



Tibet Oral History Project

“With my own eyes...” Elders Recount Their Experiences in Tibet

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California Non-Profit Reaches Milestone and Delivers Work to Library of Congress

Washington, DC (November 13, 2012) - The Tibet Oral History Project delivered to the Library of Congress a collection of 67 oral history interviews with elderly Tibetan refugees. This presentation was a milestone in the Project's 9-year effort to help preserve the unique culture and history of Tibet and share it with the world.

The Tibet Oral History Project documents the extraordinary lives of exiled Tibetan elders—the last generation to live in a free, unoccupied Tibet—and preserves memories of their homeland for future generations. This non-profit organization, based in the San Francisco Bay Area, has already videotaped the eyewitness accounts of 170 of the oldest surviving Tibetan elders.

“I have been waiting my whole life to tell what happened in Tibet,” said a relieved 82-year-old Sonam Gogyal at the end of his videotaped interview. Sonam Gogyal's interview will now be preserved indefinitely in the Library of Congress along with those of many other elderly Tibetans residing in a refugee camp in southern India as well as a few exiles in California.

When the Dalai Lama was forced to flee Tibet in 1959, an estimated 80,000 Tibetans followed their spiritual leader into exile in India where most now live. The Tibet Oral History Project (TOHP) documents the refugees' early peaceful life in Tibet and the devastating impact of the Chinese invasion and occupation on their families, livelihood, social structure and religious practices. Now at the ages of 70, 80 or 90, these refugees are the last generation who can describe the rich and ancient traditions of Tibet as an independent country.

Faye Straus, TOHP Board of Directors President and co-founder of the Firedoll Foundation, visited the Library of Congress' Asian Division to hand deliver the first set of interviews. Straus met with Dr. Dongfang Shao, Chief of the Asian Division, and Susan Meinheit, Tibetan and Mongolian Area Specialist for the Asian Division. The Project provided videotaped interviews on DVD and in electronic format as well as English transcripts of all the interviews. Meinheit offered to include TOHP's work in the Library's Tibetan collection after meeting with the Tibet Oral History Project's founder and executive director, Marcella Adamski, last year.

Straus was “honored to be able to present TOHP's first collection of interviews with Tibetan elders to the Asian Division of the Library of Congress. We are immensely grateful that the Library of Congress will act as the official archive for the entire collection. These oral histories will be an invaluable resource for scholars and for advocates for the preservation of Tibetan culture and identity.”

Also attending this important event were Mary Beth Markey, President, and Bhuchung K. Tsering, Vice President, of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), another non-profit organization which has been a longtime supporter of the Project. Contributions from ICT's Rowell Fund for Tibet as well as Straus' Firedoll Foundation have been instrumental in allowing the Project to videotape and transcribe these oral histories. “ICT is pleased to see that a grant from its Rowell Fund for Tibet is able to help shine a light on a section of Tibetan history, as the Tibetan people themselves experienced it,” said Bhuchung Tsering.

Interview transcripts, video clips and photos of the interviewees can be found on TOHP's website (www.TibetOralHistory.org) along with a 30-minute film, *With My Own Eyes*, which provides a moving description of Tibetan history and culture as told by the elders.

About the Tibet Oral History Project:

At the request of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Tibet Oral History Project was initiated in 2003 by Marcella Adamski, Ph.D to record the early life experiences of Tibetan elders, who were forced to flee their homeland in 1959 following the Chinese invasion and subsequent occupation. The Tibet Oral History Project is a non-profit organization committed to making the elders' oral history interviews accessible via the Internet in order to share with the world the culture and history of Tibet.

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