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## **Himalayan Linguistics**

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*Review*

*The Dura Language: Grammar and Phylogeny*

By Nicolas Schorer

Leiden, Boston: Brill 2016

ISBN 978-90-04-32560-9

xvi + 456 pages

Reviewed by Marie-Caroline Pons, University of Oregon

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# Review

## The Dura Language: Grammar and Phylogeny

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### Introduction

Dura is an extinct language (van Driem 2001; Kausen 2013) of the Trans-Himalayan (a.k.a. Tibeto-Burman or Sino-Tibetan) family that was spoken in the Lamjung district of Western Nepal. As a pioneering attempt in the documentation of the Dura language, three-word lists were collected when the language was still spoken between 1982 and 1985. In 1982, Lok Bahādur Durā recorded a word list for the first time. A second word list was published in 1983, in a government report, *Durā Jāti ra Tinīharū ko Saṃskṛti* [The Dura people and their culture]. In 1985, Ṛsikānt Adhikārī published a word list in *Durā Jātiko Paricaya* [Acquaintance with the Dura people]. Most of the documentation available on Dura have later been collected by a single member of the community, Keś Bahādur Durā, who published two versions of a Dura dictionary in 1994 and 2003, with the help of the Durā Sevā Samāj (Dura Service Society). The linguistic materials provided by Keś Bahādur Durā served the first linguistic analysis of the language undertaken by Muktināth Ghimire for his Master's thesis in 1993: *Durā Bhāṣā ko Vyākaranātmak Svarūp* [The grammatical appearance of the Dura language]. The linguist Kedar Bilash Nagila, who started working on Dura in 2005, published several morphosyntactic analyses (Nagila 2008; 2009; 2010; 2013) in *Nepalese Linguistics*, the journal of the Linguistic Society of Nepal.

In the present grammar of Dura, Nicolas Schorer has assembled an impressive collection of available linguistic knowledge on the language collected over the last three decades, which he presents through a historical, comparative, and descriptive approach that aims to provide linguistic evidence for the classification of Dura within TH. This monograph is an extended version of the author's Master's thesis (Schorer 2013), *The Phylogenetic Position of the Dura Language*. Schorer spent one month in Nepal in January 2015 to find the missing materials he needed to put together all available elements on the Dura language, and to investigate heretofore under-represented aspects of the Dura community and language, such as their history and culture, as well as the socio-linguistic status of their language.

### Summary

*The Dura Language: Grammar and Phylogeny* (Schorer 2016) contains eleven chapters that combine descriptive, comparative, typological and historical approaches of the language. In the appendix of the grammar, Schorer includes a map of Nepal that situates the Dura language area and a detailed map of the Dura settlements. Following those, the next two pages present "The Master List of Morphological Items" based on the typological set of features established by LaPolla (2012:

126) to classify TH languages. The 25 next pages present to the reader the available corpus on Dura, in a chronological order from the oldest to the latest collected data: translations are provided in Nepali and English. The last part of the appendix is devoted to an “Etymological Reference Dictionary” that presents the Dura lexicon transcribed in Devanāgarī as well as transliterated and following the Devanāgarī alphabetical order. The lexical entries are annotated with source references and additional comments.

The book may be divided in three main parts:

In the first part, from Chapter 1 (Introduction) to Chapter 3, Schorer introduces the state of the art of research on Dura, both in terms of available linguistic knowledge and its classification within TH. The author presents the Dura community, their culture and history, and provides an overview of the typological features of Dura phonology, morphology, and syntax.

The second part, from Chapter 4 to Chapter 10, gives a phonological and grammatical description of the language based on and discussing “the pioneering works of Muktināth Ghimire (1993) and Kedar Bilash Nagila (2008; 2009; 2010; 2013)” (Schorer 2016: 3).

The last part of the book corresponds to Chapter 11 where Schorer gives a proposal for the classification of Dura within Trans-Himalayan.

### **Remainder of the Review**

The remainder of this review describes the content of each chapter.

In **Chapter 1 (Introduction)**, Schorer briefly introduces the available literature or “sources” on Dura and addresses the “epistemological limitations” (Schorer 2016: 5) of his work based on second-hand data.

In **Chapter 2**, the reader discovers who the Dura people are, their culture and history, and what their daily life looks like in Durāḍāḍā (Dura Ridge), Lamjung district. Schorer addresses here more in detail the previously available research and documentation of the language, called Durā Bhū by the community. Declared extinct, Dura appears to be related to Tāndrāṅge, a language spoken in the nearby villages of Tāndrāṅ, Pokharī Thok and Jitā, mostly inhabited by the Gurung. Although a few speakers of Tāndrāṅge claim their affiliation to the Dura community, most assimilated to Gurung ethnicity, unwilling to participate in the documentation and description of their language, worried to be considered Dura. The last sections of the chapter focus on discussing the different models of branching proposed for classifying the TH languages and Dura in particular. The previous attempts for classifying Dura are mainly based on the typological features of the language, while Schorer aims to provide stronger evidence based on comparative and historical analysis for a phylogenetic relationship between Dura, Kham, Magar, Chepang and Raji-Raute, as discussed in Chapter 11.

**Chapter 3** provides “A Typological Overview” of the phonological, morphological, and syntactical features of Dura, based on the structural features established by Noonan (2003) to classify a body of 16 TH languages into two major branches, i.e., Bodish and Himalayish. Schorer (2016: 47) recognizes that typology is not “diagnostic of phylogeny,” but points out that a typological comparison of Dura may allow a better understanding of language contact and evidence for structural borrowings from Nepali (lingua franca) and other TH languages.

In **Chapter 4**, Schorer presents the phonological system of Dura, including observed morphophonological processes. The consonant system includes 36 phonemes in six places of articulation: bilabial, coronal (dental/alveolar), retroflex, palatal, velar and glottal. Voicing, aspiration, and murmur are distinctive features of stops and affricates. Nasal, rhotic, lateral and glide consonants distinguish breathiness. Fricatives are voiceless and unaspirated. Schorer notes that the original

consonant system of Dura has fundamentally changed, influenced by intense language contact with Indo-Aryan (IA) and other TH languages.

**Chapter 5** is dedicated to the lexicon of Dura. It first discusses the sound changes that affected Dura vocabulary with regards to the Proto-Tibeto-Burman (PTB) reconstructions proposed by Benedict (1972) and Matisoff (2003), as well as to the reconstructions provided at lower levels by Sun (1993), Watters (2002), Mortensen (2003), Van Bik (2006), Wood (2008), and Button (2009). In doing so, Schorer (2016: 101) gives evidence for the genetic relatedness of Dura “to the vast Trans-Himalayan family.” Schorer (2016: 101) recognizes the importance of comparing grammatical or morphosyntactic features, i.e., cognate paradigmatic and syntagmatic morphosyntactical structures, for establishing phylogenetic relationships between languages (Nichols 1996). But for Schorer (2016: 101), this also goes through a prior solid understanding of historical sound changes that happened at the lexical level, since these also affected grammatical morphology.

In the second section of the same chapter, Schorer compiles an expanded Swadesh list of 125 Dura vocabulary items and an extended list of 275 selected items that he compares with a sample of languages from different sub-branches or of languages whose classification remains undetermined: Tibetic (Written Tibetan), Tamangic (Tamang and Gurung), Central-Himalayan (Magar, Kham and Chepang), West-Himalayish (Darma), Kaike, Ghale, Newar, Baram, and Raji. Schorer provides a lexicostatistic analysis that shows the “likelihood scores for cognacy” (Schorer 2016: 129) between these languages and Dura, and in particular a “stronger link” between Dura and Magar-Kham-Chepang as well as Tamangic (Schorer 2016: 133). Schorer observes that this result may either be triggered by genetic relationships or language contact, and that these would be difficult to tease apart. The rest of the chapter describes in greater detail lexicon items, which are classified thematically (kinship, foodstuffs, animals, basic verbs, numerals, color terms, human body parts and functions), through their comparison with other TH languages, PTB, as well as IA languages.

The last section of Chapter five focuses on the analysis of the two main sources of loanwords in Dura, primarily from Nepali and surrounding TH languages (Magar, Newar, Manange, Gurung, and Tamang). Schorer identifies several clear borrowings from Gurung or Tamangic, applying one or more of the following criteria:

- 1) Identical or near-identical phonological structure;
- 2) Lack of cognates outside Gurung or Tamangic;
- 3) Word member of a semantic class particularly susceptible to borrowing;
- 4) Opaque or unusual morphological structure in Dura;

Schorer identifies 10% of the 1100 lexical items as borrowed from Nepali from diverse semantic fields amongst which three of the following unexpected domains: kinship terms, body parts and motion verbs. Nepali verb roots are nativized with a suffix *-di* found as well in Magar (*-di*) (Grunow-Härsta 2008: 176), Baram (*-di*) (Kansakar et al. 2014: 79), Gurung (*-ti*) (Glover 1974: 115), and Manange (*-ti*) (Hildebrandt 2009: 460).

**Chapters 6 to 10** present the morphosyntactic properties of Dura, focusing on the following grammatical domains, in the following order: Nouns, Adjectives and Adjectivals, Verbs, Adverbs, and Minor Word Classes. Within this larger functional analysis of the grammar of Dura, Schorer makes a point of discussing the possible historical origins of the morphemes with regards to cognate forms and PTH reconstruction.

**Chapter 6** covers the morphosyntactic devices attached to nominals, as well as nominal morphology: pronouns, case marking, relator nouns and postpositions, nominalization, simple nouns,

compounds, and reduplication. The syntactic structure of the noun-phrase is summarized as follows: DEM-QNT-ADJ-N-GEN-N.

The nominalizer *-u* is used to derive agentive and non-agentive nouns from verbs, as well as adjectivals and relativizations. This morpheme is cognate with the nominalizers *-o~wo~u* and *-o* found in Kham (Watters 2002: 199) and Magar (Grunow-Hårsta 2008: 211), respectively. The morpheme *-u* has also a cognate nominalizer in Chepang (Caughley 1982: 130) and Bantawa (Doornenbal 2009: 179). Schorer (2016: 192) describes them separately from the forms found in Kham and Magar because they are transcribed with an initial glottal stop: *-ʔo*. However, in Chepang, the glottal stop is not phonological in initial position (Pons Forthcoming), and it is not either in Bantawa, where it marks syllable boundary (Doornenbal 2009: 26).

Dura personal and possessive pronouns feature PTH reflexes. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns *ŋi* and *no* are clear reflexes of *\*ŋa* and *\*naŋ*. The 1<sup>st</sup> person singular possessive root *ki-* is treated as a reflex of *\*ka*, reconstructed by Jacques (2007) and DeLancey (2011; 2013) as a PTH possessive or oblique form.

The form *mi-* of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular possessive form *mi-ni* is analyzed as a reflex of the PTH morpheme *mi* ‘person’ and as being cognate with the Magar inalienable possession marker *mi~me-* (Grunow-Hårsta 2008: 99) and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular pronoun *men* (Angdembe 1996: 5; Grunow-Hårsta 2008: 99). While it is possible that all these forms come from the same original morpheme *mi* meaning ‘person, man,’ reconstructed back to PTH *\*r-mi(y)* by Chou (1972) and *\*r-mi(y)-n* by Matisoff (2003), the functions of possessive pronoun, inalienable possessive prefix, and of independent pronoun may have evolved through different diachronic pathways and likely represent later innovations. Indeed, the PTH form *\*a-* reconstructed by Benedict (1972: 121–123) is a solid candidate to the function of 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular possessive as a prefix to nouns (Pons 2021) and Chepang has preserved a strong meaning of ‘person’ in the morpheme *mi* which forms the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural independent pronouns *i-mi~maŋ-lam* and *o-mi~maŋ-lam* literally ‘these people (or persons)’ and ‘those people (or persons),’ respectively, as well as a possessive construction with a frozen genitive form *-ka* (that evolved from the genitive case marker *-ko*) (Pons Forthcoming), as in: *ŋa-ka-mi~maŋ* ‘my people.’ It is in fact likely that the Dura form *mi-ni* and the Magar forms *mi~me-* and *men* are later innovations.

Dura has eight case markers: absolutive (unmarked), ergative *-ge*, dative *-re*, genitive *-ni*, allative *-du*, ablative *-du*, locative *-la*, and comitative *-so*. As for the distribution of the ergative marker, Schorer suggests that Dura has been “gradually moving towards split-ergative syntax along the Nepali-style split-ergativity” (Schorer 2016: 175) based on aspect, a typological trait of IA languages (Masica 1991: 341).

The following table summarizes Schorer’s etymological observations about Dura case markers (Schorer 2016: 174–188).

Case	Dura	Reconstruction (*)	Cognate functions	Possible Cognate forms
ergative	<i>-ge</i>	PTB <i>*-ka</i> ergative (Bauman, 1979) genitive (LaPolla, 1995)	ergative	Tibetan <i>-gis-gyis-kyis</i> Caudeng rGyalrong <i>-kə</i> Tshangla <i>-gi</i> Thulung <i>-ka</i> Raji <i>-kəy-gəi-əi</i>

				Bhujel <i>-kəy<sup>1</sup>-i</i>
dative	<i>-re</i>	Proto-Tamangic <i>*-ri</i> locative (Glover, 1974, Hildebrandt, 2004)	locative dative	Manange, Gurung <i>-ri</i> Nar-Phu <i>-re</i> Chantyal <i>-ra</i>
genitive	<i>-ni</i>	Proto-Dura <i>*-ni</i> ablative (Schorer, 2016)	genitive  ablative	Kaika <i>-ne</i> Nar-Phu <i>-nê</i> Garo <i>-ni</i> Kham <i>-ni</i> Magar <i>-iŋ</i>
ablative allative	<i>-du</i>	Proto-Dura <i>*-da(ŋ)</i> allative/dative (Schorer, 2016)	allative  dative  ablative	Kham <i>-da</i> Chepang <i>-taŋ</i> Rawat <i>-to</i> Dhankute Tamang <i>-da</i> Newar <i>-ta</i> Kham <i>-tin</i>
locative	<i>-la</i>	Proto-Dura <i>*lak</i> 'place' (Schorer, 2016)	locative  inessive circumessive	Tibetan <i>-la</i> Tshangla <i>-la</i> Kham <i>-lə</i> Magar <i>-lak</i>
comitative	<i>-so</i>	Proto-Dura <i>*-sa</i> (Schorer, 2016)	associative verb	Kham <i>-so</i> Magar <i>sa</i> 'accompany'

Table 1. Etymological observations about Dura case markers

<sup>1</sup> The Bhujel (Regmi 2007, 2012) form *-kay* is also transcribed *-kəy* in Schorer (2016: 181). The morpheme is pronounced /kəj/ or /kʌj/, with a mid-central vowel. It is reported as an ergative case marker cognate with the Dura ergative case marker *-ge* (Schorer 2016: 181). Regmi (2007, 2012) explains that the ergative/instrumental case markers have two allomorphs, a form *-kay* and a form *-i*, found attached to open and closed syllables, respectively (Regmi 2007: 159). However, examples of ergative/instrumental case markers are not transcribed consistently in Regmi (2007). Ergative/instrumental case markers are mostly transcribed *-i* (in both open and closed syllable contexts) and sometimes *-kay* (in both open and closed syllable contexts). Discrepancies between the presence of the forms *-i* and *-kay* are also found between the first (phonetical) and second (phonological) transcription line in the cited examples. These irregularities in transcription are confusing since exists a dative morpheme *-kay* (pronounced /kaj/ with a low-central vowel), which marks direct objects and indirect objects but also dative experiencers (Regmi 2007: 162), similarly to Chepang (Caughley 1982). The difference in use between the ergative/instrumental forms *-i* and *-kay* should be revised, looking for instance at verb type differences to see if the dative experiencer construction did not expand its use, resulting in a Bhujel innovation. This allomorphy is not attested in Chepang (Bhujel's most closely related language) which features an ergative/instrumental morpheme *-i* and a dative morpheme *-kaj* (either pronounced [kaj] with a low-central vowel or [kʌj] with a mid-central vowel). These morphemes are clearly cognate with Magar ergative/instrumental morpheme *-e~i* and dative morpheme *-ke*.

In **Chapter 7**, Schorer presents the morphology of Dura adjectives and adjectivals. Following Watters (2002: 111), Schorer makes the distinction between “common” adjectives and adjectivals, these latter formed using nominalization, a widespread process in TH languages (Grunow-Hårsta 2011). To derive adjectivals from verbs, Dura uses the nominalizer suffix *-u*. Amongst the “common” adjectives, Schorer (2016: 200) observes that their polysyllabic structure and velar initial consonant likely show the trace of an old nominalization, reflex of the PTH nominalizing prefix *\*gV-* reconstructed by Konnerth (2009).

**Chapter 8** is dedicated to the analysis of Dura verbal morphology. The chapter’s structure follows the verbal structure, presenting first prefixing morphology followed by the examination of the suffixes. The last sections discuss copula, periphrastic and modal constructions.

Dura features two derivational affixes that may be traced back to PTH: the causative/transitivizing prefix *ha-~hã-* (Schorer 2016: 207) and the reflexive/detransitivizing suffix *-si* (Schorer 2016: 234). A reflex of the PTH causative prefix *\*s-* (Wolfenden 1929: 46–53), the causative/transitivizing morpheme *ha-~hã-* is cognate with the Raji causative *ha-~hai-* (Krishan 2003: 251), as well as the Kham prefix *sə-* and Jingpho *šə-* (Watters 2002: 103; Matisoff 2003: 101). The reflexive/ditransitive suffix *-si* is cognate with the Kham reflexive/reciprocal/middle/detransitivizing morpheme *-si* (Watters 2002: 104) and the Magar detransitivizing morpheme *-cis* (Grunow-Hårsta 2008: 173–174). The two other Dura prefixes attested in the verbal structure are the negation morpheme *ma-* and the prohibitive morpheme *ta-* (Schorer 2016: 205–207).

In Dura, inflectional morphology does not include any argument indexation in the verb (Schorer 2016: 205), as is also the case in Tibetic, or more distant sub-groups of TH languages, such as Lolo-Burmese or Boro-Garo (DeLancey 2013: 63). This typological feature of Dura contrasts with that of the languages along with which Schorer classifies Dura, such as Chepang, Kham, Magar or Kiranti languages which present complex argument indexation patterns. Mainly suffixing, Dura inflectional morphology encodes tense, aspect, mood, evidentiality and mirativity.

As for the verbal suffixes, Schorer distinguishes non-finite vs. finite forms. Schorer (2016: 208) defines the non-finite forms as “verb forms (that) cannot form the nucleus of a main clause but only occur in a subordinated, embedded clause, or as a modifier.” Schorer’s structural definition does not seem to be sufficient to account for instance for the first non-finite form he introduces, the “infinitive” suffix *-i*. In the example he gives, reproduced in (1), the verb is clearly finite and constitutes the main or matrix clause. The subordinate clause is a conditional clause. The infinitive morpheme *-i* is described as a nominalizer suffixed to the verb, resulting in a citation form of the verb, such as *u-i* ‘to do.’ In example (1), the nominalized construction is finite, having developed the marking of near future aspect. Nominalizers developing into aspectual markers is a widespread typological feature of TH languages (Grunow-Hårsta, Ha Yap & Wrona 2011: 34), as illustrated in (2) or (3) with Magar. The finiteness of a verb may be better defined as well in terms of semantic features, constituting the event as the “primary foregrounding information,” as DeLancey describes it (DeLancey 2001: 90).

Dura (Schorer 2016: 209)

- |     |   |                                |             |                |
|-----|---|--------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| (1) | <i>hui-ge</i>                               | <i>ma-kya-c<sup>h</sup>ise</i> | <i>bihe</i> | <i>ma-u-i.</i> |
|     | 3SG-ERG                                     | NEG-ask-COND                   | marriage    | NEG-do-INF     |
|     | ‘If he does not ask, I will not marry him.’ |                                |             |                |



Western Magar (Pons data 2011-2017)

- (2) *nʌmʌs raha-nij ma-an-ke.*  
 rain arrive-COND NEG-go.down-NMLZ  
 ‘If it rains, (we will) not go.’

- (3) *ʌbʌ dʒja-ke.*  
 now eat-NMLZ  
 ‘Now, let’s eat / (we will eat).’

Amongst the other non-finite forms presented by Schorer, the nominalizer *-te* encodes complement clauses, when arguments of modal verbs. The progressive active participle *-ude*, the non-past active participle *u-le*, the perfective active participle *-ni*, and the perfect participle *-damu* are described as non-finite forms, nominalizers suffixed to the verb in auxiliary constructions using copulas. However, they encode aspectual functions, and thus are not non-finite. In fact, while analyzing these constructions as non-finite, later in the same chapter, Schorer (2016: 246–249) describes the morpheme *-ude* as a progressive aspect maker used in an auxiliary construction, or the form *-damu* used as a perfective marker. Schorer (2016: 209) suggests that the verb *u* ‘to do, make,’ is the source for the nominalizer *-u*, described as an innovation. This statement contradicts Schorer’s (2016: 192) prior acknowledgement of the large number of cognates attested for the nominalizer *-u*.

Auxiliary constructions are a widespread device that form finite constructions in TH languages (DeLancey 2010: 26) and Dura data are unsurprising in this regard. However, it would be clearer to describe these constructions in terms of synthetic vs. auxiliary constructions vs. complex constructions (complement and subordinate clauses), rather than finite vs. non-finite. As Schorer points out for the perfect marker *-mu* used with or without the presence of the non-past existential copula *po*, the morpheme may be the result of the grammaticalization of the verb *\*mu* ‘to stay, remain, exist’ used as an erstwhile auxiliary. It is cognate with, for instance, the verbs *mu* ‘to stay, remain, exist’ found in Chepang, *mu* ‘to sit’ in Magar, *mi-* ‘to sit, stay, be in location’ in Dumi and *mut* ‘to seat, sit, stay’ in Hayu; other cognate forms *mu* and *mo* are found throughout the Tamangic languages (Schorer 2016: 227).

Another construction is formed with a verb suffixed by a morpheme *-na* (Schorer 2016: 227) used to express a perfect or resultative aspect. This may likely be analyzed as the grammaticalization of an erstwhile auxiliary *\*nV*. Indeed, as noted by Schorer, the morpheme *-na* is cognate with the Chepang non-past morpheme *-na*. A reflex of *\*nV* is also present in Magar, where the form *n* is for instance fused with the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular suffix *-aŋ*, resulting in a morpheme *-naŋ*, carrying the meaning of 1<sup>st</sup> person singular imperfective, as in the progressive construction formed with the morpheme *mʌ<sup>2</sup>* in (4).<sup>3</sup>

Western Magar (Pons data 2011-2017)

- (4) *ŋa-e dʒja-mʌ-\*n-aŋ.*  
 1SG-ERG eat-PROG-\*AUX.IMPF-1SG  
 ‘I am eating.’

<sup>2</sup> The Magar progressive marker *-mʌ* developed from the verb *mu* ‘to sit.’

<sup>3</sup> I noted the reflex of the erstwhile auxiliary *\*nV* with an asterisk in both the transcription and gloss lines.

The last sections of the chapter are dedicated to discussing evidentiality, mirativity, copulas, modal constructions, and what Schorer (2016: 246) calls “periphrastic constructions,” i.e., auxiliary constructions formed with the use of copulas. These constructions feature aspectual markers such as those described as non-finite forms earlier in the same chapter.

The analysis of Dura verbal morphology and structure could have been improved if the definition of finiteness were not only structural but as well semantic, discussing the different grammaticalizations of nominalizing forms into verbal inflectional morphology, such as tense, aspect or modality markers. In doing so, Schorer (2016: 208–235) could have combined the discussion of verbal suffixes, presented as non-finite vs. finite forms, with the following discussions of copula, periphrastic and modal constructions formed with the same morphemes described as non-finite morphology.

**Chapter 9** presents the morphology of Dura adverbs and is organized in terms of semantic domains: temporal, locational, manner, and epistemic. **Chapter 10** describes minor word classes, as follows: interrogative pronouns, indefinite pronouns, demonstratives, quantifiers, pragmatic particles, and discourse coordinators.

Schorer dedicates **Chapter 11**, “Phylogenetic evidence,” to discussing the classification of Dura within TH. Prior classifications of Dura have largely relied on impressionistic observations of TH typological features: “Dura was classified by Bradley as West Bodish (i.e., a stock including Tibetan, Tamangic, Kaike and Ghale) or by Noonan as Tibetan because the language apparently looked like those languages” (Schorer 2016: 285).

Schorer (2016: 293) proposes to classify Dura along with Tandangre in a Proto-Dura sub-branch of a Greater Magaric clade that includes two other sub-branches, Magaric and Chepangic-Raji. Schorer’s classification model is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Greater Magaric clade by Schorer (2016)

Besides the absence of Newar, the Greater Magaric clade recalls the Central-Himalayan clade proposed by Bradley (1997) to which a Proto-Dura sub-branch has been added from the common ancestor. Schorer (2016: 292) observes that Dura appears to be more closely related to Kham. Schorer justifies his classification giving evidence from phonology, lexicon, and morpho-

syntax, comparing Dura with languages falling into two sub-groups of the higher Bodic (Shafer 1966) or Western (DeLancey 2013) level of TH languages, namely Himalayish and Tibetic.

In terms of phonology, Schorer (2016: 285) notes that the breathy nasals, laterals, and glides of Dura have cognates with breathy voiced resonants found in Kham, Magar, Chepang and Bhujel.

As for the lexicon, Schorer (2016: 285–287) compared Dura vocabulary with that of Chepang, Kham, Magar, Gurung and Tamang, based on both the original 100 words Swadesh list and the extended 275 words list. Schorer (2016: 286) shows that Dura has retained cognate vocabulary with Himalayish languages and presents 15 Proto-Dura lexical items that he compares with Magar, Kham, Chepang, Bantawa, Limbu, Yamphu, Bahing, and Athpare. To point out the similarities in form between Proto-Dura and Himalayish, Schorer takes as well into account the forms found in Tibetic. The comparison of the 15 lexical items does not provide sound correspondences nor a tentative reconstruction of Proto-Greater Magaric forms. Rather, it shows the similarities in form between Proto-Dura and the selected Himalayish languages. Schorer’s (2016: 286–287) comparative list of 15 Proto-Dura words with Himalayish and Tibetic is reproduced below in Table 2.

Lexeme	Proto-Dura	Himalayish/Kiranti	Tibetic
blood	* <i>hāyu</i>	Magar <i>hyu</i> Chepang <i>huy</i>	Tibetan <i>khrag</i> Tamang <i>ka:</i>
cold	* <i>c<sup>h</sup>iuy</i>	Magar <i>jung</i> Chepang <i>jhyung</i>	Tibetan <i>grajs</i> Tamang ‘ <i>khānpā</i>
house	* <i>kim</i>	Chepang <i>kim</i> Kham ‘ <i>zihm</i>	Tibetan <i>khyim</i> PTam <sup><i>B</i></sup> <i>dim</i>
water	* <i>ti</i>	Proto-Himalayish * <i>di</i>	Tibetan <i>chu</i> Gurung <i>kyuq</i>
hand	* <i>krut</i>	Chepang <i>krut</i> Magar <i>hut</i> Proto-Kham * <i>kut</i>	Tibetan <i>lag-pa</i> Gurung <i>yo</i> Chantyal <i>ya</i> Tamang <i>yā</i>
stomach	* <i>kyu</i>	Chamling <i>kui</i>	Tibetan <i>pho</i> PTam * <i>pho</i>
night	* <i>yāku</i>	Chepang <i>ya?diŋ</i> Bantawa <i>yak</i> ‘to spend the night’	Tibetan <i>nam</i> Manange <sup><i>2</i></sup> <i>muntse</i> Chantyal <i>mhuŋ</i>
sun	* <i>mamī</i>	Chepang <i>nyam</i> Limbu <i>nam</i> Yamphu <i>nam</i>	Chantyal <i>thūni</i> Tamang <sup><i>3</i></sup> <i>tini</i> Thakali <i>tihngi</i>
path	* <i>lām</i>	Magar <i>lam</i> Chepang <i>lyam</i>	Chantyal <i>khyam</i> Gurung <i>gyā:hq</i>
stone	* <i>luŋ</i>	Proto-Kham * <i>luŋ</i>	Thakali <i>yumpā</i> Tamang ‘ <i>yungpā</i>

		Magar <i>lhum</i> <sup>4</sup>	
to see	* <i>daŋ-</i>	Proto-Him. * <i>daŋ-</i> Magar <i>daŋ-</i>	Tibetan <i>mthong</i> PTam * <i>Abmraŋ-</i>
to come	* <i>rā-</i>	Magar <i>ra-</i> Bahing <i>rat-</i>	Tibetan <i>hoŋ</i> PTam * <i>kʰa-</i>
to go	* <i>kʰāC-</i>	Athpare <i>khat-</i> Magar <i>khyo-</i> ‘go out’	PTam * <i>Aɔŋ-</i> * <i>Bpʰet-</i>
to give	* <i>yʰā-</i>	Kham <i>ya-</i> Magar <i>ya-</i> <sup>5</sup>	Tibetan <i>sbyin</i> PTam * <i>pin-</i>
to say	* <i>ʰi-</i>	Chepang <i>dsyh-</i>	Chantyal <i>bhi-</i> Gurung <i>bi-</i>

Table 2. Proto-Dura forms in comparison

Schorer (2016: 287–288) further points out the differences between Dura and Bodish languages (Tibetic and West-Himalayish sub-groups in Noonan’s (2007) classification model), in terms of nominal and verbal morphology. Dura shows retention of PTH verbal prefixes that have not been preserved in Tibetic and West-Himalayish, such as the causative/transitivizing reflex of \**s-*. Schorer notes as well that Dura does not share any of the Bodish innovative morphology such as reflexes of the nominal ergative suffix \**-s* or that of the past verbal suffix \**-ci* found in Tamangic (Noonan 2007). The only innovative suffix that Dura shares with Bodish languages is a dative morpheme *-re* (Schorer 2016: 288), which could also be a borrowing, result of language contact.

Based on LaPolla’s (2012) Master List of 39 morphological features characteristic to TH languages, Schorer (Schorer 2016: 290) created Splits networks with SplitTrees 4.13.1 using uncorrected P-distances. One version of the Splits network, reproduced in Figure 2, is based on an unmodified version of LaPolla’s Master List, while the second Splits network, in Figure 3, represents an extended version of LaPolla’s Master List, with the addition of 13 features characteristic for Dura. The results in the first network show areal and typological similarities between Dura and Tamangic, such as the absence of verb argument indexation. By contrast, the second network confirms that Dura is more closely related to Kham, Magar and Chepang.

The classification of Dura along with Magar, Kham and Chepang, recalls that of Hale (1982) and Kansakar (1993) who first named the clade “Greater Magar”, and contrasts with the previous attempts of classifying Dura within Bodish (Bradley 1997; Noonan 2007; Nagila 2008). Schorer’s (2016: 293) classification of Dura is a “tentative” attempt that may “serve as a framework for further research;” indeed, as pointed out by Schorer, the analysis of shared retention and shared innovation of morphosyntactic features would provide strong additional evidence for the reconstruction of a Greater Magaric sub-branch.

<sup>4</sup> Transcribed *lhum* ‘stone’ in Schorer (2016: 287) but phonologically featuring a final velar nasal in Western Magar, *lhuŋ* (Grunow-Härsta 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Transcribed *ya-* ‘give’ in Schorer (2016: 287) but phonologically featuring a final glottal fricative in Western Magar, *yah-* (Grunow-Härsta 2008).

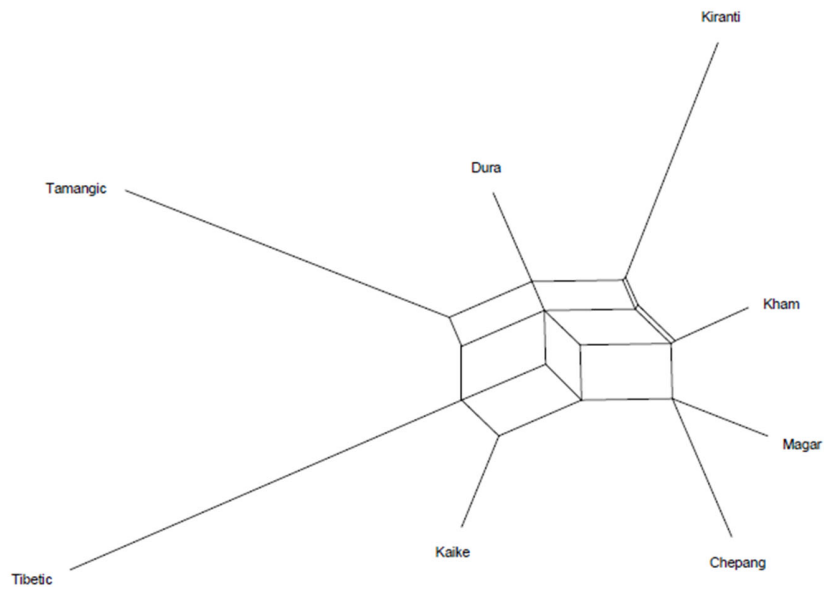


Figure 2. Morphological features network constructed with SplitTrees 4.13.1 based on LaPolla's Master list

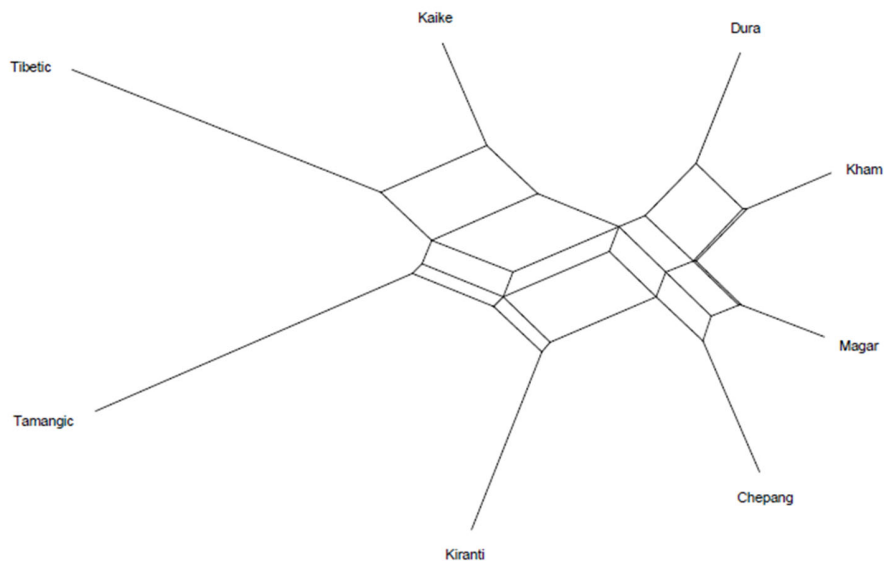


Figure 3. Extended morphological features network using 13 novel features

### **Evaluation**

*The Dura Language: Grammar and Phylogeny* by Schorer (2016) is the kind of masterpiece that linguists would like to see more often. Schorer's work has been that of a philologist, typologist, descriptivist, and historical linguist. What he has accomplished should be taken as a model for

approaching language description. Parallel to discussing functional explanations, his research has focused on historical analyses at each level of the language structures, resulting in an impressive source of historical data that will greatly benefit research in Trans-Himalayan linguistics and linguistic (historical) typology. Schorer put together over three decades of research on Dura and significantly strengthened the analysis of the language as well as that of its phylogenetic position amongst the languages of the Greater Magaric, or Central-Himalayan clade.

#### **About the reviewer**

Marie-Caroline Pons is a PhD candidate in Linguistics at the University of Oregon, under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Scott DeLancey. Her doctoral dissertation is a grammar of Chepang. Over the past decade, she has been working on the description and documentation of Magar, Chepang, Khamci, and Bhoto, Trans-Himalayan (TH) languages of the Greater Magaric or Central-Himalayan clade spoken in Nepal. Her approach to language description is functional and usage-based, in addition to historical, focusing on understanding language change, TH phylogeny, and Proto-Trans-Himalayan (PTH) reconstruction.

#### **ABBREVIATIONS**

1	1 <sup>st</sup> person	IMPF	imperfective
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	INF	infinitive
AUX	auxiliary	NEG	negative
COND	conditional	NMLZ	nominalizer
ERG	ergative	SG	singular

#### **SOURCES FOR THE DATA (IN TABLE 1 & TABLE 2)**

Athpare (Ebert 1997), Baram (Kansakar et al. 2014), Bhujel (Regmi 2007, 2012), Caodeng rGyalrong (Sun 2003), Chantyal (Noonan 1999), Chepang (Caughley 1982, 2000), Tibetan (Beyer 1992; Denwood 1999; DeLancey 2003), Newar (Genetti 2003; Hargreaves 2003; Genetti 2007; Hale & Shrestha 2006), Garo (Burling 2003), Gurung (Glover 1972, 1974) (Glover 1972, 1974), Kaike (Fisher 1971; Honda 2008; Regmi 2013), Kham (WaStters 2002; 2003, 2004), Limbu (Driem 1987), Magar (Grunow-Härsta 2008), Manange (Hildebrandt 2004), Nar-Phu (Noonan 2003b), Raji (Krishan 2001), Raji-Rawat (Rastogi 2012), Tamang (Mazaudon 2003; Poudel 2005), Thakali (Georg 1996), Tshangla (Andvik 2010), and other various Kiranti languages (Ebert 1994; Ebert 2003).

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