and uneven. Access to schooling, official employment and documentary literacy was stratified by region and social position.

### Industrial eastern Tarai and Biratnagar Jute Mills

Biratnagar Jute Mills was incorporated in 1936 and is conventionally treated as Nepal's first major modern industrial enterprise.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Industrialization did not replace agrarian society.



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# The March 1947 Biratnagar labour strike

### The March 1947 Biratnagar labour strike

A strike in the Biratnagar jute and cotton mills in March 1947 brought industrial labour grievances into the anti-Rana political movement.

### Jogbani, 10 April 1947: a border town as political platform

A Nepali National Congress meeting at Jogbani in north Bihar on 10 April 1947 decided to begin a country-wide satyagraha from 13 April, protesting repression of the…

### Indian independence and the remaking of border politics

On 15 August 1947 the southern side of the frontier ceased to be British India.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Indian independence altered diplomatic expectations and the political opportunities available to Nepalese activists, but it did not give them unrestricted freedom to use Indian territory for armed…



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# Political exile and organization in India

### Political exile and organization in India

Nepalese political activists used Banaras, Calcutta, north-Bihar towns and other Indian locations for education, publication, party organization and refuge.

### The 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship

India and Nepal signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship at Kathmandu on 31 July 1950, and Article 9 made it effective from the date of signature.

### Article 7 and reciprocal privileges

Article 7 provided, on a reciprocal basis, comparable privileges for nationals of each country in the other concerning residence, property ownership, trade and commerce…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Actual practice nevertheless remained shaped by domestic citizenship, land, security, labour and administrative law.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 52–54

# Article 8 and the break with British-era agreements

### Article 8 and the break with British-era agreements

Article 8 cancelled, for matters covered by the 1950 treaty, previous treaties, agreements and engagements concluded on behalf of India between the British Government and…

### November 1950: monarchy, insurgency, and the border

The political crisis sharpened in November 1950 when King Tribhuvan took refuge in the Indian embassy and Nepali Congress forces launched action from the border region…

### Negotiation, the Delhi compromise, and the end of Rana monopoly

Negotiations among the king, Rana leadership, Nepali Congress and India produced a compromise rather than an outright military conquest of Kathmandu.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This negotiated character matters because institutions and elites survived the transition in altered forms.



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# 15 February 1951: Tribhuvan’s return

### 15 February 1951: Tribhuvan’s return

King Tribhuvan returned to Kathmandu on 15 February 1951 after the political settlement.

### 18 February 1951: proclamation and interim government

A royal proclamation of 18 February 1951 announced a new political order and a ministry combining Rana and Nepali Congress representation, while promising movement toward…

### Sovereignty and social continuity: a source-controlled conclusion

From Sugauli to 1951 the Tarai borderland experienced increasingly precise state sovereignty without becoming socially sealed.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The strongest regional history therefore refuses both false unity and false separation.



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# What this chapter establishes

### 15 February 1951: Tribhuvan’s return

King Tribhuvan returned to Kathmandu on 15 February 1951 after the political settlement.

### 18 February 1951: proclamation and interim government

A royal proclamation of 18 February 1951 announced a new political order and a ministry combining Rana and Nepali Congress representation, while promising…

### Sovereignty and social continuity: a source-controlled conclusion

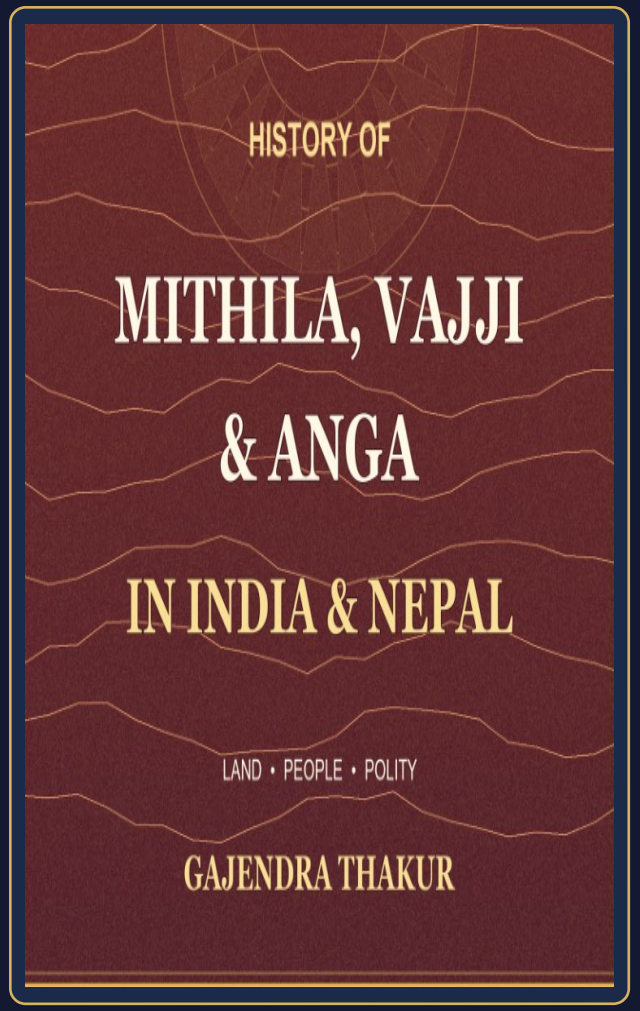
From Sugauli to 1951 the Tarai borderland experienced increasingly precise state sovereignty without becoming socially sealed.

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 22

# Land reform, democracy, and changing regional power

A source-controlled history · contemporary period

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–7 — **The end of zamindari**

02 §8–15 — **Ceiling legislation and surplus land**

03 §16–22 — **Cooperatives, credit, and new intermediaries**

04 §23–30 — **Panchayati Raj and local government**

05 §31–38 — **Limits of Nepalese land reform**

38 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# The end of zamindari

### The end of zamindari

The Bihar Land Reforms Act of 1950 marked a constitutional break in the agrarian order of north Bihar.

### Constitutional land reform and the early Republic

The abolition of zamindari became one of the first major tests of the new constitutional order.

### What vesting transferred

The Bihar statute defined the interests passing to the state broadly.

SOURCE INSIGHT

At village level, the transfer of superior interests did not erase every lower layer of tenure.



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# Darbhanga Raj and the Kameshwar Singh litigation

### Darbhanga Raj and the Kameshwar Singh litigation

Darbhanga Raj became a central test case because of the scale of its landed interests and the prominence of Maharajadhiraja Sir Kameshwar Singh.

### From estate authority to retained wealth and influence

Abolition did not make former estate families socially irrelevant.

### Raiyats after intermediary abolition

For cultivators, one promise of abolition was the removal of superior claimants between tiller and state.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The equation 'zamindari abolished = cultivator became owner' is therefore historically false.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# Abolition was not redistribution

**Abolition was not redistribution**

The 1950 Act primarily abolished intermediary interests.

**Ceiling legislation and surplus land**

The Bihar Land Reforms (Fixation of Ceiling Area and Acquisition of Surplus Land) Act, 1961 represented a second stage.

**Records, mutation, and the politics of implementation**

Land reform made cadastral and revenue records politically charged.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Official returns are therefore not transparent measurements of ownership. They were produced through claims, inspections, litigation, and sometimes strategic concealment.



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# Bhoodan and voluntary redistribution

### Bhoodan and voluntary redistribution

The Bhoodan movement introduced a different philosophy of land reform.

### The Bihar Bhoodan Yagna Act, 1954

The Bihar Bhoodan Yagna Act, 1954 gave the movement a statutory framework for receiving, administering, and distributing donated land.

### Gramdan and the village-community ideal

Bhoodan developed into Gramdan, shifting attention from individual gifts toward collective village arrangements.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Its uneven adoption exposes the difficulty of translating an ideal of village community into settlements divided by caste, class, tenancy, gender, and competing land claims.



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# Landlessness and agricultural labour

### Landlessness and agricultural labour

The abolition of intermediary landlords did not remove the distinction between landholding cultivators and landless labourers.

### Irrigation, flood control, and development

Postcolonial agrarian reform operated within the riverine environment discussed in earlier chapters.

### Community Development and the expansion of the local state

Community Development and related planning initiatives brought agricultural extension, roads, schools, health centres, cooperatives, and block-level administration into…

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This expanded state presence created new resources and new conflict.



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# Cooperatives, credit, and new intermediaries

**Cooperatives, credit, and new intermediaries**

Cooperative credit and agricultural institutions aimed to reduce dependence on older moneylending and landlord networks.

**The first general election and universal adult franchise**

The 1951–52 general election translated universal adult franchise into mass electoral practice.

**Congress, local notables, and adaptation**

Early postcolonial elections did not automatically displace established elites.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Democracy could therefore absorb parts of the old social order even while changing the rules by which authority had to be justified.



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# Socialist and peasant alternatives

### Socialist and peasant alternatives

Congress was not the only political current in Bihar.

### Caste, democracy, and historically dated categories

Universal franchise gave caste networks new political functions without making caste the only axis of politics.

### Karpoori Thakur and the 1978 reservation formula

In 1978 the Bihar government under Karpoori Thakur implemented a differentiated reservation policy for backward categories, including a distinct share for extremely...

SOURCE INSIGHT

The policy did not settle the meaning of backwardness.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# Mandal-era politics and the 1990s

### Mandal-era politics and the 1990s

National implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations in 1990 transformed the political vocabulary of backward-class representation.

### Panchayati Raj and local government

Rural local government became another arena in which post-zamindari power could be redistributed.

### The Seventy-third Constitutional Amendment

The Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992 gave Panchayati Raj institutions constitutional status and created a framework for regular elections, reservations…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Constitutional design created an institutional opening rather than a guarantee of equal capacity or freedom from local capture.



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# Bihar Panchayati Raj Act, 2006 and women in local office

### Bihar Panchayati Raj Act, 2006 and women in local office

The Bihar Panchayati Raj Act, 2006 established the contemporary three-tier framework of Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and Zila Parishad.

### Bihar reorganization in 2000

The Bihar Reorganisation Act, 2000 created Jharkhand with effect from 15 November 2000.

### Nepal's Interim Government Act of 1951

The end of Rana oligarchy was followed by the Interim Government of Nepal Act, 1951.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The transition did not immediately create stable parliamentary government.



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# Election and parliamentary opening in 1959

### Election and parliamentary opening in 1959

Nepal's first national parliamentary election in 1959 created a short democratic opening.

### Royal intervention and the 1962 Panchayat Constitution

In December 1960 King Mahendra dismissed the elected government, dissolved parliament, and detained political leaders.

### The Lands Act of 1964

Nepal's Lands Act, 2021 B.S. addressed ceilings, tenancy, rents, and landholding within Nepal's own legal history. It became a central statutory instrument of post-Rana...

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

It was not a Nepalese equivalent of Bihar's 1950 zamindari abolition.



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# Limits of Nepalese land reform

**Limits of Nepalese land reform**

As in Bihar, legislation did not translate automatically into equal redistribution.

**Multiparty restoration in 1990**

The 1990 people's movement ended the partyless Panchayat order and produced a constitutional monarchy with multiparty competition.

**Conflict, peace process, and republican transition**

The Maoist insurgency beginning in 1996 altered local governance, policing, party activity, development, and everyday security across Nepal in regionally uneven ways.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Nepal became a republic in 2008, and the Constituent Assembly process ultimately produced the Constitution of 2015.



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# Federalism after 2015

**Federalism after 2015**

The Constitution of Nepal, 2015 established federal, provincial, and local levels of government.

**Two postcolonial states, one connected region**

By the later twentieth century, north Bihar and the Nepal Tarai were governed through different constitutions, land laws, party systems, courts, and bureaucracies.

**Law is an event; implementation is a process**

This chapter distinguishes enactment, notification, adjudication, implementation, and social effect.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The same rule applies to constitutions and elections.



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# Diagram 42: Bihar — from zamindari abolition to layered land reform, 1950–2006

**Diagram 42: Bihar — from zamindari abolition to layered land reform, 1950–2006**

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**Diagram 43: Two postcolonial trajectories in a connected region**

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SOURCE INSIGHT

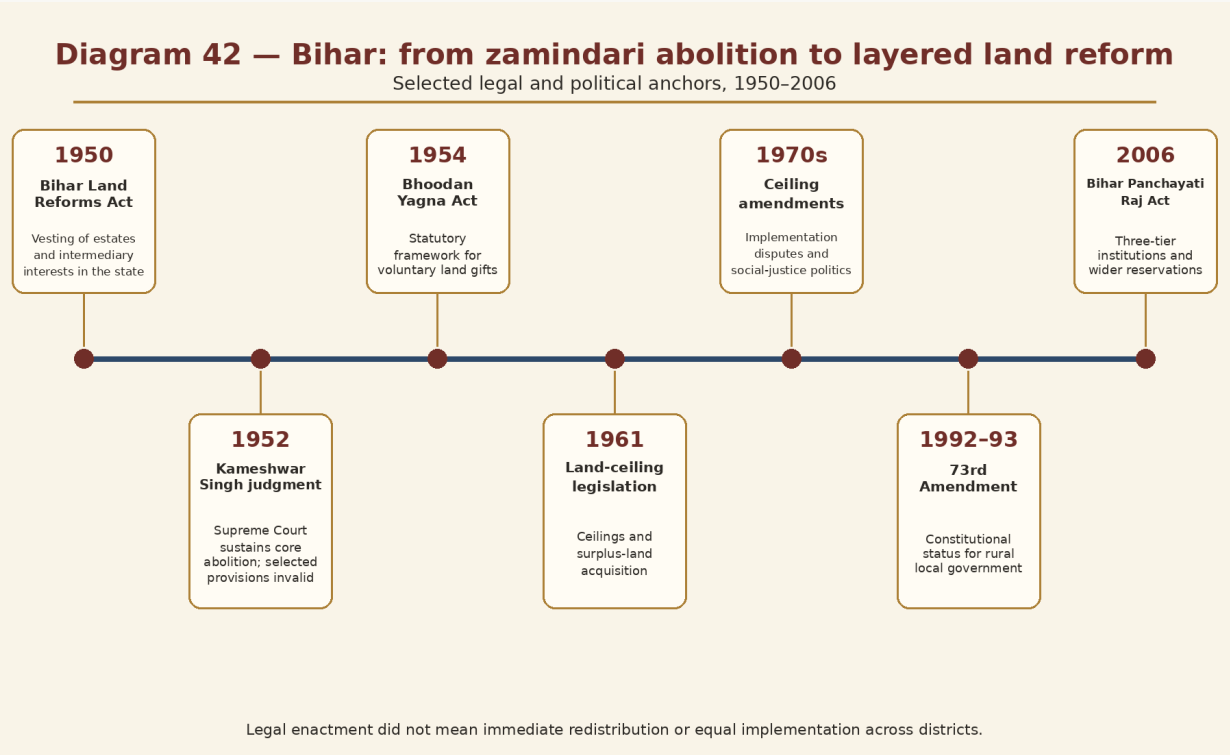
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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 42. Selected legal and political anchors in Bihar’s transition from zamindari abolition to layered…




## FROM THE BOOK

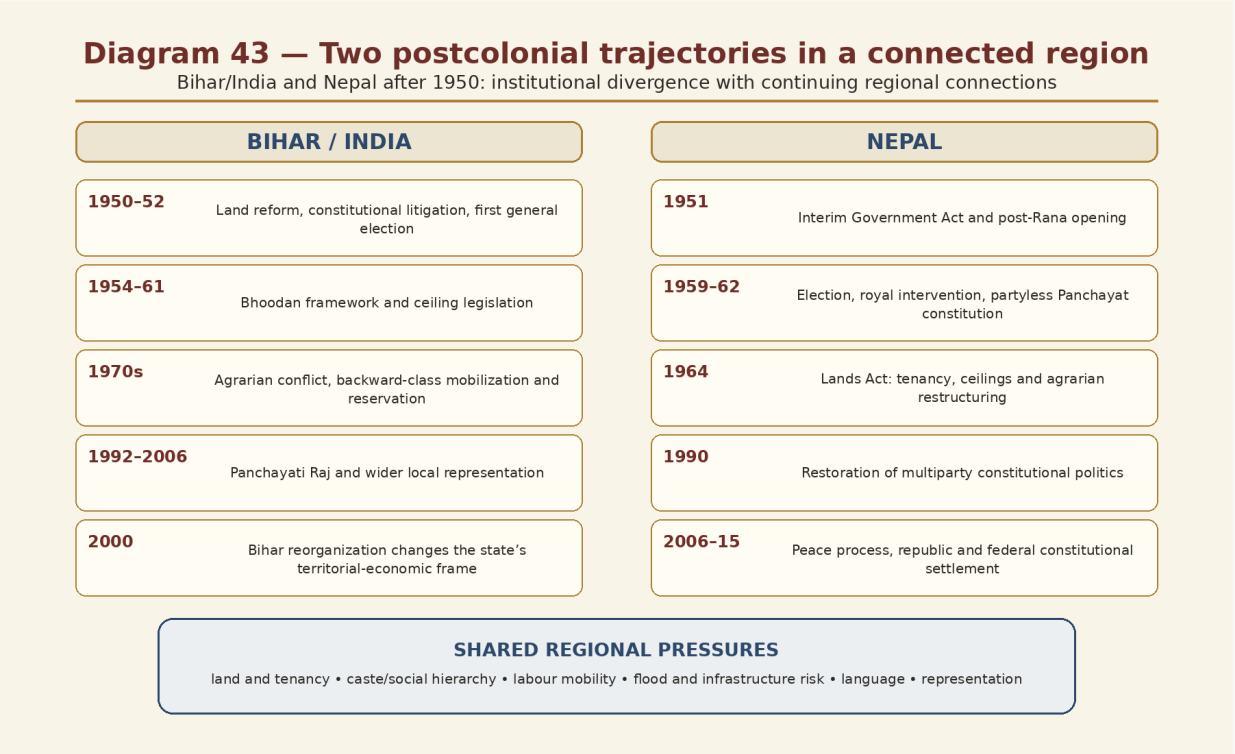
Diagram 42. Selected legal and political anchors in Bihar’s transition from zamindari abolition to layered agrarian reform and decentralized rural government, 1950–2006.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 43. Bihar/India and Nepal followed distinct postcolonial constitutional and land-reform trajectories…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 43. Bihar/India and Nepal followed distinct postcolonial constitutional and land-reform trajectories while remaining connected through regional social, economic, and environmental pressures.



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# What this chapter establishes

**Law is an event; implementation is a process**

This chapter distinguishes enactment, notification, adjudication, implementation, and social effect.

**Diagram 42: Bihar — from zamindari abolition to layered land reform, 1950–2006**

Original analytical diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026.

**Diagram 43: Two postcolonial trajectories in a connected region**

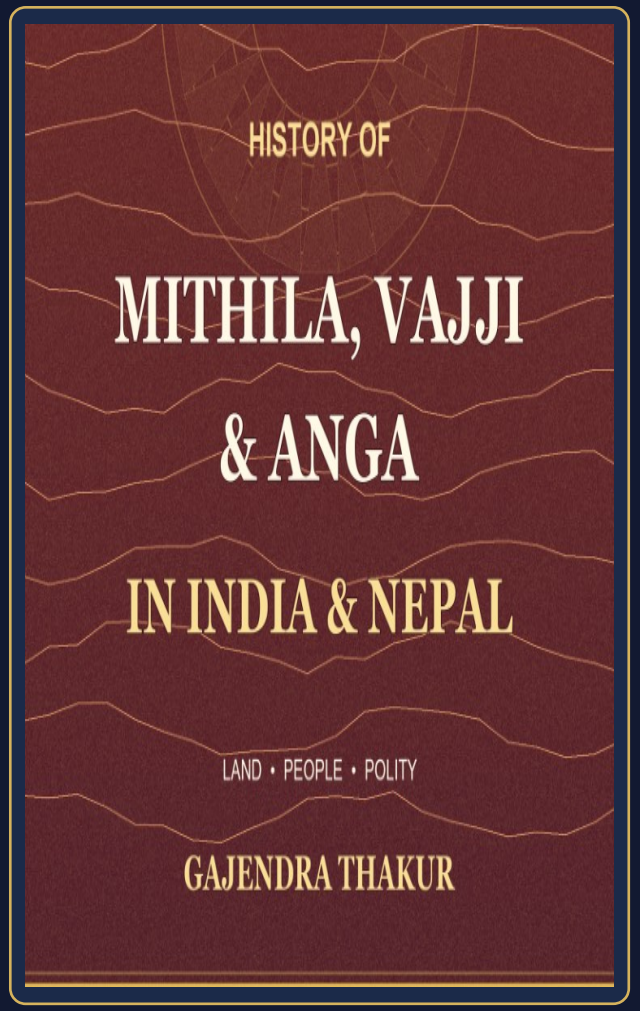
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READING PRINCIPLE

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CHAPTER 23

# The India-Nepal borderland, migration, and exchange

A source-controlled history · contemporary period

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–9 — An open border is still a border

02 §10–19 — Labour migration to India as an old but poorly counted…

03 §20–29 — Informal does not automatically mean illegal

04 §30–39 — Health care and medical corridors

05 §40–49 — Census residence and multi-local lives

49 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# An open border is still a border

### An open border is still a border

The India–Nepal frontier is often described as 'open', but openness is a historically specific regulatory arrangement rather than the absence of a boundary.

### Article 7 and the limits of treaty shorthand

The 31 July 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship is the central bilateral legal anchor.

### Open-border practice before and after 1950

Mobility across the plains long predates 1950.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This distinction matters historically. A practice can be older than its present legal basis, and a legal basis can reshape an older practice. Borderland history must therefore date both custom and…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 4–6

# Paired localities rather than one undifferentiated frontier

**Paired localities rather than one undifferentiated frontier**

The frontier should be reconstructed through linked localities and corridors.

**Mithila as a cross-border cultural field after national partition**

The modern boundary divides a cultural field in which Maithili, pilgrimage, marriage networks, ritual calendars, literary exchange, and shared historical references…

**Marriage as measurable mobility**

Cross-border marriage is not only a literary trope or a slogan about 'roti-beti' relations.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The same report records markedly higher foreign-born shares among women in the Tarai and Madhesh than among men.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# Foreign-born is not the same as foreign citizen

**Foreign-born is not the same as foreign citizen**

Census categories must be read precisely. Country of birth records where a person was born; citizenship or nationality records legal membership. A woman born in Bihar and…

**Marriage, citizenship, and gendered documentation**

Cross-border marriage can expose differences between kinship acceptance and documentary status.

**The analytical limits of “roti-beti”**

The phrase 'roti-beti' effectively conveys food, kinship and marriage intimacy, but it can conceal inequality.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The phrase is therefore retained as evidence of a widely used idiom of connection, not as a sociological description of the whole frontier.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# Labour migration to India as an old but poorly counted system

### Labour migration to India as an old but poorly counted system

For much of the twentieth century India was the principal external labour destination for Nepalis, and seasonal or circular movement remains important.

### Why border crossing is statistically elusive

ILO and IOM studies repeatedly emphasize the absence of comprehensive records for movements across the India–Nepal land frontier.

### Cross-border mobility survey as a new evidence genre

The IOM's 2023 Baseline Study on Cross-border Migration and the Nepal Cross-Border Mobility Survey represent an important methodological shift because they focus directly...

SOURCE INSIGHT

Their value lies in making movement itself visible rather than inferring mobility only from residence at a census date.



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# Seasonal and circular labour

### Seasonal and circular labour

Seasonal labour can connect agricultural calendars, construction cycles, transport work, petty commerce and services on both sides of the frontier.

### India, the Gulf, Malaysia, and multi-destination households

Since the late twentieth century, labour migration from Nepal has diversified sharply toward the Gulf, Malaysia, Korea and other destinations.

### Madhesh as a region of internal and international mobility

Nepal's 2021 migration reports show that Madhesh participates simultaneously in internal out-migration, cross-border family formation, and foreign-employment migration.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

No single migration narrative can therefore define the plains. Marriage, education, urbanization, India-bound work and permit-based overseas employment overlap.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# Absence and the household economy

**Absence and the household economy**

Migration changes the household even when the migrant eventually returns.

**Women’s work and the care economy**

Male labour migration can increase women's responsibility for cultivation, livestock, household finance, elder care and children's education without necessarily...

**Remittances as social as well as monetary transfers**

Money transfers are only one form of remittance.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Digital banking and mobile communication have accelerated some exchanges, but cash, hand-carried goods and informal credit remain historically important in border markets.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# Border bazaars and everyday exchange

### Border bazaars and everyday exchange

Border markets connect food grains, vegetables, livestock, clothing, medicines, household goods, repair services, transport and ritual consumption.

### Informal does not automatically mean illegal

Historical writing should distinguish four categories that are often collapsed: permitted personal circulation, small trade that may fall under simplified or local rules…

### Currency, prices, and arbitrage

The Indian rupee and Nepali rupee circulate within closely connected monetary environments, but they are not the same currency and the exchange relationship is…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Price differentials can draw shoppers across the frontier without implying a permanent directional flow.



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# Raxaul–Birgunj as a logistics corridor

### Raxaul–Birgunj as a logistics corridor

Raxaul–Birgunj is one of the major formal freight corridors linking Nepal with Indian ports and markets.

### Jogbani–Biratnagar: industry and border infrastructure

The Jogbani–Biratnagar corridor links an Indian railhead and commercial town with Nepal's major eastern industrial centre.

### Jayanagar–Janakpur: pilgrimage, kinship, and railway mobility

The Jayanagar–Janakpur corridor combines pilgrimage, market exchange, education, family travel and transport history.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

On 2 April 2022 the Jayanagar–Kurtha section was inaugurated as Nepal's first broad-gauge passenger rail line in the new cross-border rail programme.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–27

# Infrastructure does not erase the boundary

**Infrastructure does not erase the boundary**

Integrated check posts, railways, bridges and improved roads can accelerate movement while simultaneously making it more legible to customs, police and state agencies.

**Trade and transit are not the same thing**

Nepal's trade with India and its transit through Indian territory to third-country ports are governed through related but distinct bilateral arrangements.

**Formal corridors and unequal local effects**

Large logistics projects redistribute opportunity.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Infrastructure history should therefore ask who gains from a corridor, whose land is acquired, how traffic alters towns, and whether local pedestrians and small traders experience the border..



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# Pilgrimage across two states

### Pilgrimage across two states

Janakpur, Sitamarhi, Ayodhya and other sacred centres belong to itineraries that cross political borders and administrative scales.

### Education as cross-border mobility

Students cross the frontier for schools, colleges, professional training, examinations and language education.

### Health care and medical corridors

Border residents often seek medical care according to distance, reputation, cost and transport rather than nationality alone.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Health mobility became especially visible during periods when pandemic restrictions interrupted routine crossing, revealing how deeply everyday services could depend on access across the boundary.



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# Security and the variable intensity of checking

### Security and the variable intensity of checking

The open-border regime has never meant an absence of security institutions.

### Extradition, policing, and criminal jurisdiction

India and Nepal have maintained bilateral arrangements concerning extradition and law-enforcement cooperation alongside the open-border relationship.

### Trafficking and the danger of securitizing migrants

Easy land crossing can be exploited by traffickers, and migration research documents risks affecting women, children and workers.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Protection requires identifying coercion, deception, debt, age, recruitment practices and workplace conditions.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# 2015: protest, blockade, and competing narratives

**2015: protest, blockade, and competing narratives**

The 2015 constitutional crisis and Madhesh protests turned major border crossings into sites of national and bilateral confrontation.

**2015 as evidence against timeless openness**

The disruption demonstrates that the open border is a political institution, not a natural condition.

**2020 pandemic restrictions**

The COVID-19 pandemic provided an even clearer demonstration of exceptional closure.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The episode made visible the dependence of families, workers, patients, students and traders on a border whose normal openness was often taken for granted.



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# Repatriation and stranded mobility

**Repatriation and stranded mobility**

Pandemic restrictions created stranded travellers and required special repatriation and coordination.

**Floods, earthquakes, and infrastructural interruption**

Environmental hazards also interrupt borderland circulation.

**The Kosi as river and borderland corridor**

The Kosi system links Nepal and Bihar through hydrology, embankments, irrigation, roads and disaster governance.

SOURCE INSIGHT

River cooperation belongs to bilateral statecraft, while everyday flood adaptation belongs to household and local histories.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 40–42

# Census residence and multi-local lives

### Census residence and multi-local lives

A census must assign people to households and places according to defined rules.

### Language at the crossing

Maithili, Bhojpuri, Hindi, Nepali, Urdu and other languages circulate across border markets and institutions.

### Documents and documentary inequality

Citizenship certificates, identity documents, school records, land papers, bank accounts and mobile registrations increasingly mediate access to state and market…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The growth of documentation is therefore not simply bureaucratic modernization. It can expand rights for some while exposing others to new forms of exclusion.



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# Digital communication and the compression of distance

### Digital communication and the compression of distance

Mobile phones, messaging applications and digital payments have altered the timing of borderland exchange.

### Borderland research and the ethics of visibility

Researching an open frontier creates ethical risks because detailed descriptions of informal work, undocumented residence, unofficial routes or vulnerable migrants can…

### Oral history and family archives

Official archives are strongest on treaties, customs, infrastructure and exceptional security episodes.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

These sources require the same criticism as state records: memory is selective, family documents survive unevenly, and retrospective narratives can normalize practices that changed over time.



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# Borderland method: law, infrastructure, and household in one frame

**Borderland method: law, infrastructure, and household in one frame**

The most reliable reconstruction joins three levels. Law establishes sovereign rules and bilateral frameworks.

**Diagram 44: India–Nepal borderland — flows, institutions, and filters**

Original analytical diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026.

**Diagram 45: Selected post-1950 borderland anchors**

Original analytical diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026.

SOURCE INSIGHT

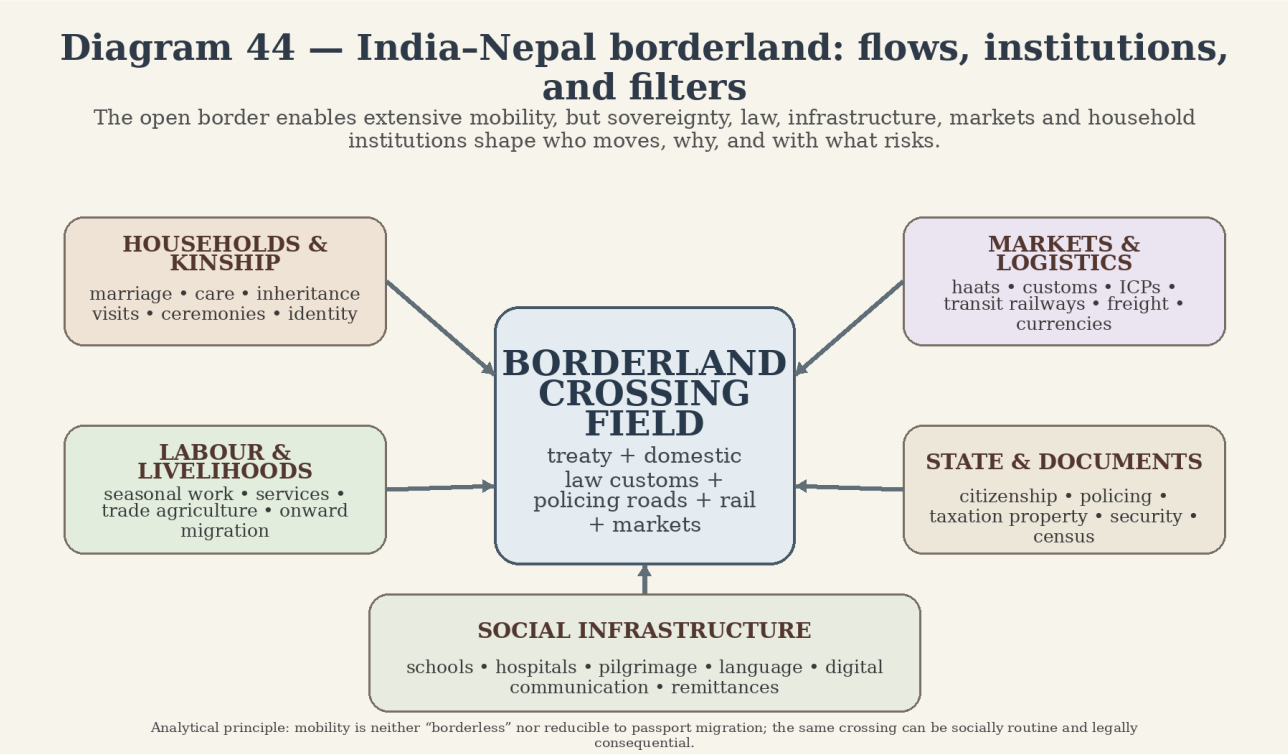
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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 44. India–Nepal borderland flows and filters: household, labour, markets, state documentation and…




FROM THE BOOK

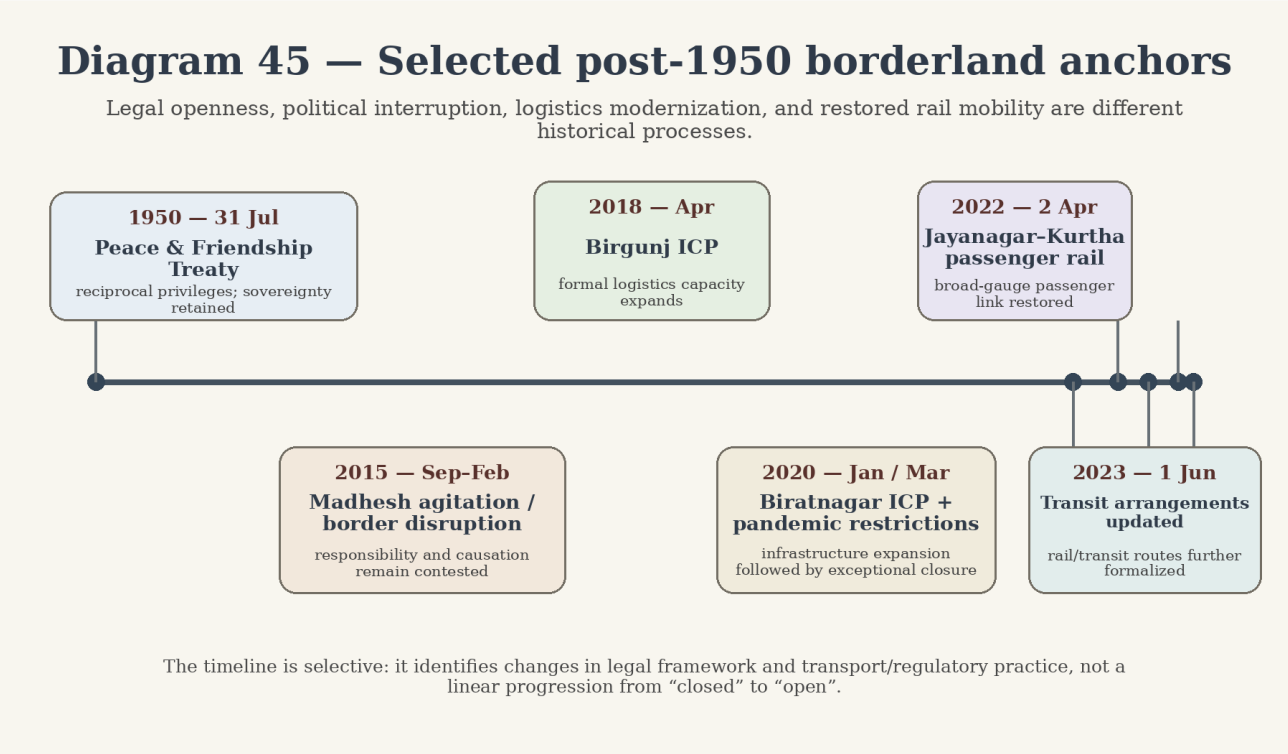
Diagram 44. India–Nepal borderland flows and filters: household, labour, markets, state documentation and social infrastructure interact through an unusually open but legally consequential international frontier.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 45. Selected post-1950 borderland anchors showing changes in legal framework, political…




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 45. Selected post-1950 borderland anchors showing changes in legal framework, political interruption, formal logistics and passenger connectivity.



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# Connected histories without a borderless myth

**Connected histories without a borderless myth**

The India–Nepal frontier within Mithila is one of South Asia's clearest examples of intense social connection across durable national sovereignty.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The stronger conclusion is relational: kinship, language, labour markets, pilgrimage and environmental systems continually cross the frontier, while citizenship, property, policing, taxation and…



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# What this chapter establishes

**Diagram 44: India–Nepal borderland — flows, institutions, and filters**

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**Diagram 45: Selected post-1950 borderland anchors**

Original analytical diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026.

**Connected histories without a borderless myth**

The India–Nepal frontier within Mithila is one of South Asia's clearest examples of intense social connection across durable national sovereignty.

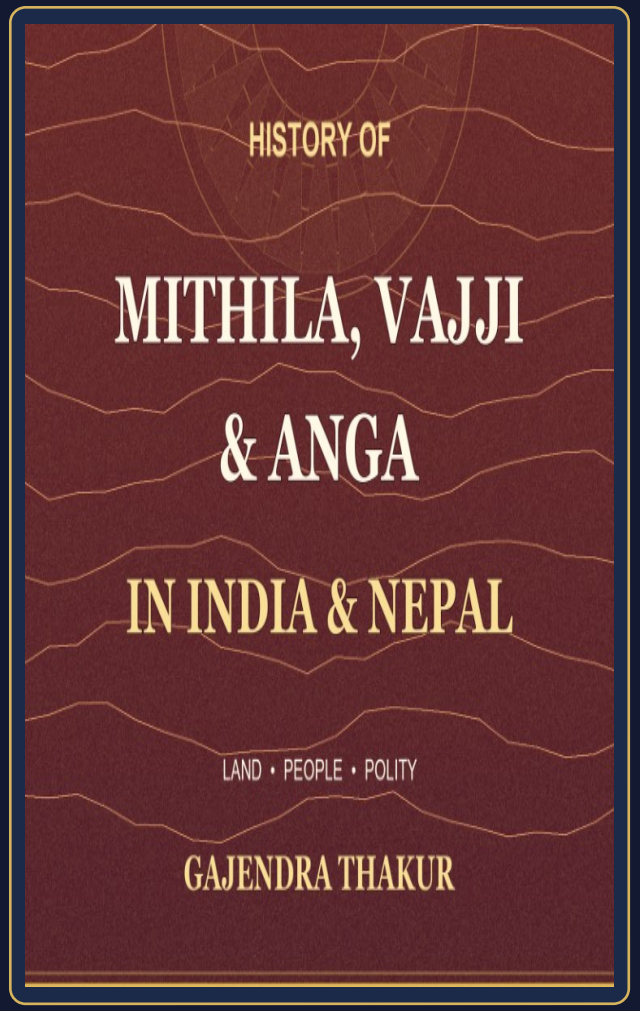
READING PRINCIPLE

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 24

# Maithili and Angika: language, literature, and recognition

A source-controlled history · contemporary period

Gajendra Thakur | Videha



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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–10 **Recognition is not one event**

02 §11–20 **Language academies and institutional capacity in 2025**

03 §21–31 **Recognition without a single hierarchy**

04 §32–41 **Sahitya Akademi canon and the problem of selectivity**

05 §42–52 **Women, household transmission, and literary visibility**

52 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# Recognition is not one event

**Recognition is not one event**

Language recognition in modern South Asia occurs through several institutions that answer different questions.

**Names, varieties, and the danger of retrospective certainty**

The names used for speech varieties change over time.

**Grierson and the colonial linguistic survey**

George A. Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India placed Maithili within the Bihari section of the eastern Indo-Aryan field and described several regional varieties.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Post-independence linguistic research can confirm, refine, or reject parts of that classification.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 4–6

# Chhika-Chhiki, Bhagalpuri speech, and the later Angika name

### Chhika-Chhiki, Bhagalpuri speech, and the later Angika name

Grierson and colonial district writing described Chhika-Chhiki speech in the Munger-Bhagalpur field as a variety of Maithili.

### Classification and self-identification are different evidence

Structural linguistics compares sound systems, morphology, syntax, vocabulary, and patterns of mutual intelligibility.

### Maithili as an internally varied language field

Modern standard Maithili is not the only speech form historically associated with the wider Maithili field.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A literary standard is therefore an institutional achievement rather than proof that all speakers use identical phonology or vocabulary.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# Southern and eastern classifications in the Maithili field

### Southern and eastern classifications in the Maithili field

Historical classifications have used labels such as Southern Standard Maithili, Eastern Maithili, Chhika-Chhiki, and other regional designations.

### Calcutta University recognition as an academic anchor

The 1917 Calcutta University recognition of Maithili, discussed in Chapter 20, belongs to the history of academic institutionalization.

### Sahitya Akademi and the national literary field

Sahitya Akademi's official award list records Maithili awards from 1966.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Awards help create a canon by selecting books, genres, and authors for national visibility.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# Bihar Maithili Academy and state cultural policy

### Bihar Maithili Academy and state cultural policy

The Bihar government established the Maithili Academy in 1976 for the development of Maithili language and culture; this date is also recorded in Patna High Court...

### Language academies and institutional capacity in 2025

Bihar Legislative Assembly proceedings of 11 March 2025 provide an unusually concrete snapshot of institutional capacity.

### The Ninety-second Amendment: a precise constitutional date

The Constitution (Ninety-second Amendment) Act, 2003 received presidential assent on 7 January 2004 and was published in the Gazette of India on 8 January.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The date is a secure constitutional anchor. It should not be rewritten as the date Maithili 'became a language,' acquired its literature, or began to be spoken. It marks entry into a specific...



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 13–15

# Eighth Schedule is not the same as a single national official-language list

### Eighth Schedule is not the same as a single national official-language list

Popular writing often calls all Eighth Schedule languages 'official languages of India,' but the constitutional structure is more precise.

### Maithili in the 2011 Indian census

The Ministry of Home Affairs, drawing on Census 2011, listed 13,583,464 persons returning Maithili as their mother tongue, 1.12 percent of India's population.

### Census categories are administrative decisions as well as data

Census C-16 tables publish mother-tongue returns under named language headings and grouped categories.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A census is therefore authoritative for what it counted under its rules, not an infallible linguistic taxonomy.



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# Angika and the problem of census visibility in India

### Angika and the problem of census visibility in India

In the published 2011 C-16 classification used for this chapter, Angika does not appear as a separate named mother-tongue row.

### Census 2027 and an unfinished demographic future

India's last completed population census remains the 2011 census.

### Angika and the Eighth Schedule demand

Government of India parliamentary replies have repeatedly listed Angika among languages for which demands for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule have been received.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The correct contemporary statement is therefore that Angika has an officially recorded demand for inclusion, not that inclusion has already occurred.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# Bihar Angika Academy and literary institution-building

### Bihar Angika Academy and literary institution-building

The Bihar government approved the formation of an Angika Academy in 2015 after public demands for an institution devoted to Angika language and literature.

### Jharkhand and second-official-language legislation

Jharkhand's 2018 amendment ordinance to the Bihar Rajbhasha Act, as adopted in the state, authorized the government to notify Magahi, Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Angika as...

### Recognition without a single hierarchy

Maithili thus has Eighth Schedule status, Sahitya Akademi recognition, Bihar academy history, census enumeration, university teaching, and state-language roles.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A historically accurate comparison asks what each institution does.



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# Nepal 2021: Maithili as a major national mother tongue

### Nepal 2021: Maithili as a major national mother tongue

Nepal's National Population and Housing Census 2021 records 3,222,389 people reporting Maithili as mother tongue, 11.05 percent of the national population.

### Nepal 2021: Angika as a separately enumerated mother tongue

The same Nepal census separately records Angika, with 35,952 mother-tongue returns, about 0.12 percent of the national population in the thematic language report.

### Nepalese census categories and comparative caution

Nepal's census separately enumerates Maithili, Bajjika, Angika, Magahi, Bhojpuri, and other mother tongues.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

A numerical difference between two census systems can arise from demographic history, migration, self-identification, questionnaire design, or coding.



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# Constitutional multilingualism in Nepal

### Constitutional multilingualism in Nepal

Article 6 of Nepal's 2015 Constitution states that all mother tongues spoken in Nepal are languages of the nation.

### Madhesh Province and Maithili demographic weight

The official Madhesh Province data portal reports Maithili as the largest language category in the province, with more than 2.5 million speakers in its published profile…

### Mother tongue, local language, and the school question in India

India's National Education Policy 2020 states that, wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, and preferably Grade 8 and beyond, should be the…

SOURCE INSIGHT

This distinction separates constitutional scheduling from pedagogy.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Pedagogy requires materials, teachers, and local decisions

**Pedagogy requires materials, teachers, and local decisions**

Mother-tongue policy succeeds only when learners can encounter usable teaching materials, trained teachers, appropriate orthography, and continuity across grades.

**University teaching and the expansion of Maithili studies**

A 2012 parliamentary reply based on UGC and Bihar government information listed Maithili teaching at L.

**Angika in higher education and the politics of curriculum**

Angika literary advocates have likewise sought stronger university teaching and departmental support in the Bhagalpur-Munger region.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Here too, a historical account should distinguish an announced course, an approved post, an operating department, student enrolment, and a continuing degree programme.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 31–33

# Literature beyond constitutional recognition

### Literature beyond constitutional recognition

Literary production does not wait for constitutional schedules.

### Sahitya Akademi canon and the problem of selectivity

Sahitya Akademi's Maithili award series provides a useful chronological spine for post-1960s literary history because it records named books and authors annually.

### The modern Vidyāpati canon and the two-Vidyāpati rule

Modern Maithili public culture often organizes poetry, commemoration, festivals, statues, and literary history around the single prestigious name 'Vidyāpati.' This book...

SOURCE INSIGHT

Accordingly, modern commemorative fusion is treated as evidence for reception and canon formation, not as proof that the two corpora must belong to one historical author.



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# Tirhuta / Mithilakshar as manuscript heritage

### Tirhuta / Mithilakshar as manuscript heritage

Tirhuta, also known as Mithilakshar, is a historical script closely associated with Maithili manuscript and documentary traditions.

### Unicode 7.0 and the digital return of Tirhuta

The Unicode Standard added the Tirhuta script in Version 7.0, released on 16 June 2014.

### Digital fonts, searchability, and archival access

Unicode enables text to be stored as characters rather than as pictures, making search, copying, indexing, and digital publication possible in principle.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Digitization therefore has two levels. Scanning preserves an image of a page; encoded transcription creates machine-readable text. Serious digital editions must keep the relationship between the two…



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# Devanagari dominance and script choice

### Devanagari dominance and script choice

Devanagari's dominance in contemporary Maithili and Angika print reflects broad technical and educational availability.

### Angika orthography and literary standardization

Modern Angika writing is largely produced in Devanagari, but literary movements face the same standardization questions that accompany many regional languages: which...

### Ancient Anga is not a linguistic certificate for modern Angika

The ancient polity of Anga and the modern language name Angika are historically connected in regional identity, but the existence of ancient Anga does not by itself...

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This caution does not diminish the modern Angika movement.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 40–42

# Maithili is not reducible to a proposed territorial boundary

**Maithili is not reducible to a proposed territorial boundary**

Maithili has speakers in Bihar, Jharkhand, Nepal, Indian cities, and overseas migrant communities.

**Language and caste: correlation is not identity**

Language movements in Mithila have often been shaped by unequal access to education, print, land, caste associations, and state employment.

**Women, household transmission, and literary visibility**

Mother tongue is reproduced in households through conversation, song, storytelling, ritual, care work, and everyday instruction long before it appears in formal curricula.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A language history that counts only published books or academy positions therefore misses major forms of continuity.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 43–45

# Broadcasting and performance publics

**Broadcasting and performance publics**

Radio, recorded music, theatre, devotional performance, and later video platforms create language publics that do not match the geography of schools or census districts.

**Digital publication and diaspora readerships**

Web publishing, social media, searchable archives, and Unicode fonts allow Maithili and Angika writing to circulate among readers who live far from the historical speech…

**Translation as a recognition practice**

Translation into and out of Maithili and Angika enlarges readership and places regional literature in comparative fields.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A history of recognition must therefore include translators, editors, anthologies, bilingual editions, and the institutions that commission or distribute them.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 46–48

# Census activism and feedback into identity

### Census activism and feedback into identity

When activists urge speakers to return a particular mother-tongue name in a census, they are responding to the fact that official numbers influence visibility, policy…

### Why Maithili and Angika cannot be compared by one number

Maithili has a published scheduled-language total in Census 2011; Angika does not have an equivalent separately published India-wide C-16 row in that census.

### Recognition, rights, and implementation

Language recognition can affect examinations, cultural grants, broadcasting, public signage, school materials, and the symbolic legitimacy of a speech community.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This is why the chapter treats the 2025 staffing data for Bihar's academies as historically important.



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# Recognition without linguistic determinism

**Recognition without linguistic determinism**

Language matters politically because it can structure access to education, media, employment, literature, and public services.

**Diagram 46: Recognition, classification, and digital infrastructure**

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**Diagram 47: Recognition is plural - an institutional comparison**

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SOURCE INSIGHT

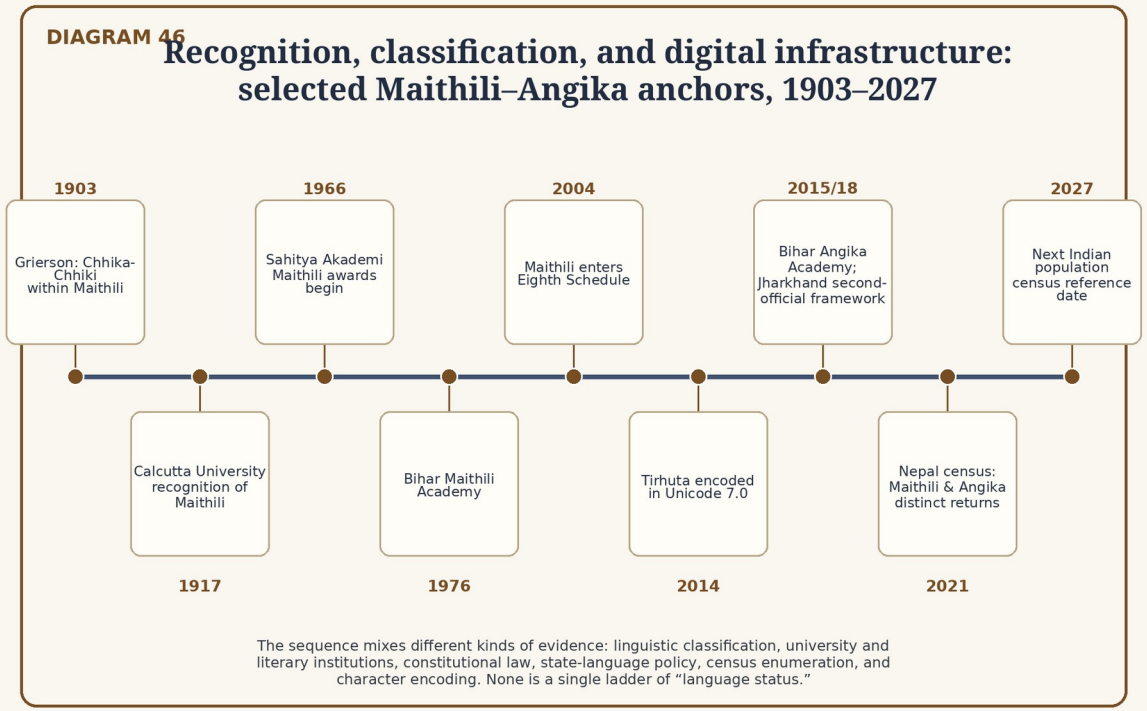
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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 46. Selected Maithili-Angika anchors, 1903-2027. The events represent different institutional fields…




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 46. Selected Maithili-Angika anchors, 1903-2027. The events represent different institutional fields and should not be read as a single hierarchy of language status.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 47. Recognition is plural: Maithili and Angika compared across distinct institutional fields rather...

DIAGRAM 47

## Recognition is plural: comparing institutional fields

| Field | Maithili | Angika |
|---|---|---|
| Historical classification | Grierson treated Maithili as a major Bihari language with several varieties. | Chhika-Chhiki/Bhagalpuri material was placed within the Maithili field; modern Angika identity later developed separately. |
| India: constitutional schedule | Included in the Eighth Schedule from 7 Jan 2004. | Not in the Eighth Schedule; demand for inclusion is officially recorded. |
| India: census 2011 | 13,583,464 mother-tongue returns nationally; 13,063,042 in Bihar. | No separate Angika row in the published C-16 classification used here; this absence itself is institutionally significant. |
| State institutions | Bihar Maithili Academy (1976); also within Jharkhand second-official framework. | Bihar Angika Academy (2015); included in Jharkhand second-official framework in 2018. |
| Nepal census 2021 | 3,222,389 mother-tongue returns (11.05%). | 35,952 mother-tongue returns (0.12%). |
| Script / digital infrastructure | Devanagari dominant in modern print; Tirhuta encoded in Unicode 7.0 (2014). | Modern literary practice chiefly uses Devanagari; orthographic standardization is part of ongoing institutional work. |

The comparison is institutional, not ontological: literary history, structural linguistics, self-identification, census coding, constitutional schedules, state official-language law, and digital script support answer different questions.

FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 47. Recognition is plural: Maithili and Angika compared across distinct institutional fields rather than ranked on one ladder.



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# Conclusions: a connected but non-identical linguistic history

**Conclusions: a connected but non-identical linguistic history**

Maithili and Angika belong to a connected eastern Indo-Aryan and regional historical field, but connection does not require institutional identity.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The governing methodological conclusion is that recognition is plural and dated.



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# What this chapter establishes

**Diagram 46: Recognition, classification, and digital infrastructure**

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**Diagram 47: Recognition is plural - an institutional comparison**

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**Conclusions: a connected but non-identical linguistic history**

Maithili and Angika belong to a connected eastern Indo-Aryan and regional historical field, but connection does not require institutional identity.

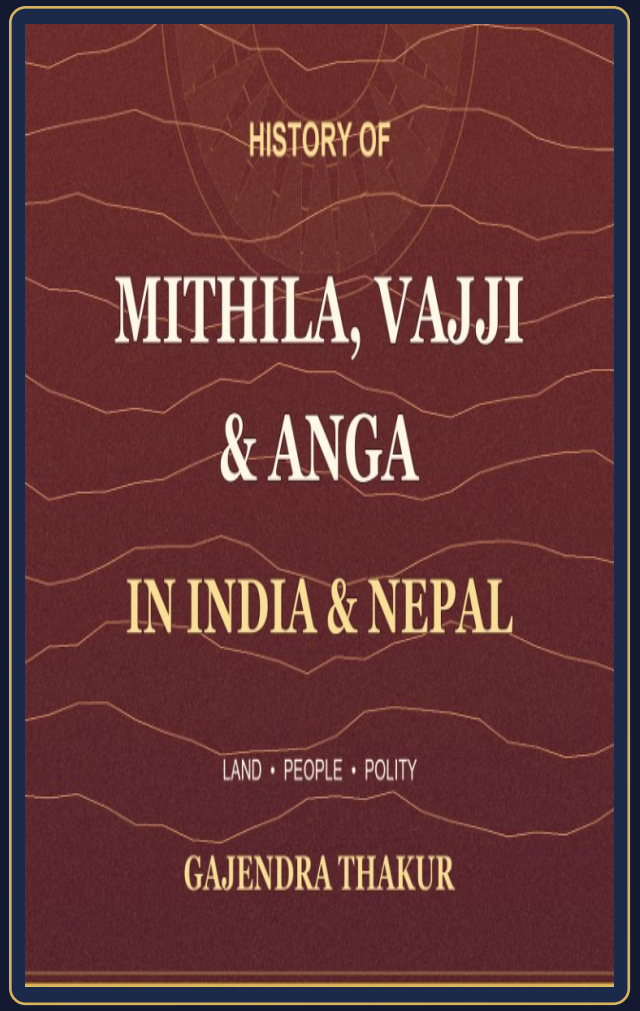
READING PRINCIPLE

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 25

# Mithila painting, gender, and the cultural economy

A source-controlled history · contemporary period

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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–11 — From domestic surfaces to a modern art field

02 §12–22 — Pupul Jayakar, Bhaskar Kulkarni, and handmade paper

03 §23–33 — The limits of an empowerment narrative

04 §34–44 — Collectors and dealers as cultural intermediaries

05 §45–56 — Digital visibility and social-media markets

56 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# From domestic surfaces to a modern art field

### From domestic surfaces to a modern art field

Mithila painting is best understood as a history of linked media rather than as a single object with a single origin date.

### What the evidence can and cannot date

Claims that Mithila painting began at the wedding of Sita and Rama belong to sacred and regional tradition, not to a datable documentary archive.

### The 1919 marriage paintings: an early documentary anchor

Carolyn Brown Heinz drew attention to paintings made in 1919 for the marriage of a daughter of Maharaja Rameshwar Singh of Darbhanga.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This evidence also cautions against writing the history only from famous villages of the post-1960s market.



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# The 1934 earthquake and an accidental archive

### The 1934 earthquake and an accidental archive

The Bihar-Nepal earthquake of 15 January 1934 was a regional catastrophe, not an art-discovery event.

### 1938-1940: photography and the making of a record

Between 1938 and 1940 Archer made more than 150 photographs of painted walls in Mithila.

### 1949: "Maithil Painting" and the first English-language canon

Archer's illustrated article 'Maithil Painting' appeared in Marg in 1949.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The article thus did two things at once. It preserved and publicized a major visual tradition, and it narrowed the frame through which many later observers encountered that tradition. Modern...



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# Bhitti-citra: walls, households, and rites of passage

### Bhitti-citra: walls, households, and rites of passage

Bhitti-citra, literally wall painting, belongs to a domestic and ritual field in which surfaces are prepared, renewed, and repainted according to household events and...

### Aripan: art made for ritual time

Aripan are floor drawings made for auspicious and ritual purposes, often with a rice-flour mixture and sometimes additional color.

### Kohbar ghar and the gendered space of marriage

The kohbar ghar, or nuptial chamber, has been one of the most discussed settings of Mithila painting.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The point is not that every woman shared one interpretation or that men knew nothing of the imagery.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# Motifs are not a timeless codebook

**Motifs are not a timeless codebook**

Later catalogues often assign stable meanings to lotus, bamboo, fish, turtles, birds, snakes, the sun, and the moon.

**The 1965-1967 drought and the relief economy**

A severe drought beginning in 1965 and lasting into the later 1960s produced acute food insecurity in northern Bihar.

**Pupul Jayakar, Bhaskar Kulkarni, and handmade paper**

Jayakar commissioned the artist Bhaskar Kulkarni to take white handmade paper to Madhubani and encourage selected women to paint on it.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The intervention also reveals how cultural policy works through people and materials.



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# Paper as a technology of portability

**Paper as a technology of portability**

A wall cannot easily be sold without destroying the building.

**Cottage Industries emporia and the metropolitan buyer**

Kulkarni carried early paper paintings to Cottage Industries emporia in New Delhi, where they sold quickly.

**From household anonymity to named authorship**

One of the most consequential effects of paper was the growth of named authorship.

## SOURCE INSIGHT

Named authorship did not erase collaboration. Family members prepared materials, repeated motifs, learned from elders, assisted with filling and borders, or helped negotiate sales. The modern artist…



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# Jagdamba Devi and the ladder of public recognition

### Jagdamba Devi and the ladder of public recognition

Jagdamba Devi became one of the first widely recognized painters of the paper era.

### Sita Devi: mobility, commissions, and the public artist

Sita Devi's career illustrates the expanding mobility available to a small number of successful painters.

### Ganga Devi and the importance of an individual oeuvre

Jyotindra Jain's monograph on Ganga Devi helped establish a different way of writing about Mithila painting: not simply as an anonymous folk tradition but through the…

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The methodological gain is significant. If a painter is allowed an individual chronology, then innovation becomes visible. The historian can ask how a particular work responds to a commission, an…



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# Baua Devi and the museum trail

### Baua Devi and the museum trail

Museum records show how modern provenance can connect a village artist, a state emporium, a private collector, and a national or international collection.

### Celebrity artists and the problem of representativeness

Heinz warns that documentation and collecting came to focus heavily on a small number of celebrated painters from a few villages around Madhubani.

### Gender: creative authority and domestic labor

The phrase 'women's art' captures an important historical fact but can conceal the labor regime in which painting occurred.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Commercial success could transform the status of artistic labor by turning a previously unpaid or ritually valued activity into cash income.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# Income, bargaining power, and household negotiation

### Income, bargaining power, and household negotiation

Cash earned from painting could contribute to food, schooling, housing, medical expenses, marriage costs, savings, or the purchase of materials.

### The limits of an empowerment narrative

Research from the 1970s onward repeatedly found mixed outcomes.

### Caste, style labels, and the danger of a frozen canon

Early scholarship often organized Mithila painting through strong associations between caste and style.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The paper market accelerated crossing and recombination.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–27

# Dalit painters and unequal entry into the market

**Dalit painters and unequal entry into the market**

The first paper-painting intervention was socially selective.

**Bharni, kachni, godna, and the instability of style taxonomies**

Terms such as bharni, kachni, and godna are widely used in the modern literature and market to describe visual techniques or stylistic families.

**"Madhubani painting" and "Mithila painting"**

The name 'Madhubani painting' reflects the district, administrative, and market geography through which the art became nationally visible.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Naming matters because it shapes claims of place, heritage, and market authenticity.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Ritual art, popular art, handicraft, folk art, tourist art, contemporary art

**Ritual art, popular art, handicraft, folk art, tourist art, contemporary art**

Mithila painting has been classified under many labels.

**Authenticity after commercialization**

Commercial production creates a recurring anxiety that a work made for sale is less authentic than one made for ritual.

**International Women's Year, 1975, and global feminist reception**

The international circulation of Mithila painting intersected with the politics of gender in the 1970s.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This visibility placed Maithil women inside transnational debates over creativity, patriarchy, and the status of domestic arts.



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# Feminist heroization and the risk of a new stereotype

### Feminist heroization and the risk of a new stereotype

Fleury describes a process in which women painters became exemplary figures for international feminist audiences.

### Moser-Schmitt and an early intersectional problem

Erika Moser-Schmitt's 1977-1978 writing and visual-anthropological work drew attention to the overlap of gender, caste, and class among Mithila painters.

### Museums, archives, and the production of an art history

Museums and libraries do more than preserve paintings.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

At the same time, institutional catalogues may preserve older classifications or incomplete attributions.



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# Collectors and dealers as cultural intermediaries

### Collectors and dealers as cultural intermediaries

Collectors, dealers, government officers, NGO workers, tourists, scholars, and gallery owners form an intermediary layer between painter and final audience.

### Awards, biographies, and cultural capital

National and state awards help transform reputation into cultural capital.

### The Indian GI: a dated form of recognition

The Geographical Indications Registry of India records 'Madhubani Paintings' as Application No.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This is a precise legal-institutional anchor. It should not be expanded into claims that the state created the tradition, that every Mithila-style work everywhere falls within the Indian…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 37–39

# GI is not copyright, authorship, or transborder ownership

**GI is not copyright, authorship, or transborder ownership**

A geographical indication identifies goods whose reputation, qualities, or characteristics are linked to a geographical origin under a specific legal registration.

**Attribution, copying, and ethical reproduction**

The global popularity of Mithila imagery has encouraged reproduction on garments, stationery, murals, packaging, websites, and machine-made decorative goods.

**Janakpur: a Nepalese institutional trajectory**

Mithila painting is not confined to India. In and around Janakpur, Maithil women have long maintained related domestic visual practices, and modern institutions developed…

SOURCE INSIGHT

This chronology should be treated as a Nepalese institutional history, not as a late arrival of Mithila art in Nepal.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 40–42

# The Janakpur Women's Development Center and organized production

### The Janakpur Women's Development Center and organized production

The JWDC has combined fine-art painting with screen printing, embroidery, ceramics, paper-mache and other products, while also providing forms of management, literacy...

### Shared region, different national institutions

India and Nepal share Maithil language, kinship, pilgrimage, marriage networks, and visual repertoires across the international border, but their state institutions...

### Contemporary subjects: politics, ecology, migration, and violence

Paper freed the image from the requirement that it serve only a household ritual occasion.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Contemporary subject matter does not prove that every painting is political, and sacred subject matter does not prove political passivity.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 43–45

# Tree protection and environmental visuality

### Tree protection and environmental visuality

Environmental themes have become a visible part of modern Mithila painting, including campaigns that use painted trees, walls, and public surfaces to connect regional…

### Pandemic painting and the archive of 2020

The COVID-19 crisis generated paintings about disease, masks, lockdown, labor, food insecurity, and social disruption.

### Digital visibility and social-media markets

Online platforms reduce some costs of reaching buyers: an artist can display new work, receive inquiries, build a public biography, and communicate beyond local dealers.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A 2024 qualitative study of sixty women artisans in Jitwarpur examined social-media use and explicitly cautioned that its small, single-village sample limits generalization.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 46–48

# Digital images, metadata, and the problem of authorship

**Digital images, metadata, and the problem of authorship**

Digital circulation separates image from object more easily than any earlier medium.

**Participatory archives and collaborative scholarship**

Recent scholarship has moved beyond collecting objects toward collaborative and participatory documentation.

**Teaching, apprenticeship, and institutional transmission**

The paper market did not replace learning through family and community.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Transmission is therefore neither purely hereditary nor purely school-based. It is a network in which household knowledge, peer observation, institutional training, and market feedback interact.



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# Men in a historically women-centered art field

### Men in a historically women-centered art field

The modern market also brought some men into the production and brokerage of Mithila painting.

### Tourism, heritage, and the staged encounter

Tourism creates demand for demonstrations, workshops, murals, small portable formats, and narratives that explain motifs quickly to outsiders.

### The cultural economy beyond sale price

A painting produces several forms of value at once: household income, prestige, ritual efficacy, regional identity, institutional reputation, tourist attraction, museum...

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This broader idea of cultural economy explains why debates over attribution, awards, GI status, museum collecting, and digital visibility matter economically even when no immediate sale is involved.



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# No single village stands for Mithila

**No single village stands for Mithila**

Jitwarpur and Ranti became especially prominent in the history of the paper market and produced internationally known artists.

**No single woman stands for women artists**

Biographical chapters and exhibitions necessarily select.

**Diagram 48: From ritual surface to cultural economy**

Original analytical diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026.

SOURCE INSIGHT

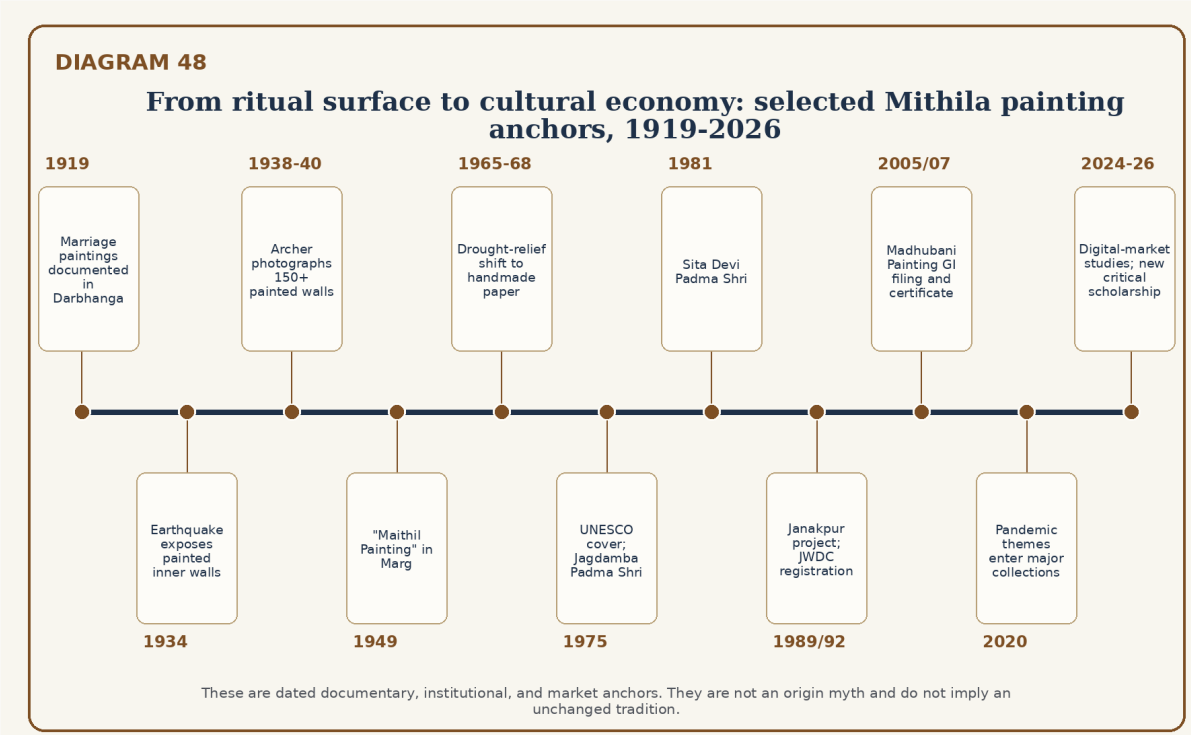
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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 48. Selected Mithila painting anchors, 1919-2026. The sequence marks dated documentary…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 48. Selected Mithila painting anchors, 1919-2026. The sequence marks dated documentary, institutional, and market events; it is not an origin chronology for the underlying ritual practices.



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# Diagram 49: The cultural economy is a chain

**Diagram 49: The cultural economy is a chain**

Original analytical diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026.

**Conclusions: continuity without timelessness**

Mithila painting offers an unusually clear example of cultural continuity produced through change.

SOURCE INSIGHT

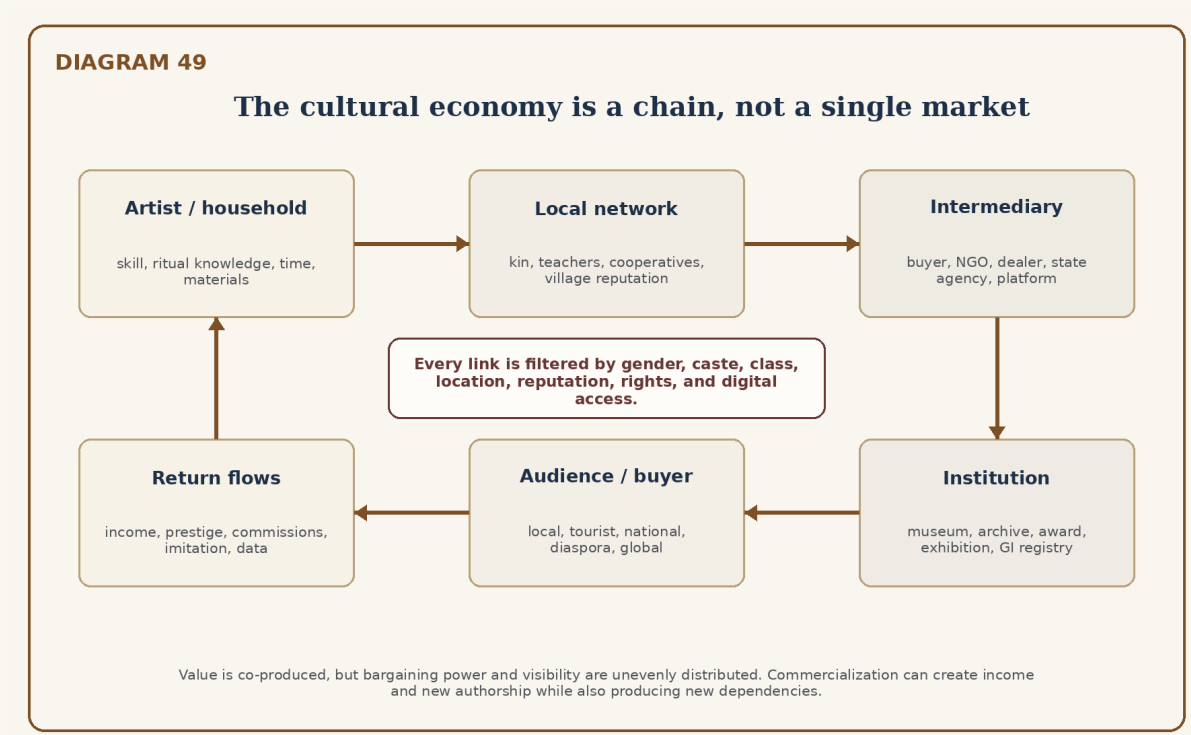
The strongest history avoids four shortcuts. It does not date the art through sacred legend alone; it does not treat caste styles as immutable; it does not equate market participation with automatic…



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 49. The cultural economy of Mithila painting is shown as a chain of production, mediation…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 49. The cultural economy of Mithila painting is shown as a chain of production, mediation, institutional validation, purchase, and return flows rather than a direct artist-to-buyer market.



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# What this chapter establishes

**Diagram 48: From ritual surface to cultural economy**

Original analytical diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026.

**Diagram 49: The cultural economy is a chain**

Original analytical diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026.

**Conclusions: continuity without timelessness**

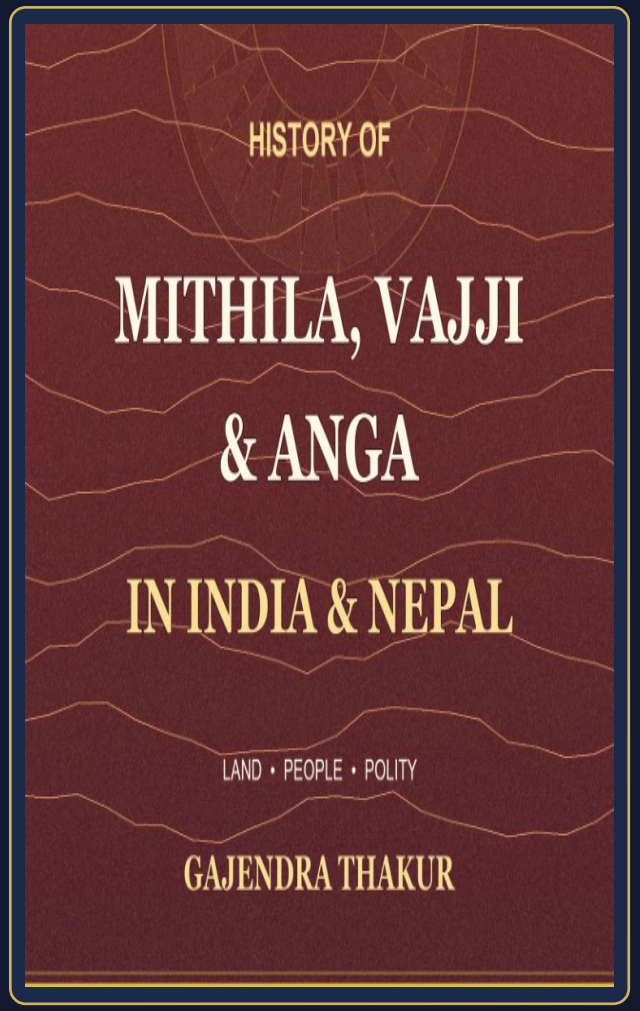
Mithila painting offers an unusually clear example of cultural continuity produced through change.

READING PRINCIPLE

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 26

# The Kosi, floods, infrastructure, and environmental risk

A source-controlled history · contemporary period

Gajendra Thakur | Videha



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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–12 — **A river system as a historical actor**

02 §13–25 — **Sovereignty, access, and infrastructure on Nepalese…**

03 §26–38 — **18 August 2008: the Kusaha breach**

04 §39–51 — **Sand casting, silt, and the uneven agronomy of floods**

05 §52–64 — **The 2026 joint committee and operational details**

64 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# A river system as a historical actor

### A river system as a historical actor

The Kosi is not a backdrop to the history of Mithila.

### The Sapt Kosi basin: one river assembled from many headwaters

In Nepal the river system is commonly understood through the Sapta Kosi, the seven-river network that gathers Himalayan and trans-Himalayan waters before entering the…

### From mountain gradient to the Gangetic plain

A river leaving a high-energy mountain environment loses gradient and transport capacity as it enters the plains.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Infrastructure changes the places in which deposition can occur



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# The Kosi megafan and the language of avulsion

### The Kosi megafan and the language of avulsion

The Kosi has built a large megafan in north Bihar.

### Historical maps and the caution against a simple westward-migration story

A familiar account states that the Kosi migrated continuously westward by more than one hundred kilometres over roughly two centuries.

### Why 60 km and 120 km can both appear in accounts of 2008

Scientific discussions of the 2008 avulsion use different measures of displacement.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

For historical writing, the safest point is qualitative but still precise: the 2008 change was exceptionally large, rapid, and eastward, and the floodwater occupied an older course outside the…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 7–9

# Sediment is not a footnote to flood control

**Sediment is not a footnote to flood control**

The Kosi transports very large sediment loads from the Himalaya.

**The colonial flood archive: a record of recurring administrative concern**

The Bihar State Archives' digitized collection on floods from 1871 to 1939 shows that colonial officials repeatedly documented crop damage, relief, river-course change…

**Embankment law and revenue logic in colonial Bihar**

The Bengal Embankment Act of 1873 gave government a formal legal framework for embankment administration.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The lesson is methodological as well as historical. 'The colonial state opposed embankments' and 'the colonial state built embankments' are both too simple.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# From colonial caution to postcolonial hydraulic developmentalism

### From colonial caution to postcolonial hydraulic developmentalism

After independence, flood control became part of a wider developmental promise linking engineering, irrigation, agricultural productivity, transport, power, and state…

### The 1953 scheme and the promise of a multi-purpose project

A contemporary Yojana account in September 1963 described a Kosi scheme drawn up in 1953 at an estimated cost of Rs 44.76 crore, combining flood protection with extensive…

### 25 April 1954: the original India-Nepal Kosi Agreement

The Governments of India and Nepal signed the Kosi Agreement at Kathmandu on 25 April 1954.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The agreement is primary legal evidence for what the two states authorized and allocated.



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# Sovereignty, access, and infrastructure on Nepalese territory

**Sovereignty, access, and infrastructure on Nepalese territory**

The Kosi Project is unusual because major structures serving downstream Bihar are located in Nepal.

**Construction, embankments, and the remaking of the lower Kosi corridor**

Construction began in the mid-1950s. Official reporting in 1963 stated that embankments had been completed in 1959 while work on canals and associated facilities...

**The Kosi Barrage: completion and function**

The Kosi Barrage at Hanumannagar/Bhimnagar was completed in 1963. It regulates diversion into canals and provides a major transport crossing as part of the project system.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A barrage is not a high storage dam. It does not create the same volume of flood-storage capacity as a large reservoir. Confusing barrage operation with reservoir flood control leads to exaggerated...



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# Canals, irrigation, and the development case for the project

### Canals, irrigation, and the development case for the project

The Eastern and Western Kosi canal systems were intended to convert flood-control expenditure into agricultural benefit.

### Hydropower and the meaning of a multi-purpose river project

The 1954 agreement and early project descriptions included hydroelectric generation as one of several objectives.

### Rehabilitation entered after engineering had already begun

Field studies and later Kosi literature emphasize that the problem of people living between the new embankments was not adequately incorporated into the initial project…

SOURCE INSIGHT

This is a fundamental political-ecology point: an embankment does not merely protect a pre-existing population map.



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# Life between the embankments

### Life between the embankments

Dinesh Kumar Mishra and the ICIMOD case study by Singh, Ghose, Chaudhary, and Hansda document communities living within the Kosi embankments, where seasonal inundation…

### 19 December 1966: the revised Kosi Agreement

India and Nepal signed a revised Kosi Agreement at Kathmandu on 19 December 1966, superseding the earlier arrangement while retaining the project framework.

### A breach chronology is an infrastructure history, not a flood list

World Bank and engineering sources record major post-project breaches at several locations, including Dalwa in 1963, Jamalpur in 1968, Bhatania in the early 1970s…

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

The analytical point does not depend on forcing every event into one table.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# 1968: exceptional flow, breach, and the importance of measurement sites

### 1968: exceptional flow, breach, and the importance of measurement sites

Bihar Water Resources Department records a historical 1968 maximum of about 913,000 cusecs at Barahkshetra and about 788,200 cusecs at Birpur Barrage.

### 1984: breach memory and the persistence of sand-cast land

The 1984 eastern-embankment failure near Nauhatta/Hempur became a major regional disaster and remains an important reference point in local studies.

### 1991: Joginia and the politics of maintenance

A breach near Joginia in Nepal in 1991 forms another important pre-2008 warning in the infrastructure record.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Maintenance politics is often less visible than construction politics.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–27

# Diagram 50: selected legal, engineering, breach, and recovery anchors

**Diagram 50: selected legal, engineering, breach, and recovery anchors**

Original analytical diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026.

**18 August 2008: the Kusaha breach**

On 18 August 2008 the eastern afflux embankment failed near Kusaha in Sunsari district, Nepal, roughly twelve kilometres upstream of the Kosi Barrage.

**The 2008 event was an avulsion, not merely a very large seasonal flood**

Rajiv Sinha emphasized that the 2008 disaster was distinctive because the river avulsed into a different course.

SOURCE INSIGHT

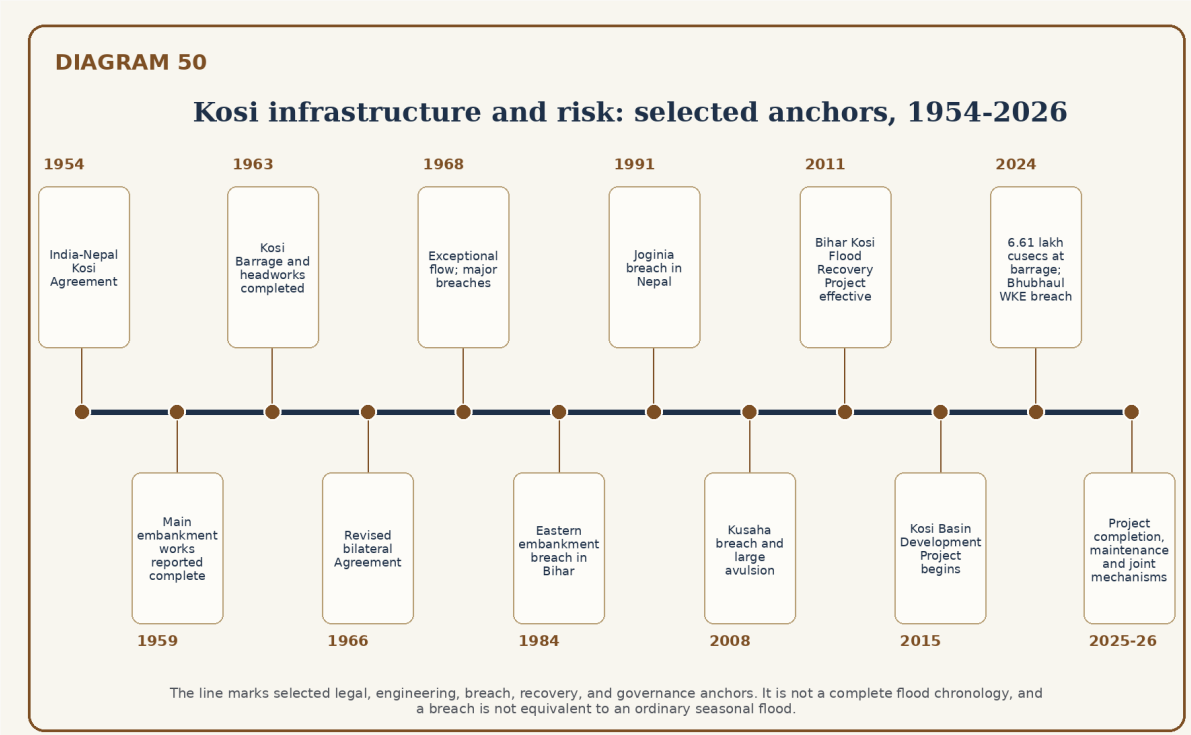
This distinction also explains why historical channel maps matter to modern risk. A channel abandoned for decades can remain topographically relevant.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 50. Kosi infrastructure and risk: selected anchors, 1954-2026. The sequence distinguishes legal…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 50. Kosi infrastructure and risk: selected anchors, 1954-2026. The sequence distinguishes legal agreements, construction, breaches, recovery programmes, and continuing governance rather than treating them as…



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# Why discharge alone does not explain Kusaha

### Why discharge alone does not explain Kusaha

The breach occurred at a discharge well below the Kosi system's highest recorded 1968 flows.

### The emergency geography of 2008

World Bank project documentation reports about 3.3 million people affected in Bihar, roughly one million evacuated, and hundreds of thousands sheltered in relief camps.

### Relief camps, documentation, and unequal recovery

Large camps can deliver food, water, health services, and temporary shelter at scale, but they also produce new problems of privacy, sanitation, gendered safety, disease…

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Recovery programmes transform these documentary questions into eligibility decisions.



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# From emergency response to the Bihar Kosi Flood Recovery Project

### From emergency response to the Bihar Kosi Flood Recovery Project

The World Bank approved a US$220 million credit in 2010 for the Bihar Kosi Flood Recovery Project; it became effective in March 2011.

### Owner-driven housing reconstruction

The recovery project used an owner-driven housing model in which eligible households were expected to manage reconstruction with financial and technical support.

### Roads and bridges as disaster infrastructure

By project completion, the Bihar Kosi Flood Recovery Project had reconstructed hundreds of kilometres of roads and dozens of bridges.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Linear infrastructure can also obstruct drainage if cross-drainage is inadequate.



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# FMISC: institutionalizing flood information

**FMISC: institutionalizing flood information**

Bihar's Flood Management Improvement Support Centre was developed to strengthen hydrological observation, remote sensing, modelling, inundation mapping, embankment asset…

**Kosi-FFEWS and the value of lead time**

The Kosi Flood Forecasting and Early Warning System operated by FMISC provides experimental forecasts of water level and discharge at seventeen sites on the Kosi and…

**Community participation in embankment surveillance**

FMISC project documents include community participation in embankment surveillance as a formal activity.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Community surveillance should complement, not replace, professional responsibility.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 37–39

# Sediment-management plans and the limits of a single engineering cure

### Sediment-management plans and the limits of a single engineering cure

Post-2008 programmes commissioned flood-and-sediment studies, river-behavior analysis, surveys, and master planning.

### Drainage congestion: the flood that protection can create behind itself

Communities outside an embankment may be protected from direct river inundation and still experience severe waterlogging.

### Sand casting, silt, and the uneven agronomy of floods

Floodwater does not leave one uniform sediment.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This helps explain why memories of pre-embankment flooding can be ambivalent.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 40–42

# Livestock, fisheries, and floodplain livelihoods

### Livestock, fisheries, and floodplain livelihoods

The Kosi floodplain supports more than crop agriculture. Livestock require dry standing space, fodder, veterinary access, and routes to market.

### Koshi Tappu: floodplain ecology across the Nepalese project landscape

The Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve in Nepal was established in 1976 and became Nepal's first Ramsar-listed wetland in 1987.

### Caste, class, and the micro-geography of vulnerability

A 2023 Frontiers in Water study of Kosi villages in Darbhanga and Saharsa found that vulnerability was shaped not only by location relative to embankments but also by...

SOURCE INSIGHT

The study is geographically specific and should not be universalized to every Kosi settlement.



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# Gendered care work and disaster risk

**Gendered care work and disaster risk**

Floods redistribute unpaid work. Securing drinking water, cooking with wet fuel, caring for children and older people, protecting documents, finding privacy and…

**Migration as adaptation, necessity, and structural outcome**

Seasonal and long-distance labor migration from the Kosi region predates any single flood.

**Health, schooling, and the long tail of seasonal isolation**

Flood exposure is measured inadequately if analysis ends when water recedes.

SOURCE INSIGHT

These effects are especially important for settlements between embankments or in chronically waterlogged tracts.



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# Diagram 51: protection, chronic water, and residual breach risk

**Diagram 51: protection, chronic water, and residual breach risk**

Original analytical diagram prepared for this book, 2026. © Gajendra Thakur, 2026.

**The Bihar Kosi Basin Development Project, 2015-2025**

The World Bank-supported Bihar Kosi Basin Development Project followed the recovery programme with a broader emphasis on flood-risk management, connectivity, and...

**September 2024: a high-flow stress test**

Heavy rain in Nepal and the region produced very high Kosi flows in late September 2024.

SOURCE INSIGHT

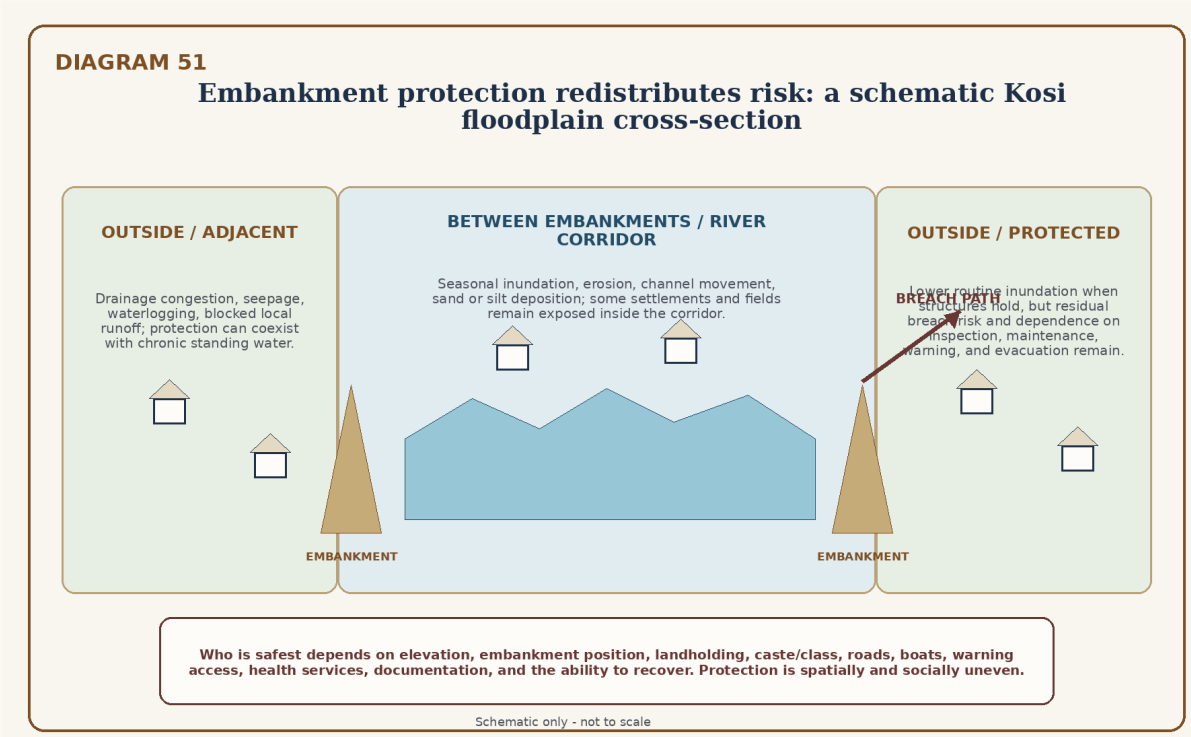
The event is useful because it demonstrates that extreme discharge and infrastructure failure are related but not identical.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 51. Embankment protection redistributes risk. This schematic separates chronic drainage and…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 51. Embankment protection redistributes risk. This schematic separates chronic drainage and waterlogging, exposure inside the river corridor, and residual breach risk in protected tracts; it is not a surveyed…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 49–51

# The 2024 Bhubhaul breach on the Western Kosi Embankment

### The 2024 Bhubhaul breach on the Western Kosi Embankment

A Lok Sabha answer in 2025 records that the Western Kosi Embankment breached near Bhubhaul village in Kiratpur block at kilometre 38.210, damaging about 220 metres of...

### 2025-26: maintenance remains an annual governance cycle

Government of India reporting for 2025-26 describes annual post-monsoon inspection and recommended flood-protection works for the Kosi, including works on Nepalese...

### India-Nepal joint mechanisms after the original treaty

Bilateral water governance now includes the Joint Committee on Water Resources, the Joint Standing Technical Committee, the Joint Committee on Inundation and Flood...

SOURCE INSIGHT

Their existence also corrects the impression that transboundary management occurs only during crisis diplomacy.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 52–54

# The 2026 joint committee and operational details

### The 2026 joint committee and operational details

In 2026 Nepal's Department of Water Resources and Irrigation publicized the eleventh meeting of the Nepal-India Joint Committee on Kosi and Gandak Projects.

### Climate change: necessary context, dangerous shortcut

Climate change is altering temperature, precipitation extremes, snow and glacier processes, and the probability of compound hazards across the Himalaya.

### Glaciers, monsoon rainfall, and the problem of one-source explanations

Because parts of the Kosi basin reach the high Himalaya, glacier and snow processes matter to long-term hydrology.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A disciplined basin history asks which part of the hydrograph came from rainfall, snowmelt, glacier melt, or an exceptional high-mountain event, and over what timescale.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 55–57

# The proposed Sapta Kosi High Dam: proposal is not infrastructure history

### The proposed Sapta Kosi High Dam: proposal is not infrastructure history

A Sapta Kosi High Dam Multipurpose Project and Sun Kosi storage-cum-diversion concept have remained on the India-Nepal bilateral agenda, with a joint project office…

### Nature-based approaches and floodplain room

Recent resilience programmes increasingly discuss nature-based approaches alongside embankment strengthening.

### Remote sensing, inundation maps, and a new documentary archive

Modern flood history is increasingly documented from above.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Remote sensing has limits. A pixel cannot reveal who owns a field, whether a household has a boat, whether a road culvert is blocked, or whether a relief message reached a Dalit hamlet. The…



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# Public dashboards and the politics of open hydrological data

### Public dashboards and the politics of open hydrological data

By 2026 Bihar's Water Resources Department and FMISC were publishing current barrage discharges, flood bulletins, and forecasting products online.

### Protected-area statistics require interpretive caution

Bihar Water Resources Department publishes basin-wise figures for flood-prone and protected areas; for the Kosi/Adhwara grouping it reports extensive embankment length…

### Against the protection-versus-river binary

Kosi politics is sometimes written as a conflict between engineers who want embankments and activists who want an unconstrained river.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Policy should therefore be evaluated reach by reach and function by function.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 61–63

# Environmental justice and the distribution of residual risk

### Environmental justice and the distribution of residual risk

Infrastructure always leaves residual risk. The central political question is who carries it. Landowners on higher ground, households beside a road, residents within the…

### A basin-scale history without erasing local responsibility

Because the Kosi crosses borders, basin-scale analysis is essential.

### What the Kosi teaches the wider history of Mithila

The history of Mithila cannot be narrated only through dynasties, languages, courts, and literary canons.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The Kosi also resists narratives of fixed regional space.



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# Chapter conclusion: from flood control to risk governance

**Chapter conclusion: from flood control to risk governance**

The Kosi Project reduced some forms of routine inundation and created irrigation and transport infrastructure, but it also generated new dependencies on maintenance, drainage, sediment management, warning, and transboundary...

SOURCE INSIGHT

The strongest contemporary framework is risk governance: maintain structures that communities depend upon, identify where protection transfers water and sediment problems, improve drainage and...



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# What this chapter establishes

### A basin-scale history without erasing local responsibility

Because the Kosi crosses borders, basin-scale analysis is essential.

### What the Kosi teaches the wider history of Mithila

The history of Mithila cannot be narrated only through dynasties, languages, courts, and literary canons.

### Chapter conclusion: from flood control to risk governance

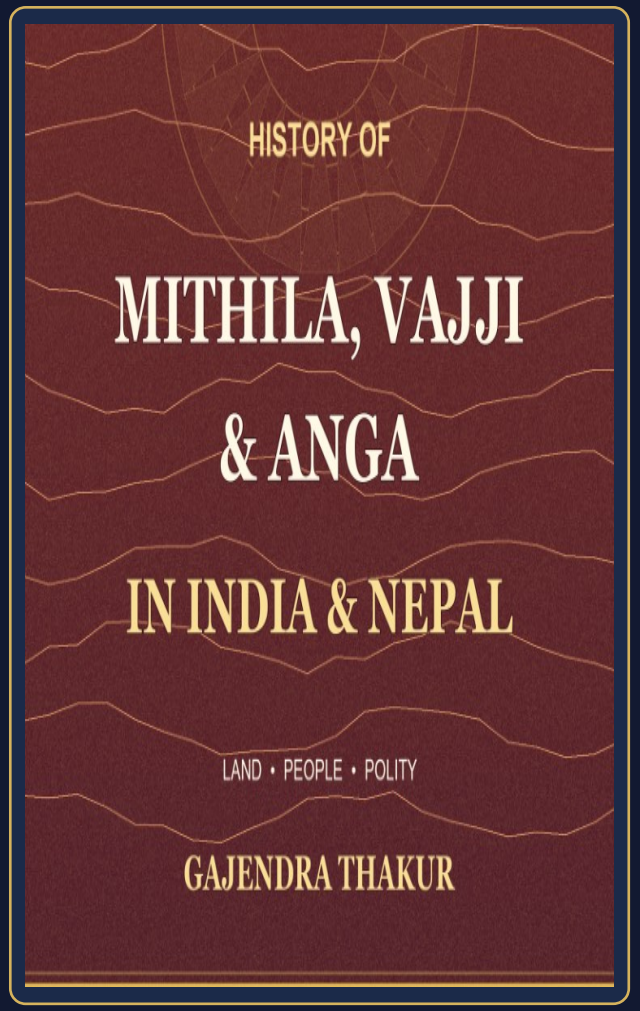
The Kosi Project reduced some forms of routine inundation and created irrigation and transport infrastructure, but it also generated new dependencies on…

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 27

# Madhesh, representation, and plural citizenship in Nepal

A source-controlled history · contemporary period

Gajendra Thakur | Videha



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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–15 — A modern political category, not an ancient homogeneous…

02 §16–30 — Why the first Constituent Assembly failed to finish the…

03 §31–45 — Article 42 and proportional inclusion in state bodies

04 §46–60 — 2025-26: the ten-year review question

05 §61–76 — The 2026 House result as a representation snapshot

76 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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# A modern political category, not an ancient homogeneous people

**A modern political category, not an ancient homogeneous people**

Madhesh is indispensable to the modern political history of Nepal, but it must be handled as a historically changing category.

**Madhesh, Tarai, and Mithila overlap without becoming synonyms**

Tarai or Terai is primarily a lowland geographical and ecological term, though its administrative meanings have varied.

**The borderland existed before modern citizenship documents**

For centuries, the plains north and south of the later India-Nepal boundary were connected by pilgrimage, marriage, agrarian tenancy, markets, scholarly circulation…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Historical method must therefore hold two propositions together: borderland society is genuinely transnational, and the international border is legally real.



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# From Rana rule to statutory citizenship

**From Rana rule to statutory citizenship**

Before the mid-twentieth century, membership in the Nepalese polity was regulated through a mixture of subjecthood, status, residence, land, administrative recognition...

**1952: the first national citizenship law**

The 1952 citizenship law was an early attempt to convert political membership into statutory categories at the dawn of Nepal's first experiments with electoral government.

**1962-64: Panchayat nationalism and the citizenship regime**

King Mahendra's 1960 royal intervention ended the first multiparty experiment, and the 1962 Constitution institutionalized the partyless Panchayat system.

SOURCE INSIGHT

For plains residents, the issue was not simply whether the law contained the word Madhesh.



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# Language policy and the making of unequal public access

### Language policy and the making of unequal public access

A state's official language is not merely a cultural emblem.

### 1990: multiparty democracy and a new language of difference

The 1990 People's Movement restored multiparty politics and opened a much wider arena for ethnic, regional, caste, linguistic, gender, and indigenous mobilization.

### Madheshi as a post-1990 political macro-category

The growing use of Madheshi as a broad political category created solidarity across differences while never eliminating them.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This duality is historically important. Successful political categories often work precisely because they simplify. A research history must record their mobilizing power without adopting their...



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# The civil war, the 2006 movement, and the end of the old constitutional order

### The civil war, the 2006 movement, and the end of the old constitutional order

The Maoist conflict from 1996 to 2006 and the 2006 People's Movement transformed the constitutional agenda.

### The 2006 Citizenship Act and the documentary question

The Nepal Citizenship Act, 2063 became the principal statutory framework for citizenship in the post-People's-Movement order.

### January 2007: protest changes the constitutional agenda

The Madhesh movement of 2007 followed the promulgation of the Interim Constitution and rapidly transformed the post-conflict political field.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Violence by state forces and by protesters must both remain visible in the record.



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# The twenty-two-point agreement and negotiated inclusion

### The twenty-two-point agreement and negotiated inclusion

The 2007 agreement between the government and Madhesh-based representatives translated street mobilization into negotiated commitments.

### 2008: the eight-point agreement and federal commitment

Further mobilization in 2008 produced another agreement before the first Constituent Assembly election.

### The first Constituent Assembly and competing federal maps

The Constituent Assembly elected in 2008 contained a much broader range of parties and social constituencies than earlier legislatures.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

No federal map could mechanically reproduce a single social geography because caste, language, religion, ethnicity, migration, and historical region overlap differently.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# Why the first Constituent Assembly failed to finish the constitution

**Why the first Constituent Assembly failed to finish the constitution**

The first Constituent Assembly expired in 2012 without promulgating a constitution.

**2013: electoral change and fragmentation of Madhesh-based parties**

Madhesh-based parties entered the second Constituent Assembly after multiple organizational splits and a weaker combined electoral performance.

**2015: earthquake, sixteen-point agreement, and accelerated constitution making**

After the devastating April and May 2015 earthquakes, four major parties reached a sixteen-point agreement intended to break the constitutional deadlock.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The historical point is not that speed alone invalidates a constitution.



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# The 2015 Madhesh and Tharu protests

### The 2015 Madhesh and Tharu protests

Protests intensified across the southern plains before and after promulgation of the Constitution.

### 20 September 2015: a federal constitution amid dissent

The Constitution of Nepal was promulgated on 20 September 2015.

### Article 4: inclusion is written into the definition of the state

Article 4 defines Nepal as an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive, democratic, socialism-oriented, federal democratic republican state.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Yet constitutional adjectives require institutions. Whether a state is inclusive cannot be assessed solely from the presence of the word.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# Articles 6 and 7: nation languages and official languages

**Articles 6 and 7: nation languages and official languages**

Article 6 declares all languages spoken as mother tongues in Nepal to be languages of the nation.

**Articles 10-15: one federal citizenship with provincial identity**

Article 10 provides for single federal citizenship with provincial identity.

**Citizenship by descent and the importance of parental status**

The Constitution allows citizenship by descent in several circumstances but attaches particular conditions to some categories.

SOURCE INSIGHT

These distinctions are legally technical but socially consequential.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–27

# Gender asymmetry is not a marginal issue

**Gender asymmetry is not a marginal issue**

Citizenship debate in Nepal has repeatedly centred on unequal consequences for Nepali women and men in cross-national families.

**Citizenship certificates, birth registration, and administrative discretion**

A constitutional entitlement becomes usable through administration.

**Cross-border marriage does not equal doubtful nationality**

The India-Nepal border sustains long-standing marriage networks, especially across adjoining regions of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A borderland approach rejects that inference. Kinship can cross borders while citizenship remains state-specific. The relevant legal questions are nationality, residence, and statutory eligibility…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Representation: population, geography, and the design of constituencies

### Representation: population, geography, and the design of constituencies

Madhesh movements repeatedly challenged electoral arrangements they considered insufficiently responsive to the dense population of the plains.

### Article 84: a mixed House of Representatives

Article 84 establishes a 275-member House of Representatives: 165 members elected from single-member constituencies by first-past-the-post and 110 through nationwide...

### One-third women: representation through party-level correction

The Constitution requires at least one-third of the total federal representatives elected from each political party to be women.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This mechanism substantially increases numerical representation but also reveals a structural tension: women may be concentrated in proportional seats while constituency nominations remain...



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# Article 42 and proportional inclusion in state bodies

### Article 42 and proportional inclusion in state bodies

Article 42 recognizes a right to participation in state bodies on the principle of proportional inclusion for specified economically, socially, or educationally backward...

### 28 February 2016: the first constitutional amendment

The first constitutional amendment, published on 28 February 2016, changed Articles 42, 84, and 286.

### The border blockade dispute: protest, pressure, and competing narratives

The 2015-16 disruption of major India-Nepal border crossings became one of the most polarizing episodes in recent Nepalese politics.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

A responsible history should not convert this contested causation into a slogan.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# 2017: a further amendment bill fails

### 2017: a further amendment bill fails

On 21 August 2017, a proposed second constitutional amendment failed to obtain the required two-thirds majority in the Legislature-Parliament.

### 2017 elections and the institutionalization of federalism

Local, provincial, and federal elections in 2017 transformed federalism from constitutional design into operating government.

### Article 176: provincial representation and inclusion

Article 176 provides that sixty percent of provincial assembly members are elected by first-past-the-post and forty percent by proportional representation.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The design is especially important in Madhesh Province because the broad category 'Madhesi' cannot substitute for the province's internal diversity.



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# Madhesh Province: eight districts and 136 local levels

### Madhesh Province: eight districts and 136 local levels

The present Madhesh Province consists of Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara, and Parsa.

### 17 January 2022: Province No. 2 becomes Madhesh Province

On 17 January 2022 the provincial assembly adopted 'Madhesh' as the province's name by the constitutionally required two-thirds majority and designated Janakpurdham as…

### Janakpurdham: provincial capital and Mithila centre

Janakpurdham carries several layers of significance at once: it is a major Sita-Rama pilgrimage centre, an important Maithili cultural city, a historic centre of Nepal's…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The capital's location also highlights an internal provincial geography.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 40–42

# The 2021 census: Madhesh is linguistically plural

### The 2021 census: Madhesh is linguistically plural

The 2021 National Population and Housing Census recorded 6,114,600 people in Madhesh Province.

### Maithili is large, but provincial equality cannot be monolingual

Maithili's demographic weight and literary history give it a strong claim to provincial institutional support.

### January 2025: the official-language bill and its withdrawal

In January 2025 the Madhesh Province government introduced a bill proposing Nepali together with Maithili, Bhojpuri, Bajjika, Hindi, and English for official working use.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The episode is a rare practical demonstration of why language recognition cannot be reduced to majority arithmetic.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 43–45

# Language recognition has at least five institutional levels

**Language recognition has at least five institutional levels**

Language status in Nepal must be separated into at least five fields: mother-tongue census classification, constitutional status as a language of the nation, federal...

**The Madhesi Commission: constitutional recognition beyond territory**

Article 262 establishes a Madhesi Commission consisting of a chairperson and up to four other members, with detailed functions provided by federal law.

**Other commissions prevent Madhesh from becoming a single-axis category**

The Constitution separately provides National Women, National Dalit, National Inclusion, Indigenous Nationalities, Madhesi, Tharu, and Muslim commissions.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Separate commissions can illuminate distinct structures of disadvantage, but they can also fragment responsibility.



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# 2025-26: the ten-year review question

### 2025-26: the ten-year review question

Article 265 requires the Federal Parliament to review the Part 27 commissions after ten years from commencement of the Constitution.

### The 2023 Citizenship First Amendment

President Ramchandra Paudel authenticated the first amendment to the Nepal Citizenship Act on 31 May 2023.

### The 2025 Citizenship Second Amendment

A further bill amending the Citizenship Act was authenticated on 21 September 2025.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

These reforms are historically important because citizenship law is still evolving after the 2015 Constitution.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 49–51

# No single amendment resolves the gender question

**No single amendment resolves the gender question**

The 2023 and 2025 amendments expand routes to documentation, but they do not make every citizenship pathway gender-symmetrical.

**Citizenship and the highest constitutional offices**

The Constitution reserves specified senior constitutional offices for citizens by descent.

**Dalit citizenship within Madhesh**

Madheshi Dalits face the intersection of regional exclusion and caste hierarchy.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This is a methodological warning against vertical analysis alone. Representation of Madhesh in Kathmandu can improve while internal inequality within Madhesh remains severe.



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# Muslim citizenship within Madhesh

### Muslim citizenship within Madhesh

Madhesh Province contains Nepal's largest concentration of Muslims and Urdu-speaking communities, but Muslim identity cannot be reduced to language or Madheshi identity.

### Tharu identity and resistance to compulsory Madheshi classification

Tharu political movements have repeatedly insisted on their own indigenous identity, history, and territorial claims.

### Hill-origin residents of Madhesh Province

Madhesh Province also includes residents whose family histories are associated with Nepal's hill regions and whose first language may be Nepali or another language.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

Minority protection therefore runs in more than one direction. A settlement designed to correct historic central exclusion of Madhesh must also protect internal provincial minorities.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 55–57

# Class, land, and the limits of identity arithmetic

**Class, land, and the limits of identity arithmetic**

Caste and regional identity do not eliminate class.

**Local government and the everyday state**

Federal debates often focus on Kathmandu and provincial capitals, but Nepal's local governments are where many citizens encounter the state.

**Education: mother tongue, mobility, and public opportunity**

Education policy sits at the intersection of language rights and social mobility.

SOURCE INSIGHT

In Madhesh, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Bajjika, Tharu, Urdu, Nepali, and other languages may require different local solutions.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 58–60

# Security institutions and the historical meaning of underrepresentation

**Security institutions and the historical meaning of underrepresentation**

Madhesh movements have repeatedly linked citizenship to representation in the army, police, civil service, and other state bodies.

**Public service inclusion and the problem of categories**

Affirmative-action systems require categories, but categories themselves become political.

**Diagram 52: selected citizenship, movement, and federalism anchors**

Diagram 52: selected citizenship, movement, and federalism anchors

SOURCE INSIGHT

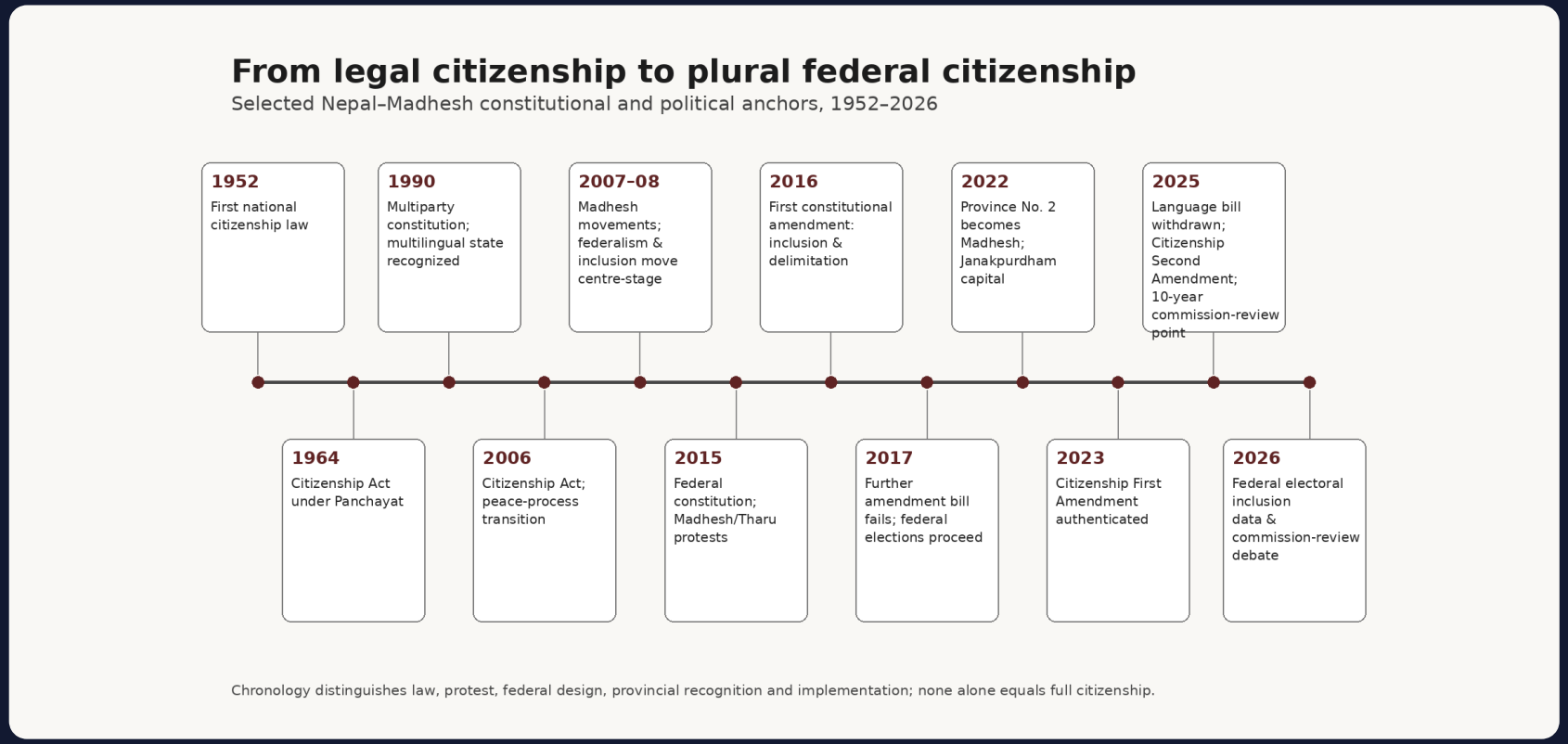
Diagram 52: selected citizenship, movement, and federalism anchors



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 52. From legal citizenship to plural federal citizenship: selected Nepal-Madhesh constitutional and…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 52. From legal citizenship to plural federal citizenship: selected Nepal-Madhesh constitutional and political anchors, 1952-2026. The sequence separates statutory citizenship, movement politics, federal design…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 61–63

# The 2026 House result as a representation snapshot

### The 2026 House result as a representation snapshot

The Election Commission's report on the 2026 House of Representatives election classified 16.73 percent of elected members within its Madhesi inclusive category...

### Representation must be disaggregated by route and office

A serious inclusion audit should separate first-past-the-post from proportional-list seats; national from provincial and local office; legislators from ministers; senior...

### Political parties remain the principal gatekeepers

Constitutional inclusion rules are implemented through party nominations and closed proportional lists.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Madhesh-based parties themselves are not exempt from this scrutiny.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 64–66

# Federal finance: recognition without resources is thin citizenship

**Federal finance: recognition without resources is thin citizenship**

A province's ability to make recognition meaningful depends on money, staff, and legal competence.

**Birgunj and Janakpurdham: two centres, different political economies**

Birgunj is one of Nepal's most important trade and customs gateways, while Janakpurdham combines provincial administration with religious and cultural centrality.

**Open border does not mean open citizenship**

The India-Nepal relationship permits unusually extensive movement and reciprocal privileges, but movement rights and citizenship are distinct.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Confusing mobility with citizenship fuels two opposite errors: treating ordinary cross-border movement as evidence of foreignness, or assuming that cultural openness makes documentary nationality...



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 67–69

# Media, stereotype, and the production of suspect belonging

### Media, stereotype, and the production of suspect belonging

Madhesh politics has repeatedly been shaped by stereotypes that portray plains citizens as insufficiently Nepali because of accent, clothing, skin colour, language, or...

### Memory of protest and the politics of martyrdom

The deaths associated with the Madhesh movements are commemorated in political speeches, monuments, anniversaries, and party narratives.

### Constitutional nationalism and Madhesh constitutionalism

Nepalese constitutional nationalism emphasizes sovereignty, territorial integrity, republicanism, and the authority of a constitution adopted by an elected assembly.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A stable federal order requires both: the state's sovereignty must be accepted, and citizenship within that state must not depend on cultural conformity to a single regional model of Nepali identity.



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# Diagram 53: plural citizenship across institutions

**Diagram 53: plural citizenship across institutions**

Diagram 53: plural citizenship across institutions

**Plural citizenship is more than possession of a certificate**

A citizenship certificate establishes a crucial legal status, but effective citizenship also includes the ability to vote, stand for office, understand public procedures...

**Recognition can create new exclusions**

Every act of recognition draws a boundary. Naming Madhesh Province recognizes one political history while leaving some residents attached to other regional names....

SOURCE INSIGHT

The answer is not to reject recognition but to design it reflexively: categories should be reviewable, minority rights should operate within recognized regions, and data should be disaggregated...

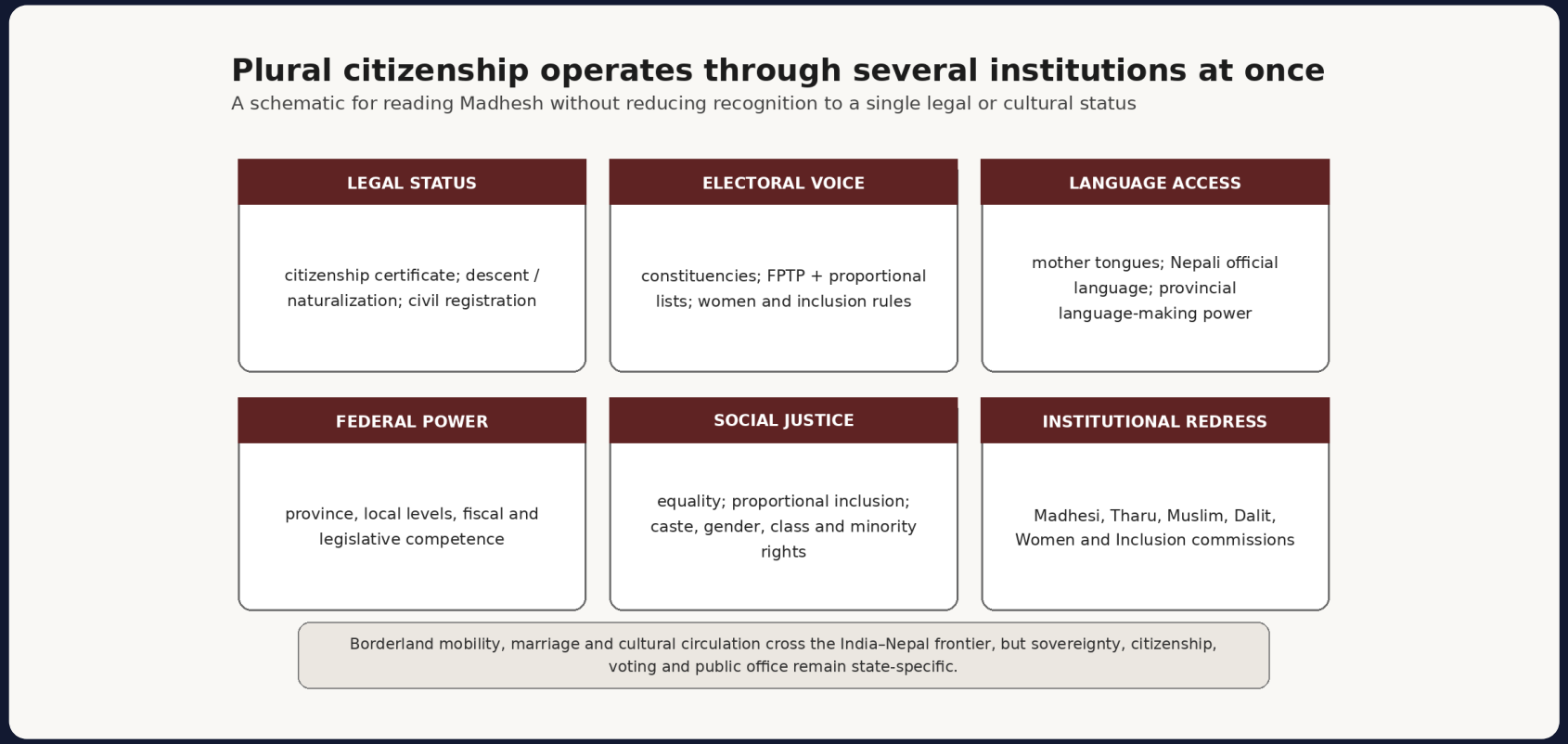


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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 53. Plural citizenship operates through several institutions at once. The schematic separates legal…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 53. Plural citizenship operates through several institutions at once. The schematic separates legal status, electoral voice, language access, federal power, social justice, and institutional redress…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 73–75

# Mithila inside Nepal: cultural continuity without territorial conflation

### Mithila inside Nepal: cultural continuity without territorial conflation

Mithila's literature, ritual traditions, Maithili language, pilgrimage networks, and artistic practices are central to the history of eastern Madhesh.

### What changed between 2007 and 2026

Between the first Madhesh movement and 2026, Nepal moved from an interim post-conflict order to an operating federal republic with elected provincial and local…

### Research method: separate law, claim, implementation, and outcome

Four levels must be kept distinct. First is law: what the Constitution, Acts, and regulations actually say. Second is political claim: what parties, movements, and…

SOURCE INSIGHT

Many controversies become confused when evidence from one level is used to prove another.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 76–76

# Chapter conclusion: citizenship as equal membership in a plural federation

**Chapter conclusion: citizenship as equal membership in a plural federation**

The modern history of Madhesh is a history of belonging negotiated through territory, documents, language, elections, social hierarchy, and memory.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Plural citizenship does not require a weak state or blurred sovereignty.



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# What this chapter establishes

### What changed between 2007 and 2026

Between the first Madhesh movement and 2026, Nepal moved from an interim post-conflict order to an operating federal republic with elected provincial and local...

### Research method: separate law, claim, implementation, and outcome

Four levels must be kept distinct. First is law: what the Constitution, Acts, and regulations actually say. Second is political claim: what parties, movements...

### Chapter conclusion: citizenship as equal membership in a plural federation

The modern history of Madhesh is a history of belonging negotiated through territory, documents, language, elections, social hierarchy, and memory.

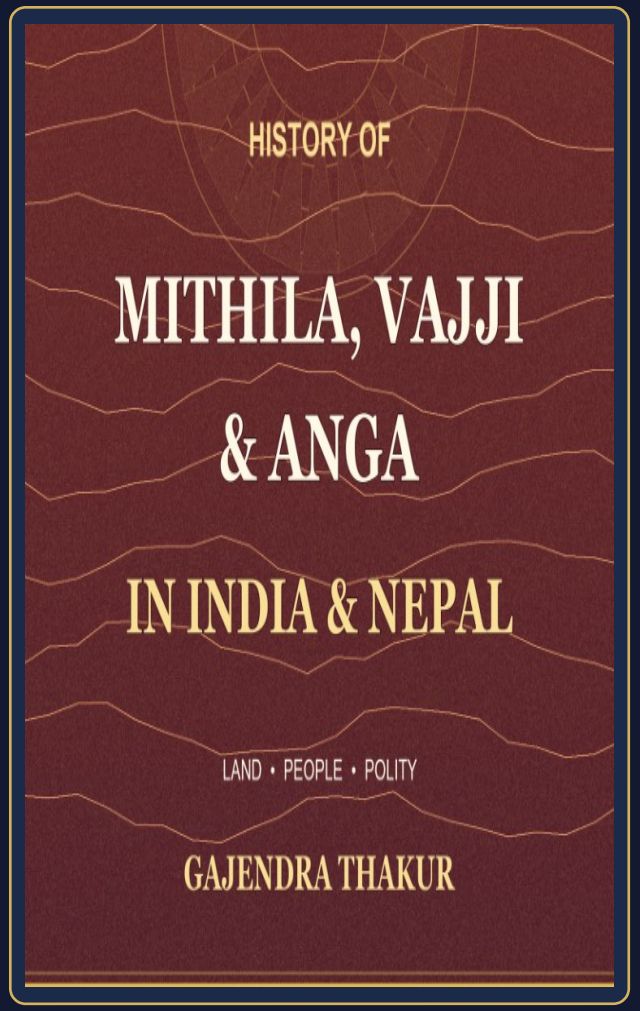
**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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CHAPTER 28

# Conclusions: connected histories without false unity

A source-controlled history · contemporary period

Gajendra Thakur | Videha



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CHAPTER ROUTE · PRIMARY LINES OF INQUIRY

# The chapter in five movements

01 §1–13 **Three names, many scales**

02 §14–26 **Uncertainty is part of the result**

03 §27–40 **Migration is a structure, not an epilogue**

04 §41–53 **Madhesh, Tarai, and Mithila must remain overlapping, not…**

05 §54–67 **Historical explanation must separate cause from…**

67 analysed sections · 2 source visuals · each argument follows the book’s source distinctions



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 1–3

# Three names, many scales

**Three names, many scales**

Mithila, Vajji, and Anga do not form a single continuous state, ethnicity, language zone, or administrative unit.

**Connected history is not a claim of sameness**

A connected history asks how places, institutions, and communities became linked, what moved across those links, and what changed because of the movement.

**No single territorial line can contain the whole history**

The maps appropriate to one period can mislead in another.

SOURCE INSIGHT

For that reason, the book treats territory as evidence that must be dated.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 4–6

# Region is a relationship before it is a polygon

**Region is a relationship before it is a polygon**

A historical region can be produced by repeated relations even when its edges remain variable.

**Difference is evidence, not an obstacle to synthesis**

Contradictions among sources are often treated as defects to be eliminated.

**Evidence has a hierarchy, but no source is neutral**

A dated inscription, excavated layer, statute, treaty, coin, court order, or contemporary administrative record can provide a firmer chronological anchor than a much…

SOURCE INSIGHT

The appropriate hierarchy is therefore claim-specific.



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# Provenance precedes interpretation

**Provenance precedes interpretation**

Before a source is used, its provenance must be established as far as possible: who produced it, when, where, for what audience, through what institutional process, and…

**Archaeology cannot name prehistoric peoples by itself**

The archaeological chapters repeatedly show the value and limit of material evidence.

**Texts are historical evidence even when they are not chronicles**

Vedic, Upanishadic, Buddhist, Jain, epic, philosophical, devotional, legal, and courtly texts preserve indispensable evidence.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Genre criticism prevents two opposite errors: dismissing literary texts as unusable because they are not modern histories, and reading them literally as transparent records.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 10–12

# Inscription, coin, manuscript, and archive must be read together

**Inscription, coin, manuscript, and archive must be read together**

Political chronology is most secure where independent anchors converge.

**Censuses classify; they do not freeze society**

Modern censuses are powerful because they provide large-scale demographic evidence within specified administrative categories.

**Memory and tradition belong to history without replacing chronology**

Sacred geography, genealogical memory, festival narratives, oral histories, local legends, and commemorative practices reveal how communities inhabit the past.

SOURCE INSIGHT

This approach does not diminish tradition. It gives memory a historical life of its own: who remembers, what is emphasized, how a narrative changes, when a site acquires new significance, and how...



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# Diagram 54: from source to historical claim

**Diagram 54: from source to historical claim**

Diagram 54: from source to historical claim

**Uncertainty is part of the result**

Historical writing often becomes less accurate when uncertainty is treated as embarrassment.

**Chronology should be anchored, not overfilled**

A long chronology can create the illusion that every year is equally known.

SOURCE INSIGHT

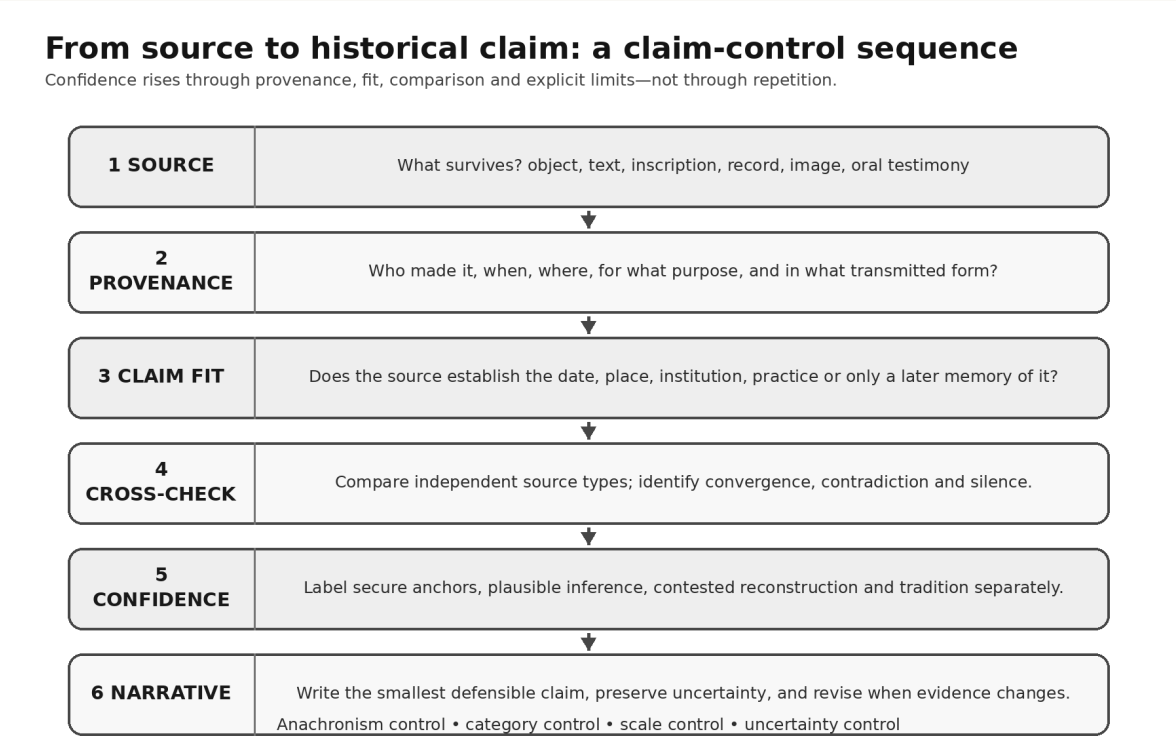
The chronological framework should therefore be read as a set of anchors connected by analysis, not as a substitute for analysis.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 54. From source to historical claim: provenance, claim fit, cross-checking, confidence labels, and...




FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 54. From source to historical claim: provenance, claim fit, cross-checking, confidence labels, and explicit narrative limits form a claim-control sequence.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 16–18

# Prehistory requires restraint in naming

**Prehistory requires restraint in naming**

The earliest sections of the book deliberately resist the urge to project later regional names into periods before those names are securely attested.

**Videha, Vajji, and Anga belong to different ancient political grammars**

Ancient sources do not present a single constitutional model for the eastern Ganga plain.

**Gana-sangha should not be translated automatically as modern republic**

The language of assembly, council, corporate lineage, and collective decision in early sources is historically significant.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Using gana-sangha or corporate polity where appropriate allows comparison with other political forms without turning analogy into identity.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 19–21

# Sacred prestige and political power are related but not identical

**Sacred prestige and political power are related but not identical**

Mithila's long association with Janaka, Sita, philosophical debate, pilgrimage, and learned traditions produced a powerful sacred and intellectual geography.

**Medieval Mithila is not one unbroken dynasty**

The Karnata, Oiniwar, Sultanate, and later regional histories require attention to changing forms of authority, tribute, military pressure, courtly patronage, local...

**The two Vidyapatis must remain distinct**

One of the book's governing corrections is the separation of two Vidyapatis who should not be conflated.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The importance of the distinction extends beyond biography. It demonstrates why a famous name cannot be allowed to override chronology, genre, manuscript evidence, and historical context.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 22–24

# Caste classifications must be dated rather than naturalized

**Caste classifications must be dated rather than naturalized**

Later caste and sub-caste classifications cannot be projected backward merely because they became powerful in modern social organization.

**Persianate and Sanskritic worlds were not sealed civilizations**

The Sultanate and Mughal periods are best understood through interaction among Persianate administration, Sanskrit learning, vernacular literary production, local landed…

**Land is where sovereignty becomes everyday practice**

Revenue demand, tenancy, survey, inheritance, mortgage, litigation, estate management, and agrarian labour convert abstract sovereignty into daily relations.

SOURCE INSIGHT

There is no single linear movement from 'feudal' land to modern private property. Rights remained layered and were repeatedly translated into new documentary forms.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 25–27

# Darbhanga Raj demonstrates the difference between estate and state

**Darbhanga Raj demonstrates the difference between estate and state**

Darbhanga Raj was a major landed estate with immense economic, cultural, and political influence, but it was not a princely state under British paramountcy.

**Markets connect regions without erasing hierarchy**

Bazaars, fairs, grain trade, cattle movement, credit, railways, roads, border posts, and urban commerce linked Mithila and Anga to wider economies.

**Migration is a structure, not an epilogue**

Seasonal labour, education, military service, clerical employment, marriage, trade, professional migration, and overseas mobility repeatedly carried people beyond the…

SOURCE INSIGHT

A regional history that studies only those who remained within a boundary will therefore miss one of the principal mechanisms through which the region was reproduced.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 28–30

# Rivers are historical institutions as well as natural systems

**Rivers are historical institutions as well as natural systems**

The Kosi, Gandak, Bagmati, Kamla, Ganga, and other rivers shape settlement, agriculture, transport, pilgrimage, erosion, sediment, and disaster.

**The Kosi shows why protection and risk must be studied together**

The Kosi chapters distinguish routine inundation, embankment breach, and river avulsion because each has different causes and consequences.

**Infrastructure redistributes responsibility**

Barrages, railways, roads, embankments, check posts, irrigation works, and digital forecasting systems are often narrated as technical objects.

SOURCE INSIGHT

When infrastructure fails or produces uneven benefits, disputes over responsibility reveal the political assumptions built into design.



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# Diagram 55: connected histories across scales

**Diagram 55: connected histories across scales**

Diagram 55: connected histories across scales

**Language is an institution, not a biological boundary**

Maithili's literary depth and contemporary recognition are major historical facts, but language history cannot be reduced to a map of immutable populations.

**Recognition is plural**

The chapters on Maithili, Angika, and Nepalese languages show that recognition has several distinct meanings: linguistic classification, census coding, literary...

SOURCE INSIGHT

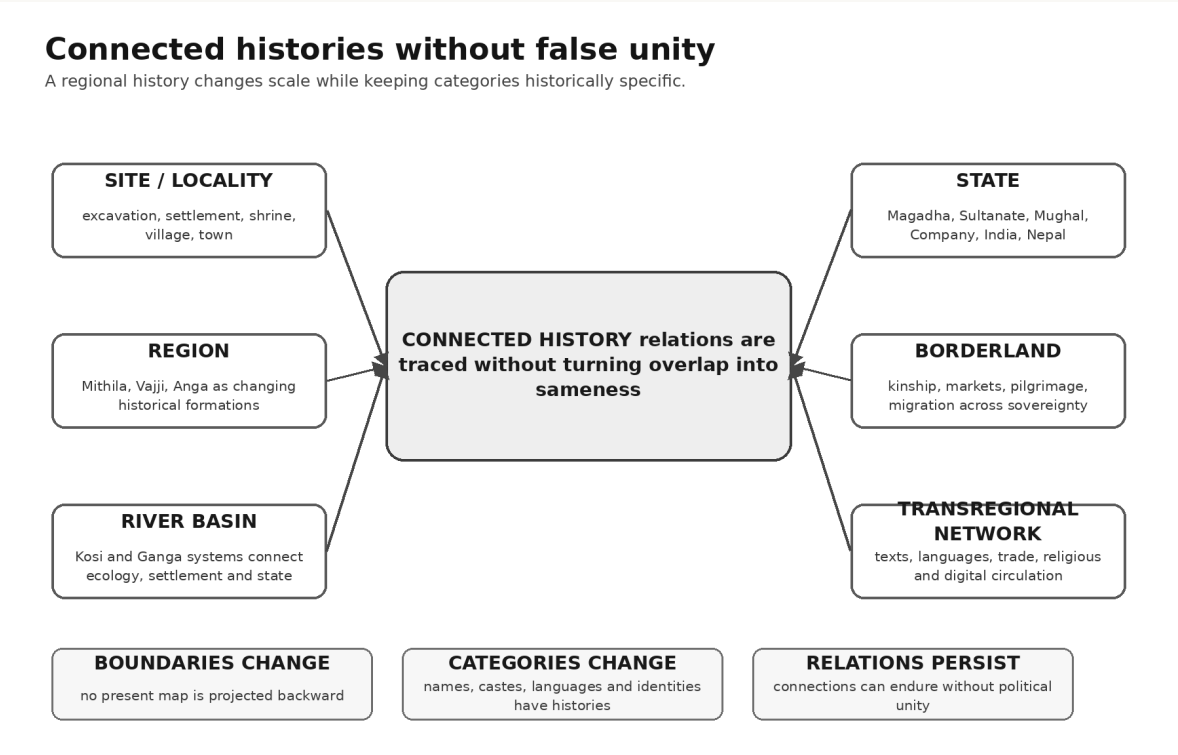
This plurality prevents misleading comparisons.



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ORIGINAL MAP / DIAGRAM · SOURCE IMAGE

# Diagram 55. Connected histories without false unity: scale changes from site and region to river basin, state…




## FROM THE BOOK

Diagram 55. Connected histories without false unity: scale changes from site and region to river basin, state, borderland, and transregional network. Boundaries and categories change while relations can persist.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 34–36

# Script history belongs to institutional history

**Script history belongs to institutional history**

Mithilakshar or Tirhuta is not merely an ornamental emblem.

**Literary canon is made through institutions**

A canon is not simply the list of the best texts waiting to be discovered.

**Mithila painting reveals how culture becomes an economy**

Mithila painting moved through several material and institutional worlds: ritual and domestic surfaces, paper, state and private collecting, exhibitions, museums, awards...

SOURCE INSIGHT

The documented twentieth-century record therefore matters.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 37–39

# Gender belongs at the centre of regional history

**Gender belongs at the centre of regional history**

Women are not a supplementary social category added after political and economic history.

**Caste and class intersect without becoming the same thing**

Caste can structure occupation, status, marriage, access to land, ritual hierarchy, and discrimination; class shapes ownership, income, employment, education, and market…

**Archive silence is itself structured**

People who leave few written records are not people without history.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Recovering these histories requires reading against the archive while remaining cautious about inference.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 40–42

# The border is both real and crossed

**The border is both real and crossed**

The India–Nepal frontier is legally decisive for sovereignty, citizenship, policing, taxation, elections, property regulation, and official statistics.

**Madhesh, Tarai, and Mithila must remain overlapping, not identical**

The modern politics of Madhesh cannot be read backward as a timeless territorial identity.

**Citizenship converts belonging into documents and rights**

Modern citizenship law gives political membership formal documentary routes.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Citizenship should therefore be distinguished from cultural belonging.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 43–45

# Federalism turns recognition into institutional design

**Federalism turns recognition into institutional design**

Nepal's federal restructuring demonstrates that recognition is not completed by naming a province.

**Plural citizenship requires more than majority rule**

A province associated with a historically marginalized regional identity can still contain minorities and internal hierarchies.

**Modern identity claims are historical evidence, not shortcuts to antiquity**

Language movements, regional flags, statues, commemorative maps, festivals, museums, social-media campaigns, and political speeches are valuable sources for the history...

SOURCE INSIGHT

This distinction protects cultural history from two distortions: dismissing modern identity as invented and treating modern identity as proof of timeless continuity.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 46–48

# Colonial rule produced ruptures and reclassifications

**Colonial rule produced ruptures and reclassifications**

Company and Crown rule changed revenue institutions, law, policing, transport, education, print, statistics, and the scale of bureaucratic knowledge.

**Independence did not end institutional history**

The end of colonial rule in India and the political transformations of Nepal opened new constitutional orders, but inherited districts, land records, infrastructures…

**Methodological nationalism is insufficient for a borderland region**

Modern archives and statistics are organized largely by states, which can make national boundaries appear to be the natural boundaries of every historical question.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The solution is not to abandon national history but to nest it within other scales.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 49–51

# Scale should change with the question

**Scale should change with the question**

A village-level land dispute, a regional language movement, an interstate river treaty, and a transregional literary tradition cannot be explained at the same scale.

**What connects the histories is movement**

Across the longue duree, the strongest common theme is movement: rivers shift; capitals move; manuscripts travel; teachers and students circulate; armies and officials...

**What connects the histories is also classification**

States, scholars, religious communities, landlords, census officials, linguistic surveyors, courts, academies, political movements, and digital standards bodies all...

SOURCE INSIGHT

Classification should therefore be studied as an event.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 52–54

# False unity usually appears through anachronism

**False unity usually appears through anachronism**

The most persistent historical errors in regional writing arise when a later category is projected backward: a modern political boundary becomes an ancient kingdom; a...

**False fragmentation is the opposite danger**

Avoiding false unity should not produce an equally misleading history of isolated boxes.

**Historical explanation must separate cause from coincidence**

Regional histories often contain events close together in time: political change and literary production, floods and migration, recognition and institutional growth...

SOURCE INSIGHT

Where mechanisms remain uncertain, the narrative should describe association without upgrading it to cause.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 55–57

# Numbers require definitions

**Numbers require definitions**

Population counts, flood discharge, acreage, revenue, election shares, numbers of speakers, publication totals, and institutional budgets all appear objective because...

**Visual evidence requires the same discipline as text**

Maps, paintings, photographs, diagrams, architectural images, and scanned documents can make an argument appear self-evident.

**Digital history expands access and creates new filters**

Digitized archives, Unicode text, searchable newspapers, online museum catalogues, census portals, GIS, satellite imagery, and digital publication have transformed the...

SOURCE INSIGHT

Digital availability is nevertheless selective.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 58–60

# Public history should disclose uncertainty rather than hide it

**Public history should disclose uncertainty rather than hide it**

Regional history has audiences beyond universities: schools, museums, cultural organizations, language activists, descendants, local researchers, diaspora readers, and...

**The archive of the future is being created now**

Websites, digital magazines, social media, online video, electronic government records, GIS dashboards, and born-digital literature are already primary sources for...

**Environmental change will reorder historical questions**

Flood regimes, heat, groundwater stress, sediment, urban growth, land-use change, and infrastructure will continue to alter the material conditions of the region.

SOURCE INSIGHT

Environmental history is therefore not an appendix to political history. It is one of the places where long-term landscape processes and short-term governmental decisions meet most visibly.



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 61–63

# A research agenda should deepen evidence, not merely enlarge narrative

**A research agenda should deepen evidence, not merely enlarge narrative**

The next advances in the field will come from denser evidence: stratified archaeological publication, epigraphic rechecking, manuscript stemmata, estate and court…

**Comparative history can test regional exceptionalism**

Mithila, Vajji, Anga, and Madhesh have distinctive histories, but many of their processes can be compared with other South Asian regions: corporate polities, Sanskrit…

**The ethics of regional history require resisting prestige inflation**

Communities understandably seek recognition, antiquity, famous ancestors, and cultural continuity.

SOURCE INSIGHT

A stronger form of respect is evidentiary: document what is secure, state what is debated, preserve local memory, and allow cultural significance to stand without forcing every practice into the…



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KEY ARGUMENTS · SECTIONS 64–66

# The ethics of regional history also require resisting erasure

### The ethics of regional history also require resisting erasure

Scepticism can become another distortion if it is applied only to marginalized traditions while official archives are accepted uncritically.

### Diagram 55 and Diagram 54 together define the method

The two concluding diagrams summarize complementary disciplines.

### What the book ultimately argues

The deepest continuity in the history of Mithila, Vajji, and Anga is not a single state or an unchanged population.

**SOURCE INSIGHT**

This conclusion permits both attachment and criticism. It recognizes the historical reality of regional cultures while refusing to make culture a substitute for evidence.



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# Connected histories without false unity

**Connected histories without false unity**

A history of this region is most accurate when it accepts plurality as structure rather than as a problem to be solved.

SOURCE INSIGHT

The result is not fragmentation. It is a more demanding unity of inquiry: one that connects evidence across periods while refusing to erase the differences that make historical change visible.



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# What this chapter establishes

### Diagram 55 and Diagram 54 together define the method

The two concluding diagrams summarize complementary disciplines.

### What the book ultimately argues

The deepest continuity in the history of Mithila, Vajji, and Anga is not a single state or an unchanged population.

### Connected histories without false unity

A history of this region is most accurate when it accepts plurality as structure rather than as a problem to be solved.

**READING PRINCIPLE**

Source, date, geographical scale and evidentiary limits remain visible in the historical argument.



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