

## Barry Thorsness

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**From:** Rick Fisher [sunracer@cox.net]  
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**To:** sunracer@cox.net  
**Subject:** Mystical Mission Accomplished



*Sony A300 as live TV*

## ***Search for a "Lost Tribe of Tibetan Pygmies" Chapter 2***

### A. Project Background:

1. The Taron Tribe of Myanmar/Burma were scientifically and officially defined in the 1960s as the only tribe of Mongoloid pygmies. *Special Report Series No. 1: The Tarons in Burma, the results of a scientific expedition by [Burma Medical Research Society](#)*. Published in 1966, Burma Medical Research Institute (Rangoon), Contributions: Mya-Tu, Dr., Burma Medical Research Institute.
2. In the 1990s it was reported by numerous scientist, most notably Alan Rabinowitz, that the tribe was nearing extinction as there was only one member left "Dawi" by name, who was young and healthy enough to have a family. The tribe had succumbed to genetic diseases originating from inbreeding which is common in remote and isolate places like these rugged canyonlands of northern Myanmar/Burma (as reported by Rabinowitz). It was also reported during this time period that the Taron originated in Tibet where they had been driven out of by slave traders and conflicts with their Tibetan neighbors in the late 1800s.
3. The Taron are a part of a more numerous and also diminutive group known more widely as the Awang (by Christiaan Klieger 4/09) Rawang (by Alan Rabinowitz 2001) people. This is very similar to the situation in the Congo where defined pygmies are surrounded by a slightly taller tribe into which they sometimes marry.
4. In the 1990s Richard D. Fisher noticed, as the first American to explore the worlds deepest canyon in Tibet, some individual families who were exceptionally small. Fisher assumed that this was a result of poor diet, inadequate food and also the extreme canyon environment which worldwide favors small agile people.
5. In 2004 Fisher was invited to speak at a Texas Explores Club meeting where he met a fellow explorer Brenda Shaddox who specialized in Myanmar/Burma who related the story of Dawi and the Taron Pygmies.

6. After 5 years of research Fisher decided it was time to find out that if indeed there were Pygmies in the borderlands of Tibet/China/Myanmar.

B. Fisher's findings from 2 expeditions in April and May 2009 are:

1. That yes, today there is a specific and specialized tribe in the tri-border region now known as "Dulong" people from whom the Taron are descended. These people have for hundreds of years been recognized as a separate culture and especially small people. Prior to the 1950s they were known as the Qui pa ethnic group in China and Tibet. Formerly they had strife with their neighbors especially over the capture and enslavement of their women by larger and physically more powerful neighbors. This is one of the reasons given for the tradition of face tattooing among the Qui pa women up until the 1960s.
2. These people are perhaps best called T'rung as that is the name of their language group and the origin of the name "Taron". Today there are over 5,000 T'rung people living in the Dulongjiang Canyon which is 3,804 meters or 12,480 feet deep, more than twice as deep as the Grand Canyon in Arizona, USA.
3. Within this area there are 6 designated villages, 838 households and 5,600 adults and many healthy and lively children as well.
4. The canyon environment is diversified with many micro climates from subtropical rain forest to mountain tundra and there are a number of small glaciers remaining in the surrounding highest peaks. The forested regions is still 97% intact with old growth trees predominating from the frigid alpine fern forest down to the tropical jungle through which runs a pristine and sparkling sky blue river.
5. Historically the T'rung people have mostly kept themselves apart from the outside world as well as their nearest neighbors. Today they are peaceful and happy people who are increasingly educated, provided with basic health care, and are now as all native people worldwide, looking to and integrating with the outside world.
6. Many T'rung also are living the old ways which are fascinating with many unique traditions. (I will elaborate more later) One of the most interesting customs was discontinued in 1966 is face tattooing of women. As of 2003 there were 60 women remaining who have face tattoos averaging 71.9 years old with the oldest being 108 years old. I was able, with permission, to photograph 4-5 of these matrons which to my surprise were very beautiful as well as animated. One tattooed lady I hike along side of and photographed was carrying a burden basket heavier than 50 lbs. over 6 miles and she reported she was in her 80s.
7. Until the 1960s all T'rung pygmies had a nature based religion including bull sacrifice, praying for no flooding when they see fire in the sky and the god of good hunting. Today many T'rung are Christian yet retaining many of their beliefs on the forces of the natural world.
8. All that were interviewed do not report knowing of any twins, that they normally lived to 70-80 years old, and that they are agriculturalists thriving on corn, vegetables, cattle, a few goats and pigs, and many chickens.

C. Why are T'rung "undiscovered" pygmies?

1. The western scientist who defined the Taron as pygmies in Burma did not look to this ethnic group's historical roots in Tibet to see if there were others because Tibet and parts of western China were "closed areas" until the past decade. Fisher was the first American to enter these vast canyonlands starting in 1987.
2. While Chinese scientist and ethnologist have long recognized the Dulong or Qui-pa people as exceptionally physically small and indeed a unique separate culture they have never, until May 14, 2009, considered the issue that they might actually be pygmies.
3. So in brief, until May 2009 the culture of China and the west have not communicated had a dialog the issue of ethnic pygmies in the extreme northwestern province of Yunnan or Tibet.

Why is this discovery important?

1. Opening communications and dialog between the east and west is always an important goal for human understanding and knowledge.
2. The T'rung people are increasingly intermarrying with other ethnic groups. Right now the time is

critical to the human understanding of many aspects of shared human cultures, common as well as diverse histories and in this case the all issues relating to Pygmies and the quest for knowledge of human evolution.

3. At the moment a scientific debate is raging about the findings of "hobbit" bones on the island of Flores in Indonesia. These new findings about the T'rung Pygmies may be of importance to this ongoing debate in many ways.

4. Fishers proposal is that the canyonlands of Tibet/China/Myanmar are perhaps a hot spot of human evolution toward small nimble people, or on the other hand, a refuge for a human genetic line that will soon be lost in the mainstream of human "progress". Both may certainly be true at the same time.

5. Such "findings" are fascinating to humans worldwide and make for interesting and readable news.

6. The photography while being uniquely captivating and illustrative, is for the first time available to the IT (digital) universe.

D. On a personal note:

1. I find it very interesting what these people are actually called or defined as. I found that while "Pygmy" is scientifically accurate, that "hobbit" may apply to the inbred Taron group in Myanmar/Burma, that the best term that applies to my observations is "gelflings" after the imaginative "Dark Crystal" fantasy by Jim Henson.

Thank you for your interest so far! If you have further questions please see our previous work through April 2009 at:

[http://www.canyonsworldwide.com/tibet/lost\\_pygmy\\_tribe/index.htm](http://www.canyonsworldwide.com/tibet/lost_pygmy_tribe/index.htm) or [www.canyonsworldwide.org](http://www.canyonsworldwide.org)

Richard D. Fisher



*Entering a mystical portal and down into a hidden land.*





*Highland glacial meadows.*



*Down to the sky blue river.*



*Our first meeting with pygmy fishermen, of all things.*



*The beauty of Qiu-pa pygmy lifestyles and people.*



*Modern Qiu-pa pygmy village.*





*Pygmy children.*



*Two full blood Qiu-pa pygmies and one mixed-blood girls enter the modern world and are today increasingly well educated and provided with basic healthcare. One can see the dramatic difference in facial structure between the pygmies and more recent immigrants.*



*Ancient Qiu-pa pygmy lady, 80+ yrs still going strong.*





*The lost pygmies of Tibet and their hidden mystical canyon.*

I would like to give a special thanks to my colleagues:

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