

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #18C – Thinlay Chogyal
May 10, 2014

The Tibet Oral History Project serves as a repository for the memories, testimonies and opinions of elderly Tibetan refugees. The oral history process records the words spoken by interviewees in response to questions from an interviewer. The interviewees' statements should not be considered verified or complete accounts of events and the Tibet Oral History Project expressly disclaims any liability for the inaccuracy of any information provided by the interviewees. The interviewees' statements do not necessarily represent the views of the Tibet Oral History Project or any of its officers, contractors or volunteers.

This translation and transcript is provided for individual research purposes only. For all other uses, including publication, reproduction and quotation beyond fair use, permission must be obtained in writing from: Tibet Oral History Project, P.O. Box 6464, Moraga, CA 94570-6464, United States.

Copyright © 2015 Tibet Oral History Project.



TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

www.TibetOralHistory.org

INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #18C
2. Interviewee: Thinlay Chogyal
3. Age: 70
4. Date of Birth: 1943
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Phenpo
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: May 10, 2014
10. Place of Interview: Northwest Tibetan Cultural Association Community Center, Portland, Oregon, USA
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 15 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen (of Portland)
14. Videographer: Tony Sondag
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen (of Bylakuppe)

Biographical Information:

Thinlay Chogyal was born into a wealthy farming family in Phenpo near Lhasa. His family farmed a large amount of land leased from the Drepung Monastery. He describes the system of loaning grain to the poor people at the time of sowing, the rate of interest charged and the system of paying taxes to the monasteries based on land holdings.

Thinlay Chogyal shares his feelings about being made a monk around 11 or 12 years of age by his parents at the Nalanda Monastery. He was sent to live at the *ladang* 'high lama's residence' of Simwog Rinpoche, which was different from living in a monastery. He offers insight into the life and intense practices of Simwog Rinpoche.

After the Chinese army bombed Lhasa, a large number of people fled through his region. Simwog Rinpoche performed a divination to decide whether to flee or remain in Tibet. Thinlay Chogyal explains how the *zenril* divination was conducted and the results prompted Rinpoche to leave his home. A group of around 60 people fled to Nepal on a 3-month journey. Once in Nepal Thinlay Chogyal served as a clerk for the *Chushi Gangdrug* Defend Tibet Volunteer Force that had re-grouped in Mustang. He later travelled to Dharamsala, India to find Simwog Rinpoche and got a job in the Tibetan Administration's Education Department.

Topics Discussed:

Utsang, childhood memories, farm life, taxes, monastic life, guerrillas in Mustang, escape experiences, life as a refugee in India.

TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

www.TibetOralHistory.org

Interview #18C

Interviewee: Thinlay Chogyal

Age: 70, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: May 10, 2014

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:11

Interviewee #18C: Thinlay Chogyal.

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?

#18C: Yes, of course.

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

#18C: [Nods] You are welcome.

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

#18C: Okay.

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

00:02:25

#18C: There will not be. It can be shown anywhere.

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

#18C: Okay.

Q: Thinlay-*la*, can you please tell me where you were born in Tibet?

#18C: I was...in Phenpo.

Q: And that is in what province?

#18C: Phen...

Q: Utsang?

#18C: It is close to Lhasa.

Q: It is in Utsang. Okay, and was there a monastery very nearby?

#18C: My monastery was close by.

Q: What's the name of the monastery?

00:03:21

#18C: Phenpo Nalanda.

[I] do not know whether you know but Phenpo Nalanda is named after the Buddha's Nalanda in India.

Q: How old are you now?

#18C: Now?

Q: Yes, now.

#18C: Seventy.

Q: So you were born in 1943?

#18C: Yes, around then.

Q: When you were born who was in your family, your immediate family and who lived in your home?

#18C: My family was very wealthy in Tibet. There were father, mother and three children. There is a brother older to me; I am the next one and then a sister younger to me. There were three children. It was a wealthy family.

Q: What did your family do for a living?

00:04:59

#18C: We were farmers with a very large farm.

Q: A very large farm?

#18C: A very large farm.

Q: Where were you, moderate income or very well off as a farming family?

#18C: Yes, yes [well off]. We had a large area of land and in Tibet the wealthy families gave loans to the poor families. Unlike here there was not any money to lend but grains were loaned that was repaid during the harvest in autumn. [We] did that kind of business.

Q: You didn't give lands but grains?

#18C: Yes, grains were given.

[We] collected an interest.

Q: What kind of interest, like what percentage of interest?

00:06:34

#18C: In Tibet there was a measurement called *bo* to measure grains. It is a wooden [container] that we call *bo*. If one measure of *bo* was loaned, the interest would be... There is one [measuring device] called *de*, 20 of which made up one *bo*. If one measure of *bo* was loaned for around 5-6 months approximately at the time of sowing the fields, for each *bo* that was loaned an interest of two *de*, the smaller measurement was collected.

Q: Okay, so like about one tenth or something like that. Two...? Two tenths, two tenths, two tenths percent. Why were the people in need of grains, these poor farmers? Why didn't they have enough?

#18C: The reason is that they too owned fields for which sowing is carried out in springtime, in the 4th lunar month. Seeds are needed for sowing the fields. The poor families had consumed all their grains and were left with none for sowing. Whereas, the richer families like mine would stock large quantities of grains in a storage called *bankhang* and then we gave loans based on how much each family wished to borrow—not that whatever requested was loaned—however, an average quantity was loaned. Such was the reason for borrowing.

Q: Had the farm that you all lived on, had that been on your family's name for many generations? Do you have any idea how long?

00:09:34

#18C: Yes, yes it was. I have seen my father's grandfather called grandpa, right? It has been for generations in the family.

Q: What kind of things did you grow on the farm? What kinds of products?

#18C: We grew grains with which *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley' is made. Then there were peas...

Q: Peas.

#18C: Then there is the one called mustard from which oil is extracted...

Q: Is it the one with yellow flowers?

#18C: Yes, that is the one, mustard to extract oil. There was a large quantity of peas.

Q: What kind of peas?

00:10:23

#18C: The peas in Tibet are big in size. Much of the peas in Tibet were used to feed horses and mules, as a great number of muleteers moved about in Tibet on trade. [The peas] were sold to them. A large quantity of peas was cultivated but it was not consumed much.

Q: Right. These were for the animals.

#18C: Right, much of the peas. Later the Chinese used the peas to manufacture noodles and many such things.

Q: Do you have any idea the size of your family farm, how large?

#18C: Based on acreage...what did we use to measure area of land in Tibet? I forget. It was very large. The land was very large. For instance, at the time of sowing the lands—there were no machines in Tibet—those called *dzo* ‘animal bred between a yak and a cow’ were used for plowing. Our family owned around 15 *dzo* known as *dhor* ‘pair of plow animals.’ There were four such that plowed the fields. These were worked for around two months during cultivation. The land was incredibly large, incredibly large.

Q: [You owned] around 15 *dzo*?

#18C: Yes?

Q: Around 15 *dzo*?

#18C: There were around 15.

Q: What was the relationship...Since we're talking about your farm before you talk about your childhood but since we are, what was the relationship of your farm and what you produce to the monasteries in the community? Did you contribute grain to the monastery? Were there taxes? How did that work?

00:13:18

#18C: The monasteries already owned lands. Take my family for instance. The actual owner of the lands of my family and to whom we paid tax was a monastery. We were tenants of Drepung [Monastery]. We must pay grain tax based on the size of our land holding. The grains were used as food for the monks. One had to pay tax.

Q: One of the reasons the Chinese gave for liberating Tibet was that the farmers were oppressed by the monasteries. Can you give us your opinion or experience of that if that was so?

#18C: It would seem like that. The Tibetans in Tibet were making offerings to the monasteries and monks on account of our faith. However, private landowners for instance, my family for instance is a private landowner having a large area of land. There were many others likewise. Actually, it would seem that way because there were not many members in our family. There were only five members but a large area of land. Then there were some families with seven, eight or nine children, poor families with hardly any land. Perhaps it is your entitlement from the past or whatever, [the Chinese] did say something appropriate. It did seem like that. One must be honest about it.

Q: How were the taxes paid then? You mean the poor people had to pay the same amount as the people who had more land?

#18C: Yes, one must pay [tax] depending upon the size of land holding. However, as I told you earlier the poor hardly owned any land. So there were no taxes if one did not own land. The rich owned a lot and paid taxes. Since land holdings were large, income was very large.

Q: So it was based on how much lands you have, the taxes that you had to pay?

#18C: [Nods]

Q: What happened to the money, the taxes that were paid? What did it support? What was it used for by the government?

[Interpreter interprets as: What were the taxes used for? She thinks it was paid to the government. It wasn't to the government, right?]

#18C: It was not.

Q: It was to the monastery, right?

00:17:21

#18C: Yes.

Q: Were the taxes just money or was it grains?

#18C: It was grains. There was not much money to pay in cash. However, unlike here the government never received any of the taxes. The government did not receive any tax because for instance, the leader of the village where I lived...leader is not the right word; the owner was the Drepung Monastery. It is called Drepung *chiso*.

Q: The Drepung monastery?

#18C: They were paid grains as taxes. Other than that there was not any money that was paid as taxes.

Q: What benefit did people get from supporting the monastery with grains?

#18C: They were making offering to the monks because of faith. There were no benefits other than that. However, one was obliged to pay the required amount of tax. Though it was not demanded, people made extra offerings to the monastery.

Q: What was the role of the monastery in...just even in your own community, in your own village, in your farming...in your own family life? What was the role? Why was the monastery something you wanted to support or did you have a choice?

00:19:49

#18C: The monks in the monastery are practitioners of the dharma. By making offerings to them...the main purpose is for bringing happiness to the region because they practice the dharma. So it is for the purpose of bringing happiness to the region and to avoid going to hell when you die. Mainly offerings are made to bring happiness for yourself, for benefits.

Q: So you grew up on this farm. What kind of...what was your daily life like when you were growing up as a little boy?

#18C: I became a monk at around...what age was I? I might have become a monk at the age of 11 or 12 and lived in the monastery after becoming a monk. Then one must study the scriptures, must start to learn. In my home there were those that performed tasks, what Tibetans would call servants. There were 7-8 such people, men and women. They did all the tasks in general like sowing, harvesting and there were the animals. Our family owned mules, donkeys and cows, which must be taken care of and the servants did that. There were a large number of such servants in Tibet.

Q: I wonder how the land got distributed...earlier generations so that some families got a little bit and some families got a lot. Do you understand that?

00:22:46

#18C: That is strange. [The lands] had been received since generations. However, here one has documents to prove that “this land belongs to me” but it was not so there. The elders would—for instance my family is called Thangla—say, “This belongs to Thangla and this to so and so.” There was nothing to show of how the ownership came about in the beginning. This had been so for generations and there was nothing to argue about it. Nobody had any documents to show.

Q: That’s the situation in many places. So why did you become a monk?

#18C: To speak honestly the Tibetans...had I stayed home, I would look after the home and take a wife. One must perform tasks such as fieldwork and such. Should one become a monk...it used to be said in our village, “You should become a monk and you will be happy.” That was because one need not engage in fieldwork. If one became a monk, one remained in the monastery and studied the scriptures. There was not any work to do. It was like that.

Q: So was that your decision or your parents’ decision?

#18C: The parents sent [me] because as I said there was my older brother...two sons in the family. Since there were two sons, the older one was to take care of the family and I was sent away. Should there be only one son, [he] would not be sent away but stayed home. My parents decided that and I was too young as a 10-11 year old to make decisions or understand anything. The parents sent [me].

Q: What was it like for you when you got there?

00:26:03

#18C: It was just so when one got to the monastery as a child. There were many of my age in the monastery, so there were many playmates. It was like that.

Q: Did you happen to have anyone like a relative or anyone in the monastery sort of looking after you or being your teacher?

#18C: No. However, as I mentioned earlier I was left at a *ladang* ‘high lama’s residence.’ There were those that took care.

Q: What is a *ladang*’s residence like? Where is it now?

#18C: The *ladang* does not exist anymore.

Q: What’s the name of the monastery?

#18C: Nalanda.

[Interpreter to interviewer: It was in Nalanda at that time, the *ladang*.]

00:27:24

#18C: There were two *ladang*, two high lamas in Nalanda known as Simwog and Chogyay Ladang. I lived in the Simwog Ladang. The lama was one of the high lamas of the monastery and owned a *ladang* or a very large house where [I] lived.

Q: What’s the name of the lama?

#18C: Simwog Rinpoche.

Q: Can you tell us a little for people who don’t know about...a *ladang* is the home of a lama and why was Simwog Rinpoche considered such a high lama? What was so special or unique about him?

#18C: [He] is a reincarnate from the past. One who is reincarnated many times is considered a high lama. So is Simwog Rinpoche.

A *ladang* is...for instance the living quarters of a monk are known as *sha* and where a lama lives in [is] called *ladang*. As I mentioned earlier there are seven, eight, nine or 10 people serving in a *ladang*. There was even a cook. Therefore, *ladang* is a large house.

Q: Was this high lama, was he very elderly or...?

00:30:03

#18C: Yes, he was aged in the 80's and passed away in Dharamsala in India.

Q: We're talking of the Gelugpa sect?

#18C: No, Sakya.

Q: Oh, Sakya.

#18C: Yes, Sakya.

Q: What age did you go to live in that place, in that lama's residence? How old were you?

#18C: When I became a monk my father left [me] at the *ladang*. [I] was not older than 12 or 13.

Q: How long did you stay in the *ladang*?

#18C: From then until '59.

Q: So for how many years? Was it 5-6? You were there for maybe four years?

#18C: Yeah, 4-5 years.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your life in the *ladang*?

00:31:36

#18C: It was a very happy life in the *ladang*. There were cooks that prepared food. Then there were the monk students and the younger ones did the task of cleaning the rooms in the house. Actually we had to study the scriptures and learn to write and were doing that as well. It was a very happy life.

Q: What kind of a student were you?

#18C: [I] was quite a good student. [We] were taught to read and write then. When I fled my knowledge of Tibetan came from having lived there. Otherwise, she [interviewer] would know that there were no schools in Tibet in the past. The majority of those that became monks know how to read and then some children from wealthy families attended schools and were taught to write. Otherwise, nobody knew to read and write.

Q: Was it easier to live in a *ladang*, which was a smaller kind of community than in one of the bigger monasteries if you were a young child?

#18C: Although living in a *ladang*, we had to go to the monastery to attend prayer assemblies. Besides the *ladang* there were monk quarters where some teachers had 3-4 students. However, as mentioned earlier a *ladang* is far better; it is economically better.

Q: Was there anything about the lama that you served that you remember? Was there anything special about him or his teachings that you have some good memories about?

00:35:15

#18C: He was...when I was in the monastery...I do not know the age but [he] was old. It was said that...in Tibet there is a box like seat for lamas made from wood called *shukdom*. It was said that Simwog Rinpoche has never slept on a bed since the age of 25 but sleeps on the *shukdom*. Of course, [he] does fall asleep.

We were two or three young students in the *ladang* and at around 10 o'clock in the night, at times one must serve tea, as is the practice in Tibet. Tea must be served at intervals of around half an hour. We were told not to serve tea after 10 o'clock and could see [him] from outside through the glass sitting on the *shukdom* meditating. The lama was incredible, Simwog Rinpoche.

Q: Was he from that monastery or somewhere else in Tibet?

#18C: [He] was from that very monastery. He was born in the north; that was the birthplace.

Q: Which part of the north?

#18C: Namru. No, not Namru. [He] was from the place called Dham.

Q: Dham?

#18C: Yes. His family home was called Simwog House or something. Being a nomad there was no house but a *ba* 'tent made from yak hair.' I have been there as a child. That was his birthplace.

Q: All of his training and spiritual development happened in the monastery?

00:38:02

#18C: Yes. He had receive empowerments and oral transmissions from senior lamas but most of the time was in retreat. He remained in retreat for six months and at times a year.

Q: And his name is Simwog?

#18C: Simwog Rinpoche.

Q: S-I-M-W-O-R?

#18C: Simwog. Simwog means...

Q: Oh, is it *wog*?

#18C: We have the *gong* ‘upper’ and the *wog* ‘lower.’ This is the *wog*. Simgong is upper...

Q: *Sim* means...?

#18C: *Sim* means *simkhang* ‘respectful term for house.’

Q: *Simkhang*, and *wog* means the lower.

#18C: Yes, there are the lower and upper [houses] and ours was the lower one.

Q: That was his name. Now did he, when the Chinese invaded Tibet, did he escape or was he arrested? Do you know what happened to him?

00:39:30

#18C: [The Chinese] could not arrest [him]. In Lhasa the Chinese shelled the Norbulingka. There is a mountain pass called Gonla between our monastery and Lhasa. A large number of monks and others came fleeing over the Gonla from Lhasa. There was not anything to discuss about but when asked what had happened, [they] replied, “Lhasa’s being shelled and people are being subjected to suffering.” After hearing the news, then our Rinpoche said...we have our *gonkhang* ‘protector’s temple’...

Q: What’s a *gonkhang*?

#18C: *Gonkhang* is where one offers supplication prayers to the deities. There are deities like the Nechung and such. Rinpoche consulted a *zenril* [selection process during which names are written and enclosed in balls of dough which are then rotated in an urn in front of an image and the name which falls out of the urn is selected] in there. There is this thing called *zenril* one can consult. [Two] balls of dough are kneaded and enclosed with written words. Rinpoche wrote ‘Is it better to remain?’ and ‘Is it better to flee?’ These were written on paper and enclosed in the [two balls of] dough. Then [Simwog Rinpoche] entered the *gonkhang* and performed *tinchor* ‘petition offerings.’ [To interpreter] You know *tinchor* that is made to the deities?

Q: Yes.

00:40:47

#18C: While the *tinchor* is being performed, someone must do this [rotates hands]; the dough [balls] are rotated like that. There is a thing in which the dough [balls] are rotated.

Q: Like a bowl?

#18C: Yes, rotated. A while later one [of the balls of dough] would drop out. When opened it mentioned, “Better to flee.” Hence, when we fled it was in the night.

Q: How did it come up? I mean were you rolling it around in a bowl? Is that what happened?

#18C: First Rinpoche offered supplications to the deity and prayed a lot. Then automatically like in our powerball, the number comes up. [Laughs]

Q: Like a centrifuge?

#18C: Yeah, yeah.

[Interpreter concludes: ...just like how we have the lottery powerball. One ball pops up...]

#18C: Yeah, jumping like that; it comes up.

Q: A ball came up and it said, “Go.”

#18C: Yeah.

Q: It said, “Leave.”

#18C: Yeah, then we left.

Q: And you just all left. How many...everybody in the small *ladang* left?

00:43:04

#18C: Yes, mostly. Except for the water carriers and such that are called servers, everybody left.

Q: Can you tell us about the journey? What happened?

#18C: We travelled towards Jang. The *ladang* owned animals and such in Jang. “[We] shall stay in Jang temporarily.”

Q: Where in the north?

#18C: We were in...[not discernible] in Jang. It is a nomadic region.

Q: Nomadic region.

#18C: Nomadic region.

Q: Was it Rinpoche’s hometown?

#18C: Yes, it is in the vicinity of his birthplace. We went there and planned to return if the situation improved. We made enquiries from those that arrived, “What has happened?”

What has happened?” “The Chinese shelled and destroyed Lhasa completely.” Then we left from Jang. When questioned along the way, “Where are you going?” [We] replied, “We are going [on a pilgrimage] to see Mt. Kailash.”

Q: Is it Nepal?

00:45:00

#18C: No. Initially, when we met nomads along the way, they asked, “Where are you going?” “We are going [on a pilgrimage] to see Mt. Kailash,” was the reply because there were many going [on pilgrimage] to see Mt. Kailash.

Then we were in Mt. Kailash, which is Nepalese border and there took a deviation and entered Mustang, Menthang in Mustang.

Q: Very rugged journey.

#18C: Oh, yeah. The journey took us around three months.

Q: Did you actually...were you able to circumambulate Mt. Kailash?

#18C: No, no. Mt. Kailash was way up north as [we] took a straight path. It is said to be a long way up there.

Q: You came straight...from your monastery straight into...?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...to Jang, which was...

Q: Nepal through Mustang?

#18C: Mustang, yes.

Q: And then where next?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: We haven't quite gotten there yet. So we are in Lo 'Mustang' Menthang right now.

Q: Now we've reached Lo Menthang.

#18C: Yes.

Q: And then what happens?

00:46:46

#18C: Then from Menthang in Mustang...actually the people of Menthang are Nepalese citizens but most spoke Tibetan. [They] spoke Tibetan and wore Tibetan costume. Then to...is it Tharpa?

Q: Tharpa.

#18C: Tharpa and then Dupchay, which are Nepalese [territories]. They did not speak Tibetan, and then [we] arrived in Pokhara.

Q: Oh, yes, yes. I know that area. Was it Tharpa or Marpa?

#18C: Tharpa.

Q: Did you go through Marpa?

#18C: In Tharkali some of the people speak Tibetan.

Q: Yes, somewhat.

#18C: People in that area are traders.

Q: How did you travel, by foot? Did you have animals?

#18C: We were with *del* ‘mules.’ [To interpreter] *Del*. Do you know *del*?

Q: What are *del*? [They] aren’t exactly horses, right?

#18C: [They] are not exactly horses. *Del* means mu...

Q: Mule?

#18C: Yes, mule. We had mules and horses, around 80-some altogether. For carrying loads and...

Q: Eighty?

#18C: Oh, yes.

Q: How many were in your party?

00:48:35

#18C: In the party we were perhaps 50-60 people from two *ladang*. Then during the journey we met others and traveled together.

Q: Were people...were people afraid...were the people you were meeting, were they fleeing from the Chinese like you were?

#18C: Yes. The people at the border had no intention of fleeing. However, there were many from Amdo with us. They knew what the Chinese were doing. Otherwise, those at the border did not have any intention of leaving.

Q: Did you have any people from Kham who were already coming from Kham?

#18C: Yeah, there were with us.

Q: I heard many people from Kham went to Mt. Kailash and then escaped.

#18C: Right, right. There was no Chinese at all in the direction of Mt. Kailash.

Q: How old was the lama at that time? Was he able to make the journey very well?

00:50:34

#18C: [I] do not know the exact age. There was a horse and a mule for him to ride. [He] rode the horse and mule on alternate days. One attendant led the horse. He [the attendant] was also on horseback. Then two attendants, one on the right and the other on the left propped [him] up.

Q: Were they also on horseback?

#18C: No, [they] were on foot. There was the saddle that could be tied to prevent [the lama] from falling but it was not a good one. Two of our men gave support on either side.

Q: How old was Rinpoche then?

#18C: [He] must have been in the 80's then, must have been in the 80's.

00:51:45

To take a guess, we started out around 8 o'clock in the morning and stopped at around 2 o'clock. [We] could not go far.

Q: Do you recall...you said this lama was a reincarnation, can you recollect who he was supposed to be a reincarnation of?

#18C: Simwog Rinpoche. He was that very lama.

Q: Same person. Had Simwog Rinpoche lived a long time prior or just recently?

#18C: It was said that [he] was the fourth reincarnation.

Q: What was so important about Simwog Rinpoche? What were his qualities that people admired or respected?

#18C: Basically he possessed great knowledge of the dharma. Besides, the lamas in Tibet used to receive empowerments and oral transmissions and he had received empowerments and oral transmissions from a large number of lamas. Such were very rare. As I mentioned earlier, he received empowerments and oral transmissions and entered into retreat where one must accumulate hundreds of thousands of mantra. So naturally [he] was very blessed and he also had a *tsugthor* 'pre-eminent crest' on the head. Normally *rinpoches* shave

[their] heads in Tibet and [Simwog Rinpoche] possessed a protrusion of this size [holds upright index finger over center of head] that can be seen. I was said that there was a *tsugthor*. Then there was a bulge on the belly. We would not know exactly.

The reason for the *tsugthor* on the head was because [he] used to hold *lung* ‘winds or energy currents of the body’ to a great extent during meditation. Holding the *lung* to a great extent would give rise to protrusion of the belly...[not discernible]. However, he was not physically fat with a big belly. [He] was not fat physically; the belly was like that. That was his distinguishing mark.

00:55:26

#18C: We could see the top of the head and there was a protrusion like this [shows thumb of right hand]. [He] was very unusual.

Q: Since he was so adept at meditation, did he ever try to teach the monks how to meditate?

#18C: [He] did not teach much. There were many that sought empowerments and oral transmissions from him but Rinpoche did not bestow them much. He was mostly in meditation. Should [he] do so [teach], it would have to be done for months on end.

Q: So, well I think, maybe we should wrap up your journey. You had a lot of horses and a large number of people with you and you finally arrived in...what’s your final destination?

#18C: This happened. Well, [we] arrived in Pokhara and our Rinpoche and company left for India, to Dharamsala in India. I remained there.

Q: Where? Pokhara?

#18C: In Pokhara. The reason for staying in Pokhara was that at that time the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] was just being established in Pokhara. You know the *Chushi Gangdrug* in Pokhara, the guerrillas? There were some people we knew that were working for the *Chushi Gangdrug*. They asked me to stay back. The reason for asking me to stay was nothing but that having attended school in Tibet I knew to read and write a little bit.

There was not much letter writing but we used to make purchases in Pokhara; purchased rice, wheat flour and oil, and sent to Mendang in Mustang. Not exactly Mendang but in the hills. The military camps were located in the hills where the provisions were dispatched. I remained there for around two years. Our Rinpoche and company left directly for Dharamsala.

Q: Yes, there are many stories of the *Chushi Gangdrug* and food and I know some of the stories. How long did the *Chushi Gangdrug* stay there in Mustang? That’s where they were, right?

#18C: Yeah, yeah, you call [it] Mustang.

Q: They were in Mustang.

00:59:26

#18C: Yeah, but actually not Mustang but Mendang side, border.

Q: So how long did they stay because I know they were told to disband many years later? When you were was it just the beginning?

#18C: Just beginning, yeah.

Q: What year? It would have been about 1960?

#18C: '64 or 5.

Q: '64 or 5?

#18C: Yeah, there [were] lots of people coming [to] India.

Q: Many Tibetans were coming and they wanted to fight or join the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

#18C: Yes, yes, guerrilla [group] starting.

Q: The *Chushi Gangdrug* had just been established then and was a lot of people coming? Were [they] coming from India?

#18C: The majority came from India. There were none coming from that [Tibet] side. The nomads, poor things did not know anything and did not flee. Those that had been in the *Chushi Gangdrug* in Lhoka had managed to flee into India through Mon Tawang [Arunachal Pradesh] and such. They were now coming back. All of them came from India.

Q: And the army had to disband as we know, the army, the Tibetan army finished. It couldn't fight anymore and so many went to India and then they wanted to sign up and join again and fight some more.

01:01:25

#18C: She [interviewer] would know that it was the United States that gave assistance there. It was the United States that gave money, guns and everything.

Q: They dropped weapons?

#18C: Yes.

Q: I know. And so what were you doing? You were buying food and bringing it?

#18C: Yeah, kind of. I am a secretary, you know, just writing. [Laughs]

Q: Like a treasurer? A secretary?

#18C: [I] was not a treasurer. There was a treasurer. We were four people. There was a treasurer; we had an interpreter and then we had a cook, one that cooked, and me. I was the one that kept records of the amount of rice, oil and other things purchased. Having become well-known the Nepalese came from the hills in the morning bearing [provisions] on their backs, bringing rice and oil. We began at around 8 o'clock in the morning. Numerous people arrived bearing [provisions]. Rice was measured in...[I] forget the name of the measuring device. Being brought on backs there was not much. Then it grew hot at around 12 o'clock and no more people came in. In this way I was the record keeper.

Q: And then what made you leave Pokhara?

01:03:25

#18C: And then [to interpreter] you know, there was one called Gen Yeshe in Pokhara. He knew me from the past. He knew my father from Tibet. He said, "You must remain here. There is no need for you to carry a gun but remain here on office duty." They believed I would stay there. But I thought it was not worthwhile and our Rinpoche had already left for India. So [I] said, "First I will go to see Rinpoche once."

As you [to interpreter] know it is easy to travel from Pokhara but it was difficult from there [Mustang]. The route was blocked. It was simple to leave from Pokhara. In those days the Khampa 'people of Kham' and the office staff did not know the language very well. I learned Nepalese while there and knew it quite well. Saying that I wished to go to see Rinpoche I left for India.

Q: Yeshe...is he the one called Bapa Yeshe?

#18C: Yes, Bapa Yeshe.

Q: Wasn't he a commander in the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

#18C: [He] was a chief. Bapa Yeshe was a commander.

Q: It sounds like what a young man would do...

#18C: Yes. [Laughs]

Q: ...to travel. You were about 18, something like that? 18, 20?

#18C: Oh yeah, 18, 20.

Q: Somewhere in there.

#18C: Yes.

Q: Eighteen, 20 and then a whole new story begins, doesn't it?

#18C: Yeah.

Q: A new story begins after reaching India.

01:05:43

#18C: Then when I reached Dharamsala, the Tibetan Office in Dharamsala was just being established. It had just about started. There were the Education Office, the Home Office and such. There were not many from Tibet then that were literate. There were not. The Kham and Amdo people are well [educated] these days but were not literate then. The aristocrats of the past and those that lived around Lhasa knew a little bit [of reading and writing]. Then when I reached Dharamsala there were people I knew. Since I was literate to a certain extent, I was given a job in the Education Office right away.

Q: Oh did you, really?

#18C: Yeah.

Q: So you were no longer a monk?

#18C: No. No monastery, no place [to] go. [Laughs]

Q: That was the end of that.

#18C: Yeah.

Q: Did you ever see your Rinpoche again?

01:07:12

#18C: Yes, yeah. Rinpoche passed away in Dharamsala. [He] passed away a year or two after I reached there. I was there then and could see [him].

Q: You were able to see him.

#18C: Oh, yes.

Q: That's good. Wonderful! Wonderful! Well, that sounds like maybe a good ending part to know that you got to see your Rinpoche again. Is there anything that you feel you want to add to your story that maybe we didn't cover?

#18C: There is nothing special to add. I am generally...I know a little bit of the past story of Tibet. There is a little part about the present story of Dharamsala and Tibetans living abroad, not about the older generation but the ways of the younger generation. [To interpreter] Please ask if it would be okay to talk about that?

Q: Absolutely. I would very much appreciate if you would tell us your ideas.

#18C: [Speaks in English] Example, before 1959, you know little bit, Tibetans, you know they have...[Speaks in Tibetan] okay, in Tibetan; this is not good. There was our Tibetan government prior to 1959.

Q: Yes.

01:09:16

#18C: A few aristocrats and officials controlled the Tibetan Government. A common man, someone like me would be told, “Do not interfere in the Tibetan Government. *Dhesey golep* will do it.” *Dhesey golep* means that the concerned people will do it and that we should not interfere. In that way there was a sort of negligence and besides the people had no education then. Actually, if people are not educated it is difficult to think. In that way we have suffered a great amount of negligence. The Chinese understood that. It is a long story but everyone did not work in unity and the people did not participate, did not think about the country due to which [the country] was lost. That is one [thing].

Now presently, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is doing so much for the cause of Tibet. These days...the schools in Mussoorie and Simla were established in the ‘60s. The Tibetan students were very good in studies then and worked hard at [their] studies. Electricity, for instance...I know a little bit because I was in the Education Department. The schools did not have many facilities and there was no electricity. The children lit lamps and studied hard. [Tibetan students] were very successful in the ‘60s. These days for instance, the schools have good facilities with good electricity and such. However, the Tibetan children are good in English but extremely poor in Tibetan. In that manner, we are being negligent. Is it negligence or carelessness? What should it be called?

Q: Like not paying attention?

#18C: Yes. Being careless. Due to the benevolence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama things are good [for the Tibetans] whether in foreign countries or in India. So seemingly fulfilled, everyone is being negligent [instead of working] for development. Take the United States for example. It is such a [great] country yet strives for progress. So I feel there should not be negligence. What happened in the past is over. It is the younger generation of today. For the older people of my age, everything is done and over with. So it is something like this.

Q: That sounds like a very heartfelt observation of what needs to be done by the next generation.

#18C: Yes.

Q: So I’m glad they have your words to practice and maybe use your insights.

01:14:28

#18C: [Nods].

Q: As we wrap up and conclude this interview, is there any other message you want to give to the Tibetan, next generation of Tibetan children?

#18C: No, that is all.

Q: You said your point. You made your point. Okay.

#18C: Yeah.

Q: Let me...I'm only because it's part of our protocol is to ask you again one more time since you've given your interview, if this interview was shown in Tibet or China would this be a problem for you?

#18C: No, no problem.

Q: Thank you very much for sharing your story with us.

#18C: Thank you. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW