

# Mapping the Spiritual breakdown of Colonial Bengal as per Francis Buchanan

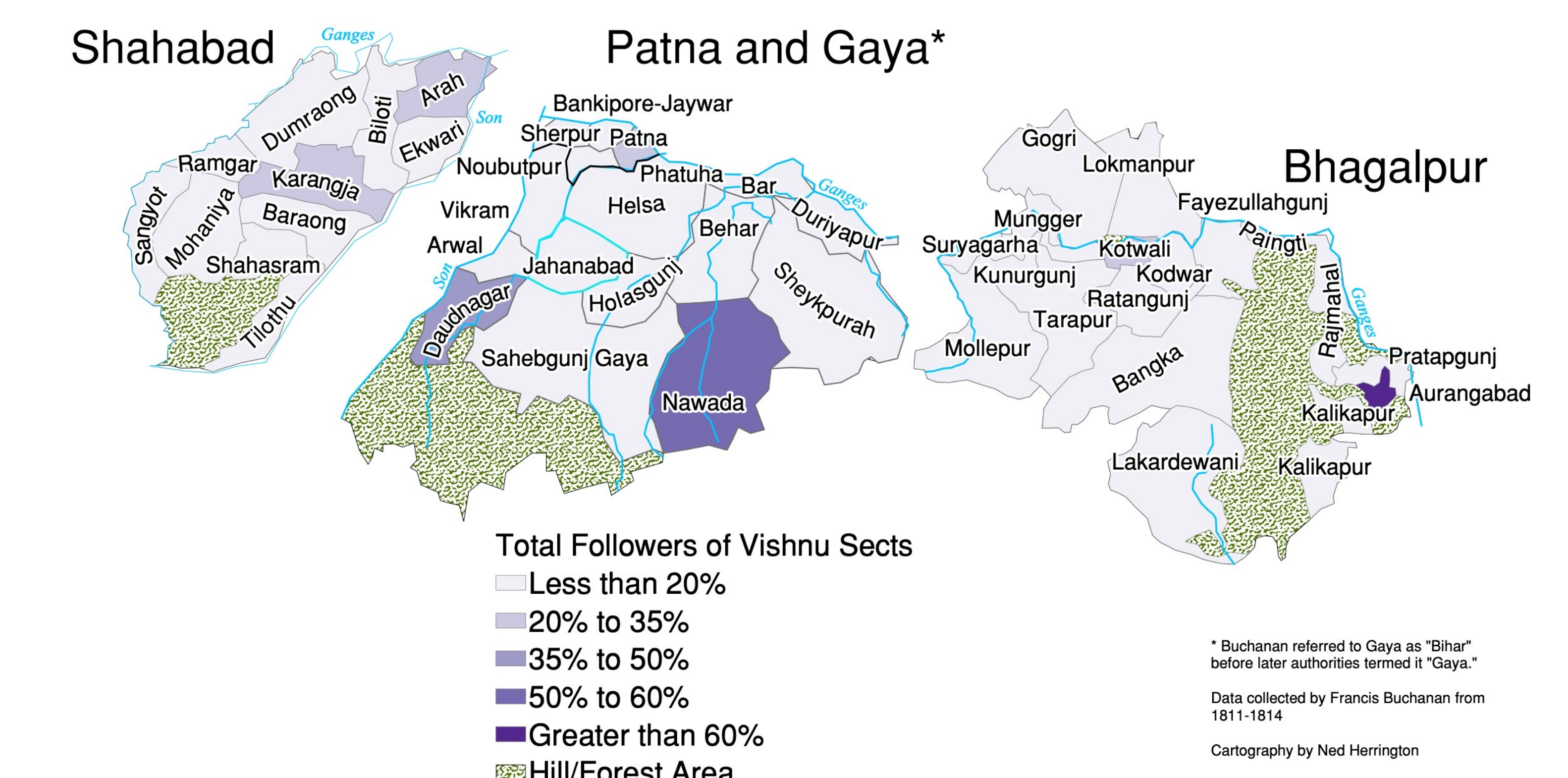
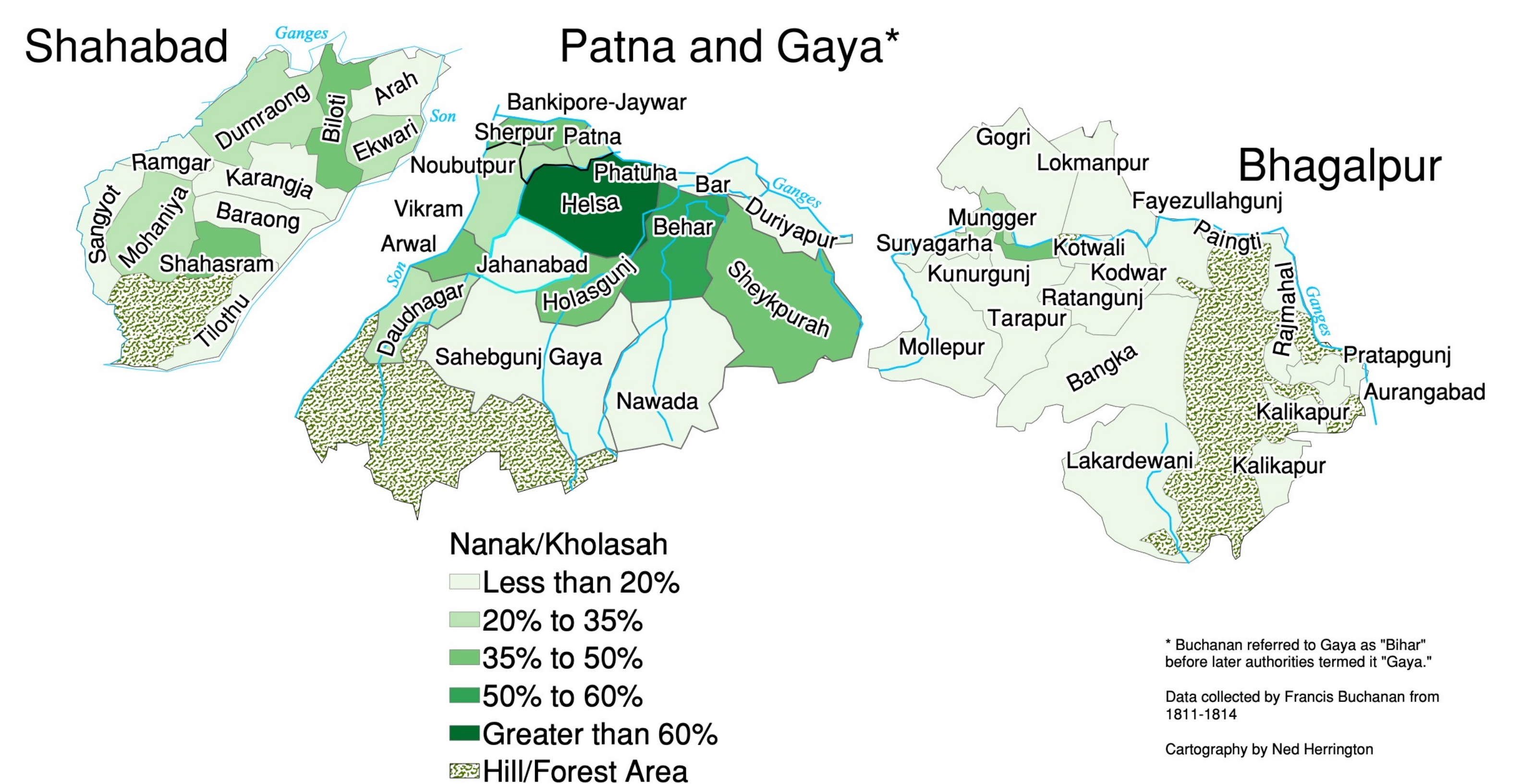
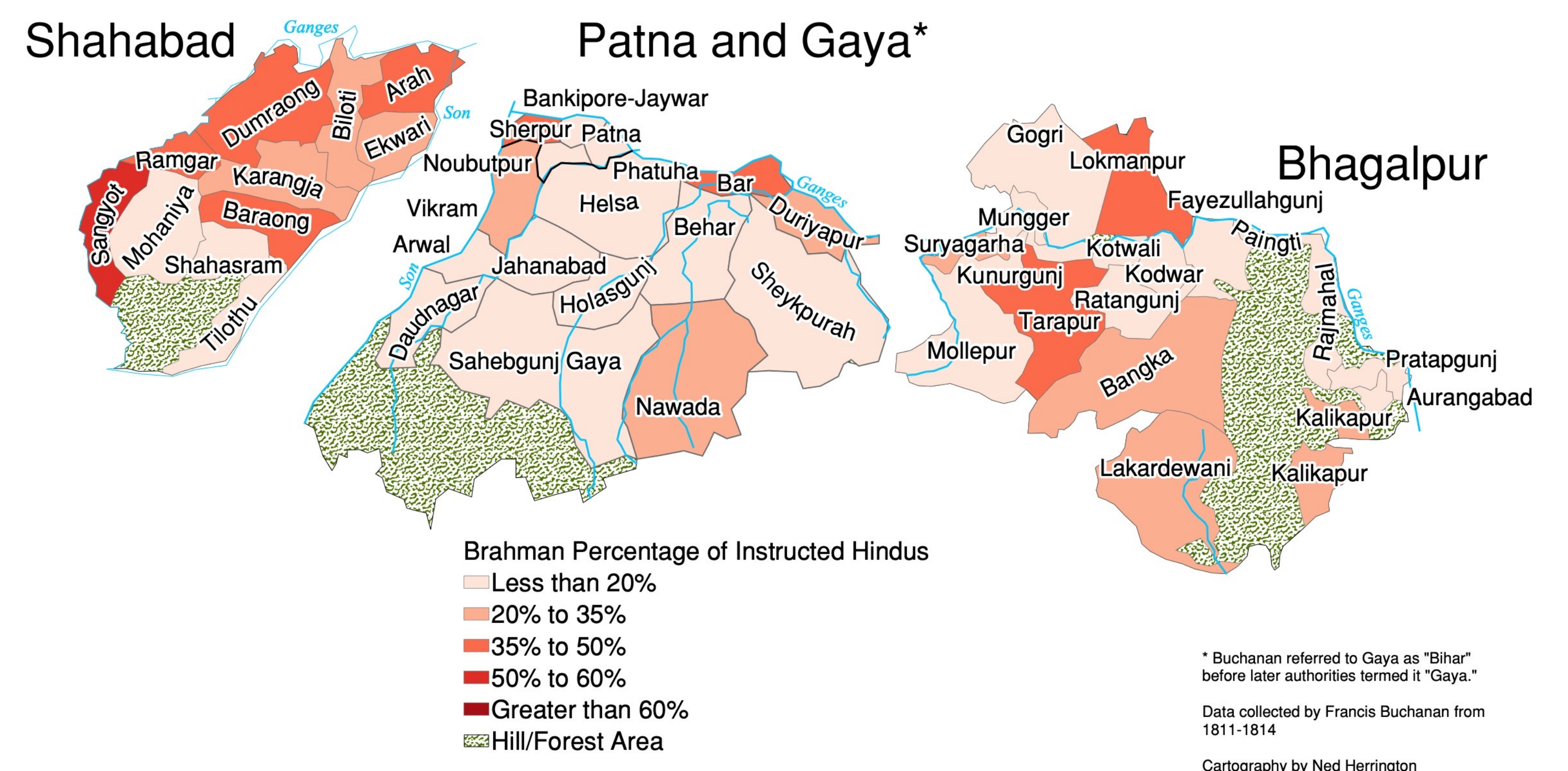
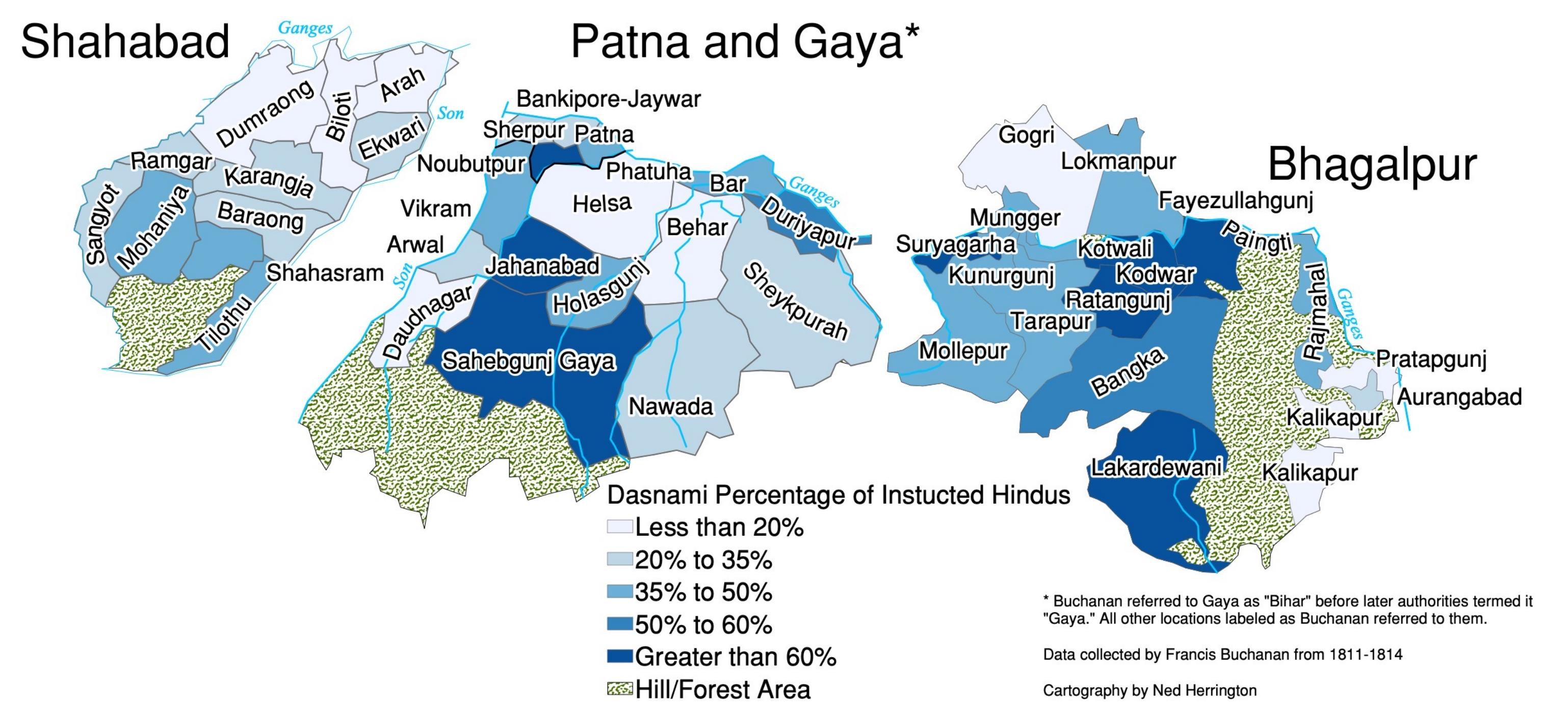
Ned Herrington, QAC Summer Apprenticeship Program, Wesleyan University

## Introduction

- The goal of this project is to produce a map or maps that describe comparative Hindu and Muslim ascetic/monastic influence in the eastern Gangetic region of Bihar, eastern UP, and Bengal in the early nineteenth century, the subject of an upcoming book chapter by Professor William Pinch.
- The data in the maps comes from the surveys of Francis Buchanan, a British botanist hired by the East India Company to collect what we would today call statistics on this largely unknown region.
- The surveys cover a plethora of topics, but crucially include religious census data gathered by Buchanan Indian assistants.
- Buchanan tallied these statistics in a system of 64ths, underscoring the antiquity of the data
- Irene Westfall (a fellow QAC summer apprentice) tabulated the data and converted to a more usable decimal system.
- Maps of Buchanan journey were my starting point but those did not include the borders of the municipalities (thanas) upon which he collected data, so I was charged with building the maps.

## Resulting Map Series

### Guru Influence in South Bihar

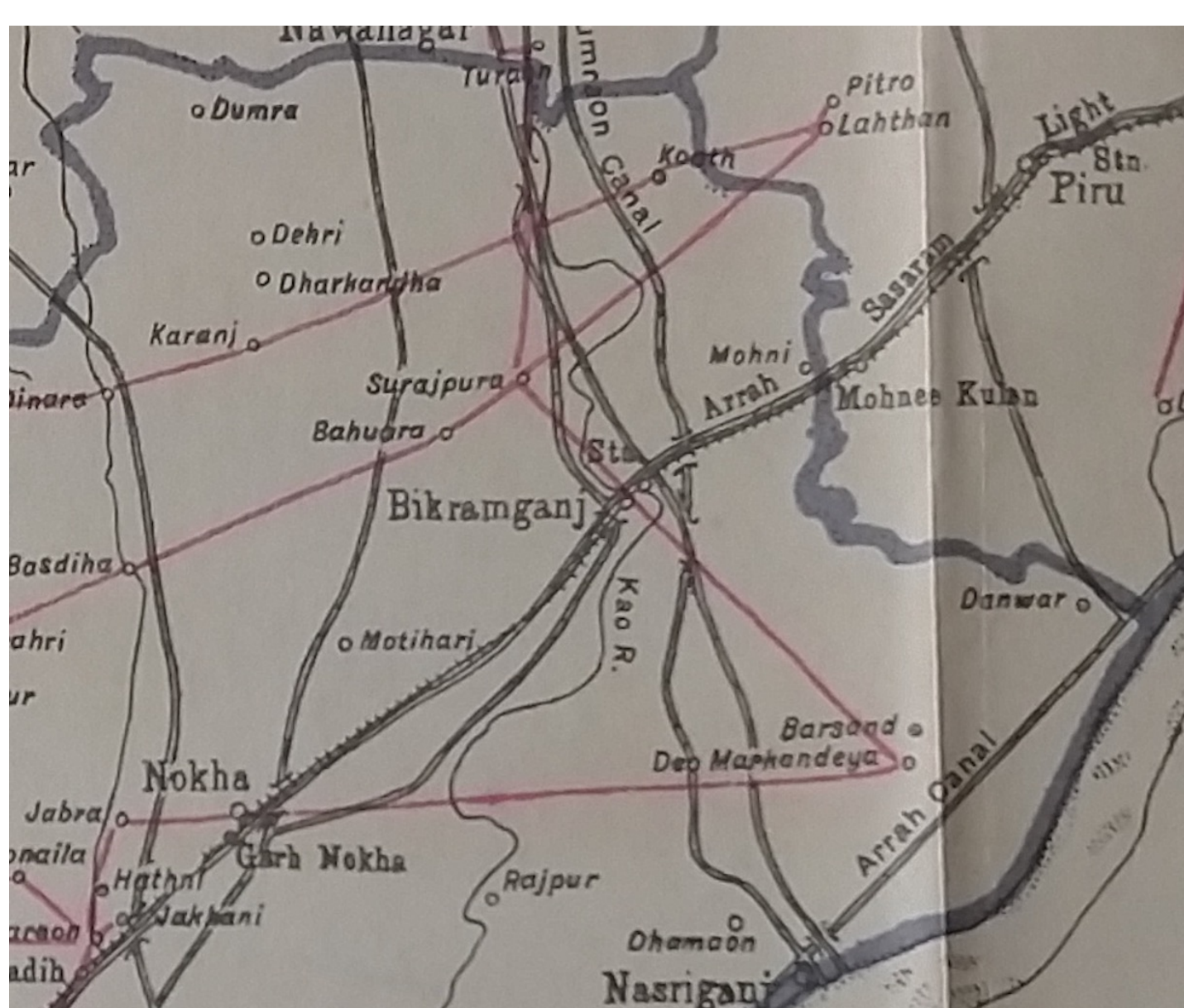


## Mapmaking Process

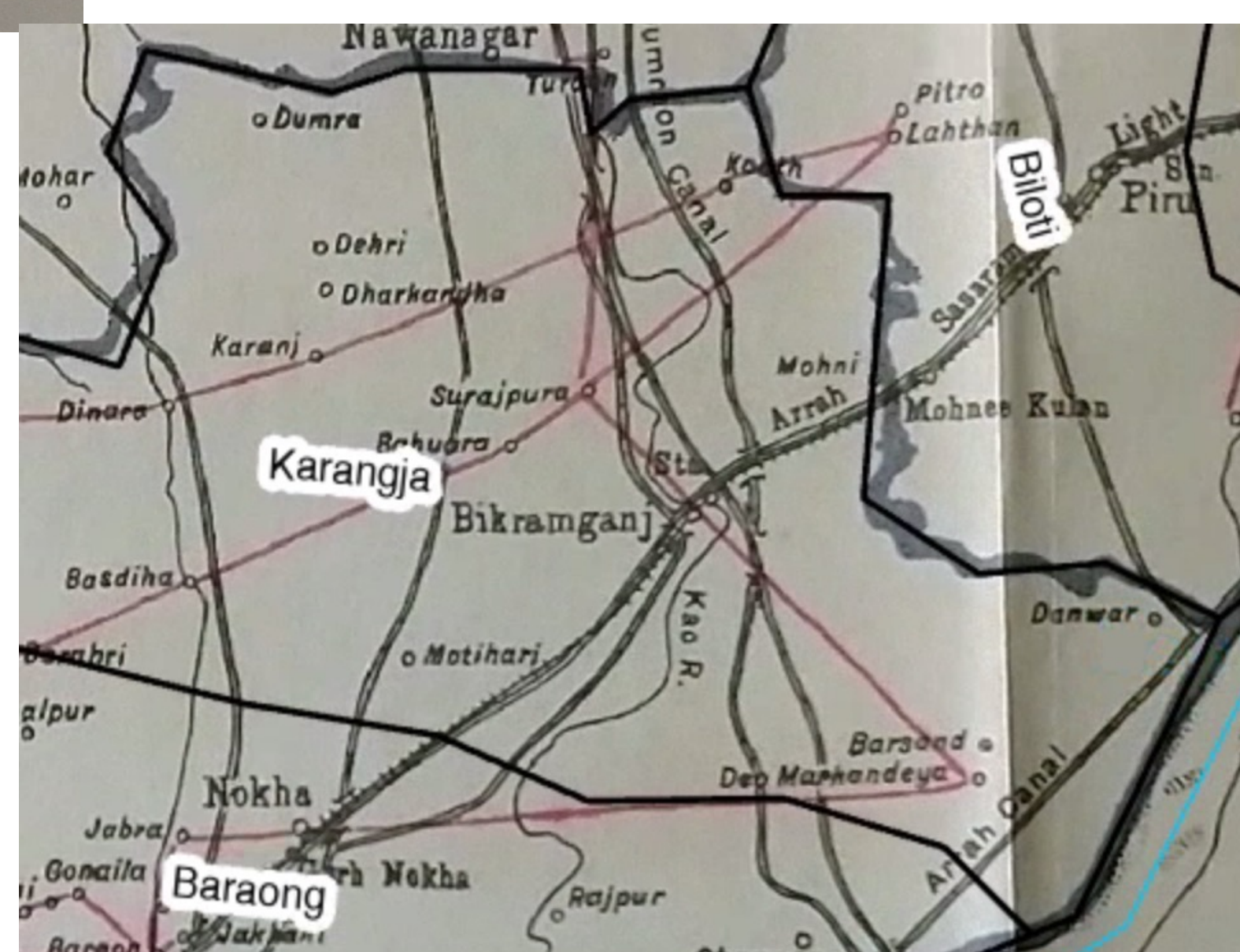
- The maps included landmarks like rivers, railroads and towns (from a later period than that in which Buchanan traveled.)
- For example, this is the descriptive account and original map for the Karangja Thana:

### Division Karangja

This jurisdiction is long and narrow, but in other respects tolerably compact and of a reasonable size. The place that has been selected for the residence of the officers of police is a small village at one of its ends; but the Darogah most usually resides at Dhangangi (Dungi R.) near the middle of one of its sides, which is no doubt the more convenient place, although Suryapura would have been still a more suitable situation.



- It's easy to miss, but the thana's capital (spelled Karenj here) is visible. This exemplifies the two greatest hurdles to making the maps: name changes and the fluctuation of some town's size as the region evolved.



- Using the description above plus mentions of other towns and contact with rivers I shaped each Thana...
- With the map made in ArcGIS, the next step was to use a table join to connect in Buchanan's data.

- Professor Pinch and I settled on a heatmap-style display of the data, with a map for each of the four largest aesthetic groups.
- I place each district into a single map layout and then duplicated the final layout four times into the series on the left.
- The maps reveal the broad popularity of Dasnami gurus, Nanak's precense radiating out from the Thana of Helsa and the rare but strong pockets of Vishnu followers.

- I still hope to fully stitch all three maps together into a single span and then have plans to further clean up the visualization, for example by unifying the map surrounds and legend.