

Nyunt Nyunt Win



**Location:** In 2015 a researcher found the Taron numbered just 179 people at the time. They inhabit a single village, Karoung, in the Putao District of Kachin State in the extreme north of Myanmar.<sup>3</sup> Their homeland of gushing rivers and snowcapped mountains is accessed by just one treacherous trail which is frequently damaged by earthquakes and floods, causing landslides that cut off Karoung from the outside world for extended periods. Immediately to their north is the only Tibetan community in Myanmar, who have enslaved the Taron for generations.<sup>4</sup> Approximately 11,000 Deng Darang people, relatives of the Taron, live in the Zayu area of southeast Tibet. Although they are only about 100 miles away, weeks of perilous trekking are required to complete the hazardous journey through terrain ranging from peaks over 16,400 feet (5,000 meters) high, to the floor of the Dulongjiang Canyon, which at 12,480 feet (3,804 meters) is more than twice as deep as the Grand Canyon in Arizona.

**Identity:** The name Taron comes from their original homeland in Tibet at the headwaters of the Taron River. The fate of this tribe is a heart-wrenching story, as they battle to avoid extinction due to genetic disease, retardation, and deformities caused by inbreeding.<sup>5</sup> In 1938 a British botanist unflatteringly described them as

“one of nature’s unsuccessful experiments,”<sup>6</sup> while in 1954 a Burmese colonel lamented, “If left to themselves, the whole Taron tribe will disappear in the next few generations.”<sup>7</sup> The Taron have been described as “East Asian pygmies,” with a study finding that the average male was 149 cm (4 feet 11 inches) tall and the average female stood at 140 cm (4’ 7”).

**Language:** The Taron language is related to Drung and Rawang, but it has developed separately due to their isolation and tragic history.<sup>8</sup> When researchers visited them in the 1960s, few Taron could speak their own language but used Taman instead.<sup>9</sup> Although the Taman still exist as a people, their language has itself become extinct in the past 50 years.<sup>10</sup>

**History:** The ancestors of the Taron are believed to have fled from Tibet about 200 years ago following defeat in a tribal war.<sup>11</sup> The last pure-blood Taron man, Dawi, explained that his people were often enslaved by other tribes because of their small stature and disabilities. They hid in caves for a time, which led to inbreeding and disease. He whispered, “Many babies just died for no reason.... When we have babies, they have small brains and small bodies.... There are few Taron left. Many die alone.”<sup>12</sup> After decades of pain and death, the Taron elders made the grim decision that their race should stop breeding and become extinct. In 2002, as the last remaining

Taron male of fertile age, Dawi, who was then 55 years old, decided to walk to Tibet, where he hoped to marry a Drung woman and so continue his race. He has not been heard from since.<sup>13</sup>

**Customs:** Taron homes consist of split bamboo walls with thatch roofs and are raised off the ground on stilts. Several families often occupy one house, with each family designated a separate area. Contact between the Taron and other tribes ceased after three powerful earthquakes between 1949 and 1951 severed all links to the outside world.<sup>14</sup>

**Religion:** Throughout their history the Taron practiced a form of primitive polytheism, living in deep fear of demons and the king of spirits, Ga Mu Hplang. After revival first swept through the Rawang tribe in the 1930s and 1940s, they shared Jesus Christ with the Taron. In 2015 a visitor wrote: “A church is situated in the middle of the village. All the Taron are Christians and they come to pray at the church every Sunday.... They also discuss their life’s experiences there.”<sup>15</sup>

**Christianity:** Although today most Taron people claim to be Christians, their faith appears to be nominal at best. The same visitor explained: “The influence of spirit worship has not yet faded away. The Taron...continue to take part in the traditional ceremonies of worship.”<sup>16</sup>



**Population**  
in Myanmar:  
185 (2024)

**Location:**  
Kachin State

**Language Family:**  
Tibeto-Burman

**Main Religion:**  
Christianity (70.0%)

**Christians:**  
130 (70.0%)

OVERVIEW

**Population:**  
185 in Myanmar  
(2024 Asia Harvest)  
179 (2015 Nyunt Nyunt Win)

**Other Countries:**  
11,000 in China  
Possibly in India<sup>1</sup>

**Other Names:**  
Dalong Darang, Deng Darang, Digaro, Duru, Quipa, Rami, Taraon, Tarong, Taying, Trone, Tr’ung

**Location:**  
Kachin State: Karoung village in Naung Mun Township, Putao District

**Language:**  
Drung [duu]

**Dialects:** 0

**Scripture:**  
None<sup>2</sup>

**Jesus film:**  
None

**Global Recordings:**  
Drung #6227,  
Digaro-Mishmi #2844

**People ID:** 22497

