

# **Tibet Oral History Project**

**Interview #12C – Lobsang Khedup Dongretsang  
July 6, 2013**

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# TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #12C
2. Interviewee: Lobsang Khedup Dongretsang
3. Age: 74
4. Date of Birth: 1939
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Chamdul
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: July 6, 2013
10. Place of Interview: Tibetan Community Center of Portland, Oregon, USA
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 22 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Sonam Ngodup
14. Videographer: Jeddadiah Emanuel
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

### **Biographical Information:**

Lobsang Khedup Dongretsang was born in Chamdul in the Dayab region of Kham. His family worked as farmers and as a child he studied at home with a tutor since there were no schools then. He shares his experience about the appearance of the Chinese in his region and of his home being turned into the residence of the Chinese Governor General in Dayab.

Lobsang Khedup reveals how a junior Chinese officer warned his family about the danger of the Communist Government and advised the family to leave for Lhasa. In Lhasa Lobsang Khedup joined the Ratoe Monastery and studied Buddhist philosophy. His father was ultimately captured and imprisoned by the Chinese on a return trip to the village to prepare for escape to India.

Lobsang Khedup describes the arduous journey to India he and other Tibetans undertook crossing snowy mountains. While in India, he was requested by the Tibetan government-in-exile to join an academy which was training government workers. He then had a long tenure of service with the Tibetan exile administration in various capacities until 2005. He felt that all the government workers were extremely dedicated and felt fear when His Holiness the Dalai Lama frequently came to inspect their work.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Kham, childhood memories, education, first appearance of Chinese, escape experiences, Tibetan Government-in-exile, life as a refugee in India.

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## Interview #12C

**Interviewee: Lobsang Khedup Dongretsang**

**Age: 74, Sex: Male**

**Interviewer: Marcella Adamski**

**Interview Date: July 6, 2013**

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:14

**Interviewee #12C: Lobsang Khedup.**

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record your experiences, so that we can share your memories with many generations of Tibetans, the Chinese and the rest of the world. Your memories will help us to document the true history, culture and beliefs of the Tibetan people. Do you give your permission for the Tibet Oral History Project to use this interview?

**#12C: Yes.**

Q: Thank you for offering to share your story with us.

**#12C: [Nods]**

Q: During this interview if you wish to take a break or stop at any time, please let me know. If you do not wish to answer a question or talk about something, let me know.

**#12C: [Nods]**

Q: If this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

00:02:45

**#61D: [Shakes head] No.**

Q: We are honored to record your story and appreciate your participation in this project.

**#12C: [Nods]**

Q: Lobsang-*la*, could you please tell me when you were born? What year you were born and where was your birthplace?

**#12C: [I] was born in Dayab; Chamdul in Dayab. There are two [monasteries] in Dayab called Magon and Phugon. [I] am from Phugon.**

Q: What was the nearest temple or monastery to you?

**#12C: When I mentioned [my] birthplace as Dayab Phugon; that is a monastery. Phugon is one of the biggest monasteries of Dayab. Nearby is the birthplace of Gyalwa Jampa ‘Buddha Maitreya’ and...is housed in the Jokhang ‘Central Cathedral’ in Lhasa.**

Q: Lobsang-*la*, please tell us what did your family do for a livelihood in Kham?

**#12C: [They] were farmers.**

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about their village? Was it a large village or small? How many families lived there?

00:04:55

**#12C: It is one of the biggest towns of Dayab. In the family were my older sibling and I...**

Q: Were you the older one?

**#12C: Yes? The other was the older one and I am younger.**

Q: You are in the middle. Three brothers and you are in the middle?

**#12C: Two, two siblings.**

Q: There were two siblings?

**#12C: Yes.**

Q: A bigger one and...Were you the middle one?

**#12C: No.**

Q: No?

**#12C: I am the younger from the two.**

Q: Can you tell us a little bit what was it like to grow up in your village?

**#12C: Livelihood?**

Q: No. What was your experience growing up?

**#12C: I see. When I was small I learned the Tibetan script at home. Likewise, [I] played as a child and there were not any other responsibilities.**

Q: What other general experiences did [you] have?

00:06:42

**#12C: I was young then.**

Q: Was the school a private school?

**#12C: There were no schools, like private schools, in Dayab, Kham. The family invited teachers home and formed a school where me and other boys were taught. The family members did that.**

Q: Why do you think your father wanted or your parents wanted you to study?

**#12C: [I] suppose [they] thought about one's race and the future management of one's family as the reason for studying.**

00:07:57

**For the family...**

Q: Yes?

**#12C: For the management of your family, when the father is no more in the family the son must continue the management.**

Q: When did life change in your village? Was there any circumstances that made things different for you?

**#12C: As [I] mentioned earlier, [I] was a child studying at home when the Chinese, the Communists appeared suddenly. When the Communists arrived, then everything changed.**

Q: Lobsang-*la*, how many years or what years were you in school? From what age to what age?

**#12C: Starting at the age of 6 until around 10.**

Q: Why did you stop going to school when you were 10?

00:09:37

**#12C: At that time the Chinese arrived and due to the change, my parents and everyone fled towards Lhasa.**

Q: If you went to school until age 10, that would be about 1949. So you are 10 years old. What do you remember or see with your own eyes? Did the Chinese come to your village? Basically what did you see at age 10?

**#12C: About the coming of the Chinese?**

Q: Yes.

**#12C: The Chinese came to Dayab and the Chinese representative was called Hothaypay.**

Q: Yes?

**#12C: Hothaypay. Hothaypay. That was the name of the Chinese leader. Hothaypay.**

00:10:52

**The one called Hothaypay was appointed the Governor General of Dayab where I lived. The Chinese [official] had arrived along with Chinese troops and the leader stayed in our house.**

**Hothaypay is a Chinese title. [He] was the Chikyab ‘Governor General’ of Dayab.**

Q: What’s *chikyab*?

**#12C: The highest leader of the Chinese in Dayab.**

Q: And what happened?

**#12C: The leader stayed in our house. When [the Chinese] initially arrived, [they] treated us extremely well.**

**[They] gave treats to the children, showed nothing but teeth [smiled] to the people and said, “[We] have come to help the poor. [We] have come with the intention to help.”**

Q: And then what happened?

00:12:19

**#12C: And then he was promoted to the post of Governor General of Chamdo. Hobuta. The title was Hobuta. Earlier it was Hothaypay and now it became Hobuta. [He] was the supreme [leader] of Chamdo.**

**He used to come to our home to see my father sometimes. He would bring gifts like rosaries and brick tea for everyone. [Laughs]**

**And then things changed at around the time we left for Lhasa. Their faces changed and turned wrathful. Then we headed to Lhasa.**

Q: Whose attitude changed?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: The Chinese officers. The Chinese.

Q: But what made your family want to leave your family home in Kham to go to Lhasa?

**#12C: Knowing that things were not going to be good in the region after seeing the Chinese ways, [we] left for Lhasa, the central part with hope. It was to escape the difficulties.**

Q: You were how old, 10?

00:14:40

**#12C: I was probably 12.**

Q: Can you remember the Chinese in your house?

**#12C: [I] can remember. [I] remember the good things and the latter bad ways as well. [Laughs]**

Q: Can you tell me about when you were a little boy about 12? Were there bad things that happened or was that later?

**#12C: [They] had not yet done extremely bad things. When that leader was living with us, there was a subordinate. I was a child and he [subordinate official] secretly told me, "You must leave. Do not stay. You will suffer." [He] told me.**

Q: He warned you.

**#12C: Yes.**

Q: Do you remember what it felt like to have to pack up your belongings and move to Lhasa? What did that feel like or seem like to you?

00:16:25

**#12C: You grew up in your house; you were born there and you have loyalty to your home and region, anybody would, and having to leave that was not a happy one.**

Q: Do you remember how your mother felt and what she said and your father felt and...?

**#12C: [I] can remember.**

Q: What did they feel?

**#12C: Father and mother explained that [we] could not remain and had to leave. [Their] advice helped us a lot.**

Q: Did you think that you were going to be able to go back home some day?

**#12C: All of us had that very hope.**

Q: Do you have any idea what was the danger that the official was trying to warn you about? What did he say was going to happen that you should run away from?

00:18:24

**#12C: [He] did say. He said that earlier his family lived in very good conditions in China when he was a child. Then because of Communism he lost his freedom. [His] family was**

**destroyed and parents killed. Such bad deeds were perpetrated which was why we should leave, he said.**

Q: So this was actually a Chinese official that told you this, a younger official, correct?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: A junior officer.

Q: Was [he] a Chinese leader?

**#12C: Yes.**

Q: What did [you] say was [his] title?

**#12C: The second one, next to the highest.**

**I knew that he was being good to us at a high risk.**

Q: Do you have any remembrance of where he came from in China, like what city or province?

**#12C: [Shakes head to indicate no]**

Q: When you left your home, was it your family only or did you tell other families to come with you and how did you...?

00:20:38

**#12C: We came to Chamdo and at Chamdo hired three Chinese vehicles and in them...**

Q: No, no. Was it only your family or were there other Tibetan...?

**#12C: Yes, yes, I am coming to that. There were around 76 people that were with us from Chamdo.**

Q: That was very visible. You couldn't sneak away; you had to do it publicly. Did anybody try to stop you?

**#12C: If you left at that time the Chinese did not.**

Q: I'm curious. Why do you think that very high official didn't want you to leave? Do you think he had any plans for your father in the village?

**#12C: No idea.**

Q: Do you have memories of that journey and can you tell us what happened on the journey and how long it took?

**#12C: We were travelling in hired Chinese vehicles. They were the big army trucks. It was cold during the journey and so the children put on masks with holes for the eyes and mouth. It seemed very strange.**

Q: What did you take with you from your home?

00:23:08

**#12C: There was nothing particular to take from home but the necessities. However, as mentioned earlier, we were farmers and gave all the grains to the Chinese and in return received tea and *dhayen* ‘Chinese silver coins’ that were loaded on the trucks.**

Q: Did you have to pay for that truck ride to Lhasa?

**#12C: Yes.**

Q: Did you take any belongings from your family home?

**#12C: [We] might have brought some but I was a child and did not bother much. The parents took care of that.**

Q: Did you go all the way from your home to Lhasa by truck, all the way?

**#12C: Yes.**

Q: So this was before, just to get what year it would have been?

Q: You were about 12 years old.

**#12C: ’53?**

Q: 1953, okay. Had there been any violent attacks in the Kham area or Chamdo or anywhere before that? Any Chinese attacks?

00:25:29

**#12C: There were not.**

Q: And you were all the way by truck?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: All the way by truck.

Q: Do you have memories of when you arrived in Lhasa? What it was like for you to see that?

**#12C: We arrived in Lhasa on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the Tibetan New Year. Therefore since the Monlam ‘Great Prayer Festival’ of the three great monasteries was going on, vehicles were not allowed to ply between the place where the trucks halted and our [rented?] home. Therefore, all the people from Dayab that were in Lhasa helped carry our things.**

Q: Tell us about Lhasa. How long did you live in Lhasa?

**#12C: There was the office of the Dayab Ladang ‘grand lama’s residence’ in Lhasa. So my father worked in the office and after three months, I was sent to become a monk at Ratoe [Monastery].**

[Interpreter interprets as: In Lhasa there was a Dayab Monastery, like a branch office there and he stayed there.]

**#12C: Father worked there.**

[Interpreter continues: My dad worked there and after three months I became a monk there.]

Q: Oh, really!

**#12C: [Laughs]**

Q: You said there was a what kind of monastery?

**#12C: Ratoe.**

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Dayab.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Dayab.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes.

[Interviewer to interpreter: D...how do you spell it?

Q: Is it Dayab?

**#12C: Where?**

Q: What’s the name of the monastery?

**#12C: Where I [joined as a monk] in Lhasa?**

Q: Yes, in Lhasa.

00:27:51

**#12C: Ratoe. Ratoe Monastery is currently in Mundgod [Karnataka, India]. It is in Mundgod presently. Ratoe Monastery.**

Q: What sect is that?

**#12C: Gelug.**

Q: Why did you become a monk?

**#12C: The parents made me become a monk.**

Q: Can you tell us about the experience for you to be a young monk?

**#12C: [I] mainly studied the Shungkapoenga ‘Five great treatises of Mahayana Buddhist Philosophy’ as a monk.**

Q: Why do you think your parents wanted you to be in the monastery?

00:29:08

**#12C: In my opinion it is perhaps because [my parents thought] things were not going to turn out well and so to study the dharma before it happened and that practicing the dharma would be the most beneficial thing for the child.**

Q: What did you feel about going to the monastery?

**#12C: [I] did not feel anything else except going [to the monastery] as per the wishes of the parents. However, it has been of great benefit to me. Because had [I] not become a monk, I would have returned to Dayab and would not have been able to escape had [I] returned to Dayab. Because of becoming a monk, I could escape to India.**

Q: Because [you] became a monk...?

**#12C: ...could escape to India. Had [I] gone back home, it would not have been possible.**

Q: How long were you a monk in that monastery?

**#12C: Until '59.**

Q: So eight years.

**#12C: Yes.**

Q: Did it help you to be a monk that your father had already sent you to school and you were studying? Did that help?

00:31:08

**#12C: It was of great help. You cannot study the dharma without first learning the Tibetan script well.**

Q: I did want to ask you when you were in school back home as a little boy, what classes were you taking? What were you learning?

**#12C: [I was learning] to read and write.**

Q: Were there no mathematics or something?

**#12C: No.**

Q: In the monasteries, did they just teach reading Tibetan or did they teach reading and writing Tibetan?

**#12C: Not in the monastery [but] in school.**

Q: No, [I mean] in the monastery?

00:32:20

**#12C: It is the dharma [that is taught] in the monastery.**

Q: Both writing and reading?

**#12C: It is not writing and reading, only reading.**

Q: Just reading?

**#12C: Yes, learning the texts [from a teacher], reading and memorizing it. [I] studied the five great treatises of Mahayana Buddhist Philosophy.**

Q: Were both reading and writing taught?

**#12C: Yes.**

Q: When does your life change? First of all, what's happening to your family? You are a monk; you have an older brother and two parents. What are they doing in Lhasa? What happens to them?

**#12C: Just before we left for Tibet [Lhasa], the Chinese said that my older brother had to go to Beijing to study, and just when he was about to leave...**

[Interpreter interrupts to interpret as: My elder brother before coming to Lhasa, the Chinese sent him to somewhere in China for studies.]

**#12C: ...[he] passed away.**

**[He] passed away and could not leave.**

[Interpreter interprets as: And after that we never met.]

Q: And your parents?

00:33:38

**#12C: As I mentioned earlier I was saved on account of being a monk. Otherwise, my father planned to escape to India and went back to Dayab where the Chinese imprisoned [him].**

Q: And mother?

**#12C: [Father] was in prison until '64. [He] had passed away in the year '68. Mother came with me to India.**

Q: Lot of loss. Did your brother go to China before you left your town? Before you went to Lhasa, was he sent to China?

**#12C: The Chinese said that [he] had to go to China.**

Q: Yes?

**#12C: [The Chinese] said that [he] had to go to China to study. [He] could not go as [he] passed away. I was in Kham then. That's before [I] left.**

[Interpreter interprets as: Before he left.]

Q: Did your family have a choice? First of all, how old was he and then did your family have a choice or was he compelled to go by the Chinese?

00:35:32

**#12C: For studies to China?**

Q: Yes.

**#12C: [The Chinese] compelled. [He] was 25 years old.**

Q: How old was [he]?

**#12C: [He] was 25 years old.**

Q: 25? So he was a lot older than you. You are 12.

**#12C: Yes.**

Q: Was he told why they were sending him and what they hoped he would do after the studies?

**#12C: It was ordered that all the youths of around the age of 25 hailing from all the rich families in Dayab must leave to train in Chinese Communism. There was no choice.**

Q: You said you never heard from your brother again?

**#12C: No. [He] passed away, passed away. Died.**

Q: Heard?

**#12: Passed away.**

Q: In China?

**#12C: [Silent]**

Q: Was it in China?

**#12C: Not in China. [Smiles]**

Q: [He] didn't pass away in China?

**#12C: Not in China.**

Q: Passed away in Tibet? Did [he] return to Tibet and pass away?

00:37:44

**#12C: [Laughs] No, there is a confusion. [He] was told to go to China at the age of 25. There was no choice and because of that, [he] passed away before leaving, before leaving for China.**

Q: [He] didn't return to Tibet?

**#12C: No, [he passed away] before leaving for China.**

Q: [He] passed away before leaving for China?

**#12C: Yes, that is right.**

Q: I see. [He] didn't [go] to China?

**#12C: [He] never left.**

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Oh, he never left Kham to study in...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: The brother.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: The brother.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Never left Kham

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Never left Kham. And he passed away in Kham.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: I thought...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: I thought, yeah...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: I thought you said [he] was sent to study in China, wasn't it?

00:38:34

**#12C: [He] was told that [he] had to go to China to study. All the others left but he passed away just as he was going to go. Perhaps it was due to stress on account of that.**

Q: Killed himself?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes. No, he didn't.

Q: He didn't commit suicide?

**#12C: No, no.**

Q: Was he sick of worry?

**#12C: Perhaps it was what we call today as heart attack.**

Q: He didn't want to go?

**#12C: Not at all.**

Q: I could understand why your family wanted to get you out of Kham and into Lhasa.

**#12C: [Nods]**

Q: I want to hear about the father. Just hear it briefly and then I want to...He went back. Why did he go back to his village? What was he hoping to do and who arrested him?

00:40:18

**#12C: As I mentioned earlier, [he] went to Dayab to make preparations for our journey. One needs facilities in order to escape to India. [He] planned to bring back whatever amenities we possessed there.**

Q: The Chinese arrested him and where did they imprison him?

**#12C: Chamdo. Prison in Chamdo.**

Q: Why was he arrested?

**#12C: [He] was arrested because of having been a leader of the region earlier.**

Q: Did you get like a letter from him? How did you and your mother know that he was in prison?

**#12C: Many of those that were imprisoned along with father escaped to India later. [They are still in India and some living abroad. They [brought the news].**

Q: So if we go back to your story, you're in the monastery and your mother is living in Lhasa and the Chinese invade Lhasa, attack Lhasa. What do you decide to do?

00:42:31

**#12C: After the attack and after His Holiness the Dalai Lama fled, we escaped.**

Q: You were about 20 years old?

**#12C: Nineteen years.**

Q: Does your mother join you? Are you with other people?

**#12C: There was mother and mother's sibling's child [to interpreter] you know Dorjee-la, who is the Prime Minister, and then my father's...**

Q: Lobsang-la, can you please tell us how your story continues when you leave Lhasa? Where do you go and tell us how your life develops from there?

**#12C: We fled from Ratoe [Monastery]. And then reached Lhoka. There is [a mountain pass] called Mangola at the border between India and Tibet. Mangola. It is a snowy mountain [joins palms to indicate a steep mountain] and terrifying.**

00:44:32

**People walked in a single file and just before stepping, mats that covered animals like horses were spread over the snow and then the animals led across. That is how the pass had to be crossed. It was very dangerous and many people and animals were lost in the snow.**

**Narrating all such [incidents] would take a lot of time. I will put it in a gist. When we left from the border of Tibet, our family drove 18 horses and mules. However, when we reached Mon Tawang [Arunachal Pradesh, India], there was only one mule left; the rest fell in the ravines.**

Q: How many people started and how many survived?

00:46:11

**#12C: There were around 15 members of my family. In general there were many thousands of people.**

Q: [You] wouldn't know how many passed away?

**#12C: [Shakes head in indicate no]**

**And then we reached Missamari [Assam].**

Q: Did all your 15 family members survive?

**#12C: All 15 family members survived.**

Q: So how does your life...what happens to you next when you get into India?

**#12C: We reached Missamari in India where the Indian Government had constructed bamboo houses. Each huge construction housed a hundred people. Everybody had to sleep like this [indicates sleeping side by side]. [Laughs] It was extremely hot. So the Indian Government provided white *kurta* and *pyjama* [loose-fitting Indian style shirt and pants], as one could not wear any other attire.**

00:48:07

**Many people died and many people became mentally sick.**

Q: Heat and exhaustion?

**#12C: The deaths were on account of the intense heat. And the grief and worry over losing their country turned [them] crazy and [they] died.**

Q: Lobsang-*la*, how does your story continue? Where do you go next?

**#12C: And then we went to Buxar [West Bengal], on the border of Bhutan and India, where Nehru and Gandhi were imprisoned long ago.**

**There His Holiness the Dalai Lama established [a center] for 1,500 monks to preserve the Tibetan Buddhist dharma and culture that the Chinese had destroyed.**

Q: Was a monastery constructed there?

**#12C: [The monks] were to live in the prison. They were 1,500 monks of the three great monasteries [Sera, Drepung and Gaden Monasteries] and were to study and preserve the dharma.**

**It was destroyed in Tibet and now must be revived.**

Q: A prison?

00:49:36

**#12C: Yes, our living quarters were the prison, the prison where Nehru and Gandhi were interned during the time of the British.**

Q: And do you stay a monk for how long?

**#12C: [I] was at Buxar and then received a letter from the [Tibetan] Government in Dharamsala. There was an officer in charge that called me and said, “The Government has called you to join the Staff Academy, so you have to leave tomorrow.”**

**It is like an academy.**

Q: Yes?

**#12C: It is like an academy, an academy to train office workers by the government.**

Q: And then?

**#12C: And then [I] went to Dharamsala.**

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Tell him to continue the story.

**#12C: It was 1963. [I] trained in the government academy for over a year. After a year, the Education Department said that they were short of teachers in the schools and we were temporarily hired from the Staff Academy and deputed as teachers to Dalhousie [Himachal Pradesh].**

00:51:54

**[I] was in Dalhousie for around three years.**

Q: Did you stay there as a teacher?

**#12C: Yes. And then [I] moved back to Dharamsala and worked for the Religious Department.**

Q: For how many years?

**#12C: Perhaps over seven years.**

Q: Yes?

**#12C: Over seven years.**

**And then...and then what did [I] do? [Laughs] And then as the Secretary for the Parliament. [I] was the secretary for around three years.**

Q: In what capacity?

**#12C: Secretary.**

Q: For how many years?

**#12C: For around three years.**

**And then as Assistant Secretary in the Cabinet for around two years. Then [I] was sent as the Settlement Officer in Bir because there was some trouble between the local people of Bir and the Tibetan Government. I was sent there to solve this problem. [Laughs]**

Q: Did you solve it?

00:54:05

**#12C: Solved it.**

Q: At this point Lobsang-*la*, you are a government official. Have you been elected or appointed in this position?

**#12C: Appointed by the government.**

Q: Can you tell us a little bit during these years? We're talking about 19...What are we talking about? The 1960s, '70s? 1960s?

**#12C: It was 1963 when [I] worked for the government.**

Q: You're starting in 1963?

**#12C: Yes.**

Q: What is the feeling or the tone of the Tibetan Government in those years? What is the...Are people excited or discouraged? Are they frightened? What is the atmosphere like in the heart, in people's hearts?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: At that time?

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Yeah.

**#12C: The people knew that we were fighting for the country and people of Tibet with truth and that one day we would win and surely be able to return to Tibet. [They] were waiting for it.**

Q: Are people excited about trying to develop a government and rule their country outside of Tibet, they have to be there anyhow?

00:57:35

**#12C: Yes, there was [enthusiasm], very great.**

Q: Was there any country that was helping the Tibetans establish a government in exile?

**#12C: At that time it was only India that was helping [the Tibetans] form a government. There were many foreign aid organizations that were giving help, but none that officially**

**did it through governments. However, India was cautious and earlier we were not allowed to say “department.”**

Q: Were there any...With so much new...and so many new people, were there conflicts going on among the people about how to run the government?

**#12C: Nobody voiced that the formation of the government was not right. However, there were little internal misunderstandings. However, it would be nice to put this briefly; at that time 500,000 Indian *rupees* were sufficient to meet all the expenditure of the Tibetan Government’s staff and all its various departments. Take our salary for instance, which was 52.50 Indian *rupees* a month. [Laughs]**

[Interpreter interprets last sentence as: My salary was about a dollar a month.]

**#12C: [Laughs]**

Q: One US dollar?

Interpreter to interviewer: Yes.

Q: Were you still a monk?

01:00:49

**#12C: In the beginning when I arrived there, [I] was a monk. Not just a monk, but I had also attended *soljong* ‘assembly for monks to confess any lapse and reiterate their vows’ in the presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. [Laughs]**

Q: What was His Holiness like in those days?

[Interpreter interprets as: What did His Holiness think at that time?]

**#12C: Thought of me or in general?**

Q: What did you think?

**#12C: Me?**

Q: Yes.

**#12C: [Silent]**

Q: What were His Holiness thoughts then?

**#12C: I would not be able to say what [His Holiness’] thoughts were. However, at that time, unlike these days, His Holiness visited all the offices every few days and saw how each staff member worked. [Laughs]**

Q: The boss came to the office to ask, “How are you? How is the Department?” and everything?

**#12C: Yes, [His Holiness] looked at everything.**

Q: How did people react to have their spiritual teacher become so comfortable in ordinary workplace?

01:02:47

**#12C: There was fear and you did your work with great care and deemed [it] extremely important. As mentioned earlier, at that time even during lunch and tea breaks [staff members] thought nothing but about the Tibetan society and independence.**

Q: Do you have any favorite memories of His Holiness dropping by the office in those days? Any sweet...?

**#12C: [I] remember.**

Q: What happened?

**#12C: When I was at work and [His Holiness] came and asked, “What are you doing?” and not just the questions but [I] had to show [His Holiness] what I had written and there was great fear.**

**I will put it briefly. At that time [we] had to be very careful about the expenditures.**

Q: Yes?

01:04:53

**#12C: [We] had to be extremely careful about the expenditures. The envelopes of the letters that had come from people and other offices must be carefully cut open with a pair of scissors and stocked. Later [the envelope] must be reused to send out letters. Even an envelope must be used over and over again.**

Q: I understand you would be a little nervous when His Holiness came, but what kind of a boss was he when he came into the office? Was he friendly or strict or angry? What kind of a boss?

**#12C: Oh, [His Holiness] was gentle. You had fear but deep down you felt, “We are incredibly fortunate to be able to see His Holiness so often.” You were happy.**

Q: Lobsang-*la*, how long did you stay a monk?

**#12C: [I] mentioned 1963 earlier, right?**

Q: Yes.

**#12C: [I] lost monkhood around ‘64. [Laughs]**

[Interpreter interprets as: '68 he had to give up.]

**#12C: Not '68.**

Q: When was it?

**#12C: It was '64.**

Q: '68?

**#12C: [I] mentioned '63 earlier, right?**

Q: [You] gave up in '68?

**#12C: No. [I] began as a staff member in 1963, right?**

Q: Yes.

**#12C: Then around '64 [I] lost monkhood, a year later.**

[Interpreter interprets as: '68.]

**#12C: [Shakes head to indicate no] '64.**

Q: '68?

**#12C: 1964.**

Q: What happened in your life after that?

**#12C: Then the experience was of bringing up children [laughs] and looking after them. [I] gained such experiences. [Laughs]**

Q: And how many kids did you have?

01:08:46

**#12C: Five.**

Q: What was the highest Tibetan Government office that you ever held in the new Tibetan Government? What was the highest office?

**#12C: [I] mentioned earlier that in the beginning [I] worked in the Religious Department. Later [I] was the Secretary of the Religious Department. After retirement and immigrating to the United States, [I] was recalled in 2002 and until 2005 was appointed the Justice Commissioner.**

Q: So [you] served until the Religious...?

**#12C: Yes?**

Q: When was the last...?

**#12C: Until 2005.**

Q: Until 2005? What position were [you] holding?

**#12C: Justice Commissioner. The government set up the Justice System.**

Q: Justice System?

**#12C: Yes.**

Q: Justice.

**#12C: Justice. His Holiness the Dalai Lama made the appointment.**

Q: The Department of Justice?

**#12C: That is right.**

Q: Your last post was Department of Justice? Were you the Chief Justice?

01:10:25

**#12C: There were three Justice Commissioners and [I] was one among them, not the Chief Justice.**

Q: What were the duties in that job?

**#12C: The duty was to pass a fair judgment whenever cases were brought up.**

Q: Like a legal case or a criminal case?

**#12C: Criminal means grave offences, right? We cannot take up criminal cases.**

Q: Criminal cases are thefts and murders.

**#12C: [We] cannot handle such cases. It is general cases, right? It could be like family matters and such. For instance, the most important aspect of our government's Justice System that His Holiness the Dalai Lama considers is to solve any cases pertaining to exploitation of the poor.**

Q: Were you given training and learning how to be a good justice?

01:11:45

**#12C: After reaching there [I] had to study to be able to work according to the many books of rules and regulations.**

Q: What would be just a sample of typical kinds of cases that would come before you?

**#12C: The most common were...what to say...For instance, the new and old *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] case.**

Q: *Chushi Gangdrug*?

**#12C: Yes. The *Chushi Gangdrug* split into two. So, like the case pertaining to the new and old. There were many cases like this.**

**Then there were cases wherein some families exploit other families by unfairly usurping properties.**

Q: Were these rules that you had with the Tibetan Government before the Chinese invaded the country and you were just continuing the same rules?

01:13:45

**#12C: There used to be courts in Tibet. There were courts in Tibet.**

Q: Was there ever any, in terms of punishment for crimes starting at the hardest, was there ever capital punishment in Tibet for serious crimes?

[Interpreter interprets as: If there were serious crimes like murder, was there punishment for such in Tibet?]

**#12C: There was in Tibet.**

Q: What kind of crime?

[Interpreter interprets as: What was the punishment for murder?]

**#12C: The punishment for murder could be life imprisonment but there was no capital punishment.**

Q: Is there anything else about your work that you think would be interesting to share with people in years to come?

**#12C: How?**

Q: For instance you have served the Tibetan Government for many years...

**#12C: Yes.**

Q: If you desire, please talk about your experience of working for the Tibetan government with the people.

01:15:47

**#12C: I see. I do not have anything else to say except that the most important responsibility is to work for the cause of your people in accordance to the guidance shown by our leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama...**

**...And to be honest and work for the community even at the cost of personal sacrifices. In doing so, I can say from my experience that nothing untoward or any suffering will befall you in your life. It is of great benefit for you and likewise in the future, if those with [such responsibilities] can do the same, [I] think that will be very good.**

Q: What are your hopes and wishes for Tibet?

**#12C: My hope is that we should [follow] the Middle Path in accordance with the guidelines shown by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I have faith that this will lead to success.**

Q: Could you tell us, briefly describe what you mean by the Middle Path?

01:18:40

**#12C: The Middle Path is the condition for the Tibetan people to live under the Chinese; the Tibetan people should have the right to [practice] religion, culture and tradition, and have freedom. [His Holiness] is advocating such a condition and has said that having it accepted is good.**

Q: If this was an opportunity for you to talk to the people of China, what would you like to tell them, the people of China?

**#12C: I, in my personal capacity, have nothing against the people of China because the people have undergone the same suffering that we have been through. Our sufferings have been similar. Therefore, just like our problems need to be resolved, I feel theirs too should be resolved. [I] will tell them the same thing if given the opportunity. [I] have that very hope.**

**I am not simply saying that the Chinese people have the same difficulties like us. [I] mentioned earlier about the subordinate Chinese leader in Dayab who told me [his story] and [I] understood then.**

Q: He said he too suffered and he didn't want you to suffer.

**#12C: Yes, exactly.**

Q: Thank you very much, Lobsang-*la*.

01:21:41

**#12: I would like to express heartfelt thank you for your enthusiasm in doing this difficult work for the benefit of the future generation of Tibetans in accordance with the wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. [Joins palms]**

END OF INTERVIEW