

# **Tibet Oral History Project**

Interview #16N – Yeshe Dolma  
April 11, 2015

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# TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #16N
2. Interviewee: Yeshi Dolma
3. Age: 85
4. Date of Birth: 1930
5. Sex: Female
6. Birthplace: Layay Thanka, Kongpo
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: April 11, 2015
10. Place of Interview: Swayambhu Old Age Home, Kathmandu, Nepal
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 09 min
12. Interviewer: Katharine Davies Samway
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Dhiraj Kafle
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

### **Biographical Information:**

Yeshi Dolma was born in Layay Thanka in Powo District. She talks about her family that engaged in farming and raised animals as well. Her father had the added responsibility of delivering letters to Lhasa for the Tibetan Government. As a young child Yeshi Dolma herded and milked the animals and began working in the fields around age 14. She describes the system of taxation, which required grains paid to the district authority and butter tax to the monastery.

Yeshi Dolma narrates how her life changed once the Chinese appeared. She was sent to construct roads and houses for the Chinese who paid her with *dhayen* 'Chinese silver coins.' All the villagers were forced to collect human excrement and apply as manure in the vegetable fields for the Chinese. The Chinese imprisoned or killed the rich and the influential people of the village, including Yeshi Dolma's husband who was put in a forced labor camp for 15 days. Yeshi Dolma also tells the story of two girls from her village that Chinese soldiers married and took to China.

Yeshi Dolma describes her experience of escaping from the Chinese a day after her husband's release from prison. She relates the two incidents when Chinese sent neighbors to persuade them to come back, but the determined family continued their trek and reached India after one month. The hot weather in Assam caused the death of five of Yeshi Dolma's family members in exile.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Utsang, childhood memories, taxes, invasion by Chinese army, forced labor, imprisonment, escape experiences, life as a refugee in India.

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## Interview #16N

**Interviewee: Yeshi Dolma**

**Age: 85, Sex: Female**

**Interviewer: Katharine Davies Samway**

**Interview Date: April 11, 2015**

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:10

**Interviewee #16N: Yeshi Dolma.**

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama has 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 permission for the Tibet Oral History Project to use this interview?

**#16N: Yes, you can. I am old and will pass away. So...**

Q: That's why it's important to hear your story.

**#16N: Yes.**

Q: Thank you. During the interview if you need to take a break or want to stop at any time, please let us know.

**#16N: Okay.**

Q: If there is a question you do not want to answer or there's something you don't want to talk about, please let us know.

**#16N: Okay. I am old and will pass away, but [I] can talk about [my] hometown.**

Q: We're honored to record your story. If this interview were to be shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

00:02:30

**#16N: There will not be problems because I will be gone as I am old.**

Q: Okay, thank you. We appreciate your participation in the project.

**#16N: Okay. [Joins palms]**

Q: So *ama-la* ‘respectful term for mother,’ you are 85 years of age, right?

**#16N: Yes, 85.**

Q: Where did you grow up? Where were you born and where did you grow up?

**#16N: The birthplace is called Layay Thanka.**

Q: Is that the same place [you] grew up?

**#16N: Yes.**

Q: How far is Layay Thanka from Lhasa?

**#16N: It took a person one month on foot to reach Lhasa and 15 days on horse or mule. There were no vehicles in those days. When my father went to deliver letters [he] reached Lhasa in 15 days or a month.**

Q: Did it take 15 days when father went to deliver letters?

**#16N: When father went to deliver letters it took a month. It took 15 days riding horses and mules and a month on foot.**

Q: Was father on foot?

**#16N: [He] went walking.**

Q: Why did he go to Lhasa?

00:04:25

**#16N: [Father] was sent to Lhasa by the Tibetan Government to deliver letters.**

Q: Who sent him to deliver letters?

**#16N: Our Powo district administrator.**

Q: Did your father work for the district administrator of Powo?

**#16N: We came under the jurisdiction of Powo District. We had to pay land tax to them and butter and such had to be offered to Tsurphutsang every year.**

Q: To whom did [you] make the butter offering?

**#16N: The butter was offered to Tsurphutsang, the Karmapa.**

Q: To whom did you pay the land tax?

**#16N: The land tax was paid to the Powo District.**

Q: Do you mean Tsurphu Monastery?

**#16N: Yes, the butter was offered to Tsurphu Monastery.**

Q: Could you please tell us what the land tax was?

**#16N: Whatever the produce from the fields, one must pay to the Powo District. The produce from the animals must be offered to the Tsurphutsang.**

Q: How much was it that you had to give each year?

00:06:55

**#16N: Whatever the produce from the animals, it must be transported on horses and mules and offered. The grains must be given to the Powo District.**

Q: How much was it?

**#16N: Grain [measurement] in Tibet is called *bo*. Here it is *gyama* ‘half a kilogram’ while we [used] *bo*. One must pay around six *gyama*.**

Q: One *bo* is six *gyama*, right?

**#16N: Yes.**

Q: How many *bo* must be offered?

**#16N: One must offer around 800 *bo*. The district [authority] came to collect once a year.**

Q: That sounds like a lot of grain. Was it considered a lot of grain when you grew up?

**#16N: Yes, one must offer all the produce.**

Q: Was that a lot of tax?

**#16N: The tax was a lot.**

Q: Who decided that...who decided that you had to pay the tax?

**#16N: There was the Powo district administration that came to collect each year.**

Q: Did the district administrator come?

00:09:13

**#16N: The district administrator arrived. Should you not have you must borrow and pay.**

Q: So the *bo*, the tax that you paid, did this leave you with enough food for your family?

**#16N: There was a little [left]. There were other [crops] like buckwheat and such. Grains must be paid but there were other harvests for consumption like peas and buckwheat.**

Q: Did you have grains left after paying taxes?

**#16N: There was a little left.**

Q: What did you get in return for paying this tax?

**#16N: One got nothing from the government.**

Q: What did you get from the district administration?

**#16N: One did not get anything. One got nothing. Except for serving [the authority], one got nothing in return.**

Q: Did you own your land?

**#16N: Yes, you worked in the fields every day.**

Q: Was the land yours?

**#16N: Yes, the land was yours to till as much as you can.**

Q: Did your parents, your father and mother ever complain about this tax?

00:11:48

**#16N: Mother passed away when I could just about walk. Father was living in Tibet but he has passed away. [He] did not complain. We worked hard in the fields to earn a living.**

Q: You mean [father] didn't complain?

**#16N: [He] did not complain.**

Q: How old were you when you started working on your farm?

**#16N: I was around 15...14 when [I] started working in the fields. We owned animals and since a young age I used to herd the animals and milk them at the nomadic site. When old enough to do fieldwork at around the age of 14-15, [I] started working in the fields.**

Q: Could you tell us about when you were younger and when you herded and milked the animals? What did you do?

**#16N: The older ones went out to graze the animals and to milk them in the hills while I made fire, boiled tea and did such in the nomadic home. There were pigs that [I] fed.**

Q: So you took the pigs up with you to the grasslands?

00:14:11

**#16N: Yes, [we] took them to the nomadic site and fed whey to the pigs. After removing the butter [the whey] was fed to the pigs.**

Q: About how many animals, what kinds of animals did you have?

**#16N: [We] owned around a hundred and brought them along until the point [we] had to leave them at the tribal region when there was no route.**

Q: When you were herding and milking animals and making butter in your homeland, what animals were they?

**#16N: There were yaks, *dri* 'female yaks,' *dzomo* 'female animal bred from a yak and a cow' and cows.**

Q: Around how many were there?

**#16N: There were only 5-6 cows and 50 other animals.**

Q: Was your family considered a wealthy or a poor family?

**#16N: We were among the richer ones in the village. There were two better off families and since they were arrested by the Chinese, [we] had to escape from the Chinese.**

Q: Was yours one of the families arrested by the Chinese?

**#16N: Yes.**

Q: There were two rich families?

**#16N: Yes.**

Q: What was it about being a rich family or one of the richest families that made you fear the Chinese?

00:16:34

**#16N: The Chinese were capturing all those that were rich. They were...[not discernible] and they [the Chinese] would confiscate everything and put [the families] in prison. That is why [we] were forced to escape.**

Q: When did the Chinese come to your village? How old were you?

**#16N: [I] was around 17 years old then.**

Q: You were around 17 years old then?

**#16N: Yes.**

Q: Could you please tell us your memories of when the Chinese came into your village?

**#16N: We were sent to build roads and assigned an area measured with a piece of wood. [The Chinese] paid *dhayen* ‘Chinese silver coins.’ So [I] was sent to build roads and then to construct their houses.**

Q: What could you do with these silver coins?

**#16N: In our region of Kongpo there was the custom of making belts from the *dhayen*. Having given [the *dhayen*] to the blacksmith, we fled before getting them back. Ornaments.**

Q: Why were they at the blacksmith?

00:19:12

**#16N: [The *dhayen*] were left at the blacksmith to make belts but [we] had to flee and did not have time to get them back.**

Q: So you escaped soon after the Chinese came into your village?

**#16N: We fled after the Chinese arrived. The Chinese came, captured my children’s father and imprisoned [him]; imprisoned for 15 days and released. Then we fled. That was the first time [the Chinese] did that.**

Q: What did your husband tell you about the 17 days he spent in prison?

**#16N: [He] said that during the day they were made to *shing say* and in the evening put in prison.**

Q: What’s *shing say*, cut wood?

**#16N: To split wood. There were huge piles of wood that they were made to split. During the day they were made to split wood and in the night put in prison.**

Q: Why was he put in prison?

**#16N: [He] was put in prison because ours was a better off family in the village. Lamas, the district administrator and everyone were captured.**

Q: Was the district administrator also captured?

**#16N: The district administrator was captured and killed. Lamas were captured.**

Q: Were you there when your husband was taken by the Chinese?

00:22:02

**#16N: [I] was. I was at home then. [My husband] was taken to a prison a little further away. I was at home.**

Q: From where was [he] captured?

**#16N: [He] was captured from our home in Layay.**

Q: [Your] husband?

**#16N: Yes, husband.**

Q: Can you describe for us that scene of when your husband was taken away? What exactly happened? How did they do that?

**#16N: We were one of the richer families and there was another family in the village. [We] used to give loans to people and collect them during harvest time. So since we were better off, [my husband] was captured.**

Q: What did you see when [he] was being captured?

**#16N: [The Chinese] ordered the people to gather and during the gathering [husband] was imprisoned; called to a meeting and captured.**

Q: At the meeting?

**#16N: Called to a meeting and locked up.**

Q: At this meeting that everyone was required to attend, what did the Chinese say and do?

00:24:11

**#16N: One must gather every evening. They [Chinese] sealed the homes of the people. Everything was in their hands and [the Chinese] talked about the work we had to do. They sealed all the homes.**

Q: Of the people?

**#16N: Yes.**

Q: And sent the people out to work?

**#16N: Yes, all the people. They planted cabbages and such and made [the people] to apply excrement from the pits. [The manure] must be applied to the radishes and such. [The people] must work for them [the Chinese.]**

Q: How did you do that [apply manure]?

**#16N: Human excrement was mixed with water in a barrel or such. It was then poured in two tin cans that were balanced on either side of a piece of wood. One tin here and one tin here [indicates two sides of index finger] and carried on the shoulder. Then using a ladle it must be poured at the roots.**

Q: Was this a very new experience for you?

00:26:15

**#16N: Yes, yes. It was new, as we had never done this before. [We] applied animal manure and not human excrement.**

Q: Why didn't you use human manure?

**#16N: It was never our custom to use human manure. [We] heaped animal dung, left it to decompose and then applied to the fields.**

Q: When you were asked to do this with human manure, what was the reaction of the people?

**#16N: Though they did not want to do it, yet one was helpless. One must do whatever [the Chinese] ordered.**

Q: Were there other things that the Chinese made you do that were not part of your custom?

**#16N: Their making [us] apply human excrement was a new custom.**

Q: Anything else?

**#16N: They made [the people] construct houses. [I] fell into a drain during the construction and received a cut here [gestures off camera] that was sewed. It is stitched here [gestures off camera]. [I] was cut here and the Chinese stitched it up.**

Q: What happened?

**#16N: They made [us] build houses. While carrying a load, [I] fell into a drain and received a cut here, which the Chinese sewed. Because of this I still suffer from leg pain.**

Q: Does it still hurt?

00:29:14

**#16N: I have pain here [gestures off camera]. There is pain here and while climbing stairs [I] cannot use this leg properly, cannot use this leg first to climb.**

Q: How did they sew it up?

**#16N: They stitched it up like we sew clothes.**

Q: Was it a doctor who did this or...?

**#16N: There was not a doctor as such but someone not so skilled. They could do anything since they have the power.**

Q: I'm wondering when the Chinese came to the villages were women safe?

**#16N: There was danger for the women. In our village were two girls whom they [Chinese] requested marriage while they lived there. There was a big party. An agreement was signed stating that [the Chinese] would not take [the girls with them] when they left. However, when they were leaving, the girls were made to run away. We went in search and brought them back. The Chinese said, "Please allow them to come until the border and then you can take them back." They [Chinese] went ahead taking the women in a vehicle—there were many vehicles – leaving the person who was to bring them back behind and lost [the women]. [The Chinese] took the girls [with them].**

Q: Did the Chinese marry the two girls?

00:31:16

**#16N: [The Chinese] married [them] and there were two children. Each girl had a child.**

Q: Were they to live with the women while they stayed in the village and leave them behind when they left?

**#16N: There was an agreement that [the Chinese] would not take [the girls with them when they left the village]. [The Chinese] requested that they be sent until the border. They went ahead in a vehicle—there were many vehicles—leaving us behind and took [the girls] away for good.**

Q: So did you ever see the girls again?

**#16N: [They] were never to be seen. One of them did not have parents. The other did but was never seen again.**

Q: So did the girls willingly marry the two Chinese men?

**#16N: Yes, they [Chinese men] came to the homes and took [the girls] away.**

Q: Is it that they forced them to marry them or that they raped them?

**#16N: They [Chinese men] said they wanted to marry [the girls] and came to their homes and forcefully took the girls. [The Chinese men] forced the parents and took [the girls]. [The Chinese men] stated that they would live together while in the village and would leave [the girls] behind when [they] left. [An agreement] was signed to this effect in the presence of village leaders. However, at the time of departure, [the Chinese] deceived us and took [the girls with them].**

00:34:27

**The parents had refused to give [the girls] to them. So they [the Chinese] requested that they be allowed to live together while they remained [in the village] and that they would not take [the girls with them] when they left. [The Chinese men] organized a party and such. At the time of departure, [they] made the girls to flee and hide in a forest. We went in search and brought [them] back and stated that [the girls] would not be allowed to leave. “Please let [the girls] come until the border to see us off.” Then they drove off ahead in a vehicle and left us behind, left those of us who were to bring [the girls] back behind. We were left behind.**

**One of the girls was called Shilo and the other Karma Yountso.**

Q: Did the girls want to go with the Chinese men?

**#16N: Yes, because they already had a son each who were taken away.**

**[The girls] belonged to poor families.**

Q: The Chinese, were they soldiers?

00:36:30

**#16N: [They] were soldiers.**

Q: Were they like officers or just ordinary soldiers?

**#16N: [They] were ordinary. They had to follow orders. One was called Tsing Shao.**

Q: Yes?

**#16N: The husband was called Tsing Shao.**

Q: Tsing Shao?

**#16N: Yes, Tsing Shao.**

Q: Weren't there two husbands?

**#16N: There were two husbands. One was called...I cannot get the name. There were two, an older and a younger one.**

Q: When you saw this happening what did you think?

**#16N: [I] felt sorry [for the girls]. The younger one was related to us. [She] was related to my children's father. People of our village went in search [of the girls] and brought [them] back holding [their] hands. Then the Chinese chided us. Later the people refused to let them go and they requested, “Please let them come until the border and then you can take them back.” [The Chinese] deceived [us] and took [the girls with them].**

Q: Why did their families sent them back to the border?

00:38:56

**#16N: [The Chinese] put all of us in one vehicle and they drove off ahead in another. When the parents refused to let [the girls] go [the men] said, "Take [the girls] back from the border. Allow [them] to see us off at the border." However, [they] took [the girls with them]. The parents returned crying.**

Q: Were you there then?

**#16N: Yes, [I] was.**

Q: That must have been a terrible time, a terrible experience.

**#16N: Yes, their parents were crying a lot. The father and mother cried but were helpless. They [Chinese] drove off in one vehicle while we had to make several stops along the way, as there were many vehicles. [We] could not catch up and [the girls] were taken away for good and never heard of.**

Q: When your husband was in prison, were you able to see him? Were you able to visit him and take food to him or anything like that?

**#16N: When one went to take food, one was not allowed to hand it over but it must be left at a place where they [Chinese] went through it. Then they sent us away. [We] were not allowed to go near.**

Q: Were you required to send food or did you take food so that there would be plenty?

00:41:30

**#16N: It was not necessary for they did give some sort of food. We took food at times. It was not necessary to do so every day.**

Q: So the food was poor in the prison?

**#16N: The food was poor. The vegetables were of poor quality and they added insects. [The Chinese] spread a cloth beneath a tree and hit the tree with a stick and insects that fell out were added [to the vegetables]. The food was very, very poor.**

Q: Your husband was released after 15 days. How soon after his release from prison did you go into exile?

**#16N: [He] spent a day at home packing and then fled immediately. [We] fled.**

Q: One day later?

**#16N: All the men went to another mountain in another region while all us women and children left for another region. [We] met up after 2-3 days of travel. They came to get [us].**

Q: Why did the men and then the women and children take two different paths?

00:43:59

**#16N: [We] fled in different directions. Fearing the Chinese would pursue them, [the men] armed with swords and guns went through another region while us women and children took the belongings and left through another region. It was summertime and raining continuously.**

Q: So how did you protect yourself from the environment, the rain?

**#16N: [We] wore animal skin in the night. There was nothing else to wear and one just got drenched. There was no shelter.**

Q: How did the children handle this?

**#16N: All the children were crying and were wrapped in animal skin. [We] transported the belongings and in three days pursuers arrived. “Come back if [you] wish to. [We] are asked to bring you. If you do not wish to return, proceed speedily. Otherwise...” Our relatives had come and said, “Proceed speedily for [the Chinese] will not spare [you].” They helped us cover a little distance and then returned to say that no one could be found.**

Q: Where were you in three days?

**#16N: In three days we were traveling through a jungle after crossing a river.**

Q: Whom did you meet?

**#16N: A relative of ours and two neighbors came in pursuit. [They] were sent in pursuit. “We will tell [the Chinese] that you are not here if you do not wish to return. If you so wish come back.” “We will not return.” “If you do not wish to return, proceed speedily for [the Chinese] will not spare you.” They helped [us] cover a little distance and then they went back.**

Q: So how long did it take you to get to the forest?

00:47:16

**#16N: And then we journeyed through the forest and reached a mountaintop in a week. From the mountaintop [we] crossed a pass on the other side and were in the tribal region. [We] stayed in the tribal region for a year. After a month pursuers had been sent. “They [the Chinese] are stoning all the holy images and dumping them in drains and on the roads. Robes for *cham* ‘religious dance performed by monks’ have been sewn into dresses for women,” [they] said.**

**One of our family members who were living there was sent in pursuit. “[I] will report that you are not here. You have to move fast for [the Chinese] will not spare you.” We had planned to live there but could not. After traveling a whole month we reached the Indian border. [We] reached the Indian border on the day [we] completed one month.**

Q: So it took a month to get to India?

**#16N: Yes, [we] reached the border exactly on the day of completing one month. At the border [we] were distributed provisions.**

Q: During that one-month of your escape how many people were in your group?

**#16N: In our family were two sons, one of whom passed away in Darjeeling [India] and the other is in the United States. My husband was there and an older sister. There were around eight people.**

Q: Your whole group, the whole group that left your village was eight people?

00:50:48

**#16N: We were two families. There are no survivors from the other family. The family’s completely gone. From our family are only two survivors and the rest have passed away.**

Q: Where did the members of the other family pass away? Was it during the escape journey?

**#16N: All of them expired in India. [They] went to Tezpur [Assam] and passed away there.**

Q: What happened in Tezpur, India where so many people died?

**#16N: It was very hot where we lived. Even insects died instantly upon emerging from the ground. Milk used to prepare tea was black like coal. The heat was intense while Tibet had been cool. Everyone died from the heat. Just from our family five members expired.**

Q: Did [you] say insects died after emerging?

**#16N: Yes, [insects] died after emerging from the earth due to the intense heat.**

Q: And the milk?

**#16N: Milk turned completely black.**

Q: I’m sorry to hear that. What turned the milk black?

00:52:43

**#16N: Milk turned black like water added to coal. [I] do not know why. It is said that is because of the heat.**

Q: The month that you spent escaping from your village to India, what are some of the most powerful memories you have of that time?

**#16N: The most [powerful] memory is that in the dreams...when I go to bed at night initially [I] fall asleep and then [I] cannot sleep because the journey from my hometown, my hometown and everything seems to flash across [my] eyes and [I] cannot sleep these days.**

Q: Are you talking about now or when you were escaping?

**#16N: Presently, presently. The journey from there and what [we] did in Tibet sort of appears before the eyes. Everything sort of appears before the eyes and [I] cannot sleep.**

Q: What are the nicest memories you have of Tibet, life in Tibet?

00:54:48

**#16N: The happiest [memories] are that in Tibet you have animals, milk to drink, butter and meat to eat. One was free to eat any food. It has been suffering since losing Tibet. I do not have a husband and only one child. Being poor, [he] served in many places and presently is in Bangalore in India. I have only one son.**

Q: Didn't you say [he] was in the United States?

**#16N: The one in the United States is the child of my husband and...the husband had two wives but I brought him up. The mother of the child who lives in the United States was left behind in Tibet and [she] has passed away.**

Q: Your sibling's child?

**#16N: Yes.**

Q: Was he the son of a relative or a friend?

00:56:24

**#16N: The one in the United States and my son share the same father and different mothers.**

Q: Is there anything else that you'd like to tell us about your life in Tibet?

**#16N: "Over there the temples have become meeting halls for the Chinese, all the images are broken and the *kagyur* 'translated word of Buddha' and *tengyur* 'translated treatises' are thrown in drains," said those that came in pursuit. "If you do not wish to return, it is good." So we did not go back.**

Q: When you heard about how the sacred places were being treated by the Chinese, what was your reaction?

**#16N: [I] suffered a lot and cried. You had lost your country and there was nothing to do but cry when you hear about what was being done to the scriptures and images in your country.**

Q: Did any of the Tibetans who the Chinese sent to try and get you to come back, did they ever stay with you and go into exile?

00:59:04

**#16N: It did not happen. There was a servant of the district administrator and a monk who fled. The monk was captured and at the time of being locked up, wanted to answer nature's call and managed to flee. He was with us and passed away sometime back. [He] said that having nothing to eat, he ate mushrooms on the mountains and survived. Later he came with us.**

Q: Why did those that were sent in pursuit go back?

**#16N: The Chinese had told them to tell [us] that they would after us. [They] were told to bring us back without fail. "[We] will say that you are not here. You should not remain here." We came this side and he went back.**

Q: Why didn't they escape with you?

**#16N: Because they had children and such at home.**

Q: How did you survive on that month-long journey from your village to India?

01:01:09

**#16N: [We] brought a little bit of food. Each person carried a load that [we] ate. At the tribal region [we] bought wood *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley,' mixed it with [our] *tsampa* and consumed.**

Q: And that was enough for the whole journey?

**#16N: [We] ran out of food the day [we] reached the border. [We] reached the border and ran out of food at the same time.**

Q: You must have felt great relief?

**#16N: Yes, [we] were given rice but we had never eaten rice before. [We] ground and cooked it but it was too rough to be eaten. [We] were given sugar but [we] had never eaten sugar before.**

Q: Do you eat rice now?

**#16N: Yes, [I] eat rice. Here if one does not eat rice there is nothing much to eat. [I] eat rice and [I] also eat *tsampa*.**

Q: And the sugar, did you enjoy the taste of the sugar?

01:03:10

**#16N: Yes, these days [I] cannot do without sugar.**

Q: I'm curious to know why do you think the Chinese had taken your family's land and your property? Why do you think they were so keen to get you to come back to the village?

**#16N: The Chinese have taken away the properties. They have closed [the homes] of all the richer families. They [who were sent in pursuit] said, "It is not good to return. All the scriptures and images have been dumped in the manure. *Cham* costumes have been converted into skirts for women. If you plan to go far away, do so quickly." Then they went back and we continued. Otherwise, we had planned to stay in the tribal region. Later pursuers came a second time including an older man. We traveled and reached the Indian border exactly in a month.**

Q: Why did the Chinese wanted you to come back?

**#16N: So that they could cause suffering. [The Chinese] had said there would be *dhakyen* [pardon?] and that we were to come back.**

Q: What's *dhakyen*?

**#16N: We followed one direction and [the Chinese] had seen the smoke from [our] fire from the other side. We crossed over many mountains without pathways. [We] trekked days and spent nights on the mountains and then the next morning stopped near rivers to eat *tsampa* and drink water. Along the way we came across lone families who ate wood *tsampa*. We exchanged woolen *chupa* 'traditional coats/dresses' for wood *tsampa* and consumed it.**

Q: Who did you exchange your woolen clothes for this other product?

01:07:14

**#16N: [Along the way] were few families to whom we gave *chupa* brought from Tibet and took wood *tsampa*. We ate the wood *tsampa* by mixing it with our *tsampa*.**

Q: You said that the Chinese saw your fire. What was the fire?

**#16N: The smoke was from the fire we had made with wood. It rained heavily at night on the mountains and [we] made fire with wood to cook food. They saw it in the night from the village on the opposite mountain.**

Q: Thank you very much.

**#16N: [Joins palms]**

Q: Thank you for sharing your very rich and very interesting story.

**#16N: [Joins palms]**

Q: Thank you. I have to ask you two more questions and then we'd like, if we may, to take some pictures with you and then we have some gifts for you.

**#16N: Okay [Joins palms]**

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

**#16N: I am old and will be dead to have any problems.**

Q: Can we use your name, your real name?

**#16N: Yes.**

Q: Thank you very, very much for sharing your story. We really, really, really appreciate it.

**#16N: Okay [Joins palms]**

END OF INTERVIEW