

Dura

Approximately 5,000 Dura people inhabit the Lamjun District in the Gandaki Zone of central Nepal.¹ According to the respected contemporary linguist George van Driem, 'Their homeland comprises all the territory between the Paudi and Midim rivers and encompasses the ridge which runs from Dura Dada proper via Turlunkot. . . . The Dura homeland affords splendid views of Lamjun Himal, Annapurna II and IV, the eastern flank of Machapucchre and Manaslu.'² These peaks represent some of the highest mountains in the world, with Annapurna II rising to 7,937 metres (26,033 ft.).

The Dura were originally a group with their own Tibeto-Burman language. According to one source, 'Round-faced, flat-nosed and short in stature, Duras have their own unique traditions and culture though their religious and cultural formalities are quite akin to Gurungs. Their sons are fitted with bows and arrows on the very day of their naming ceremonies, a fact that reflects on their martial heritage.'³

The Dura are believed to have originated in Dullu Dailekh to the west. They migrated to their present location at various stages between the 8th and 12th centuries AD. At the time they had a far larger population than they do today. Over the course of the centuries the Dura area has been inundated with Hindus from the south. Gradually they lost the use of their mother tongue and now the Dura can only speak Nepali although, as van Driem notes, 'There are Dura who still remember bits and pieces of the language.'⁴ Concerted efforts have been made to try to record as much

of the Dura language as possible, including a list of more than 200 words, but these seem destined for historical use only.

Despite the loss of their language, the Dura remain a proud and unique people. Another part of their identity that is presently undergoing a process of assimilation is their religious belief. For centuries, Buddhism played the dominant role in Dura spiritual life. They lived at the southern end of the Tibetan Buddhist world, but after centuries of pressure from Hindu migrants, many of



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the Dura's Buddhist practices have now been subsumed into a complicated Hindu-Buddhist mix. The Dura worship many Hindu deities alongside images of Buddha. The Dura still have lamas who serve the community's Buddhist

needs, and most of their birth and funeral rituals are Buddhist in nature. When someone dies, a lama is summoned to 'perform the last rites and they do not do anything without their presence or permission'.⁵ It is noteworthy that the Dura go back to their Buddhist roots at times of death. On other important occasions, however, Hindu rituals are performed, especially matrimonial rituals that have been adopted from the Nepalis.

For more than a thousand years the Dura have been waiting to hear the gospel. In recent years a very small number have believed in Christ, but most of this fascinating group have yet to hear the good news.

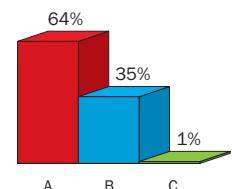


Population:
5,150 (2000)
6,350 (2010)
7,850 (2020)
Countries: Nepal
Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: 30

Overview of the Dura

Other Names: Durra
Population Sources:
4,500 in Nepal (1994, R Gautam)
Language: Indo-European, Indo-Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Northern Zone, Eastern Pahari (Dura was traditionally a Tibeto-Burman language which is now extinct.)
Dialects: 0
Professing Buddhists: 50%
Practising Buddhists: 15%
Christians: 0.5%
Scripture: none
Jesus film: none
Gospel Recordings: none
Christian Broadcasting: none
ROPAL code: none

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Have heard the gospel but have not become Christians
C = Are adherents to some form of Christianity