

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #1 – Apey
June 27, 2007

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #1
2. Interviewee: Apey
3. Age: 88
4. Date of Birth: 1919
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Chi Nying Dongpa
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: June 27, 2007
10. Place of Interview: Home for the Aged and Disabled, Lugsung Samdupling Settlement, Bylakuppe, Mysore District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 8 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Jeff Lodas
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Apey is the fourth child of seven. He became a monk at Sama Datsang at the age of eight and remained there until the age of 18. He was forced to leave the monastery and return home to support his family, who had become poor due to the unfair actions of Apey's uncle. Apey helped his family pay taxes to the Tibetan government. Later he went to serve *Dapon* 'Colonel' Mogya, the highest Tibetan military officer.

When the Chinese arrived in Tibet, Apey fought as part of the Tibetan army against the Chinese even though he was not a Tibetan government soldier. After the fall of Chamdo and capture of *Dapon* Mogya, Apey went to Lhasa and warned people about the invasion of the Chinese, but at that time, they did not believe the Chinese would come to Lhasa.

Apey took up work as a wool trader for an aristocratic family in Lhasa. When Apey learned that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had left Tibet, Apey escaped by crossing over a mountain pass to Sikkim and ultimately he reached Kalimpong. He later joined the Indian army and remained there for seven or eight years.

Topics Discussed:

Kham, monastic life, taxes, invasion by Chinese army, trade, escape experiences, early life in Bylakuppe, life as a refugee in India.

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Interviewee: Apey

Age: 88, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: June 27, 2007

[The tape has poor sound quality at the beginning of the interview. At some points during the interview, it is impossible to decipher the words spoken, especially by the interviewee.]

Question: Could you please tell us your name?

Interviewee #1: My name is Apey.

Q: And do you give your permission for the Tibet Oral History Project to use this interview?

#1: Yes.

Q: Apey, when you think back on your childhood, does any memory come to mind about being a little boy in Tibet?

#1: When I was small, my parents had five children; three sons and two daughters and among them I was the fourth. When I was small, my parents had five children; three sons and two daughters. I was the fourth child. At the age of four, I became a monk.

Q: And where did you become a monk?

#1: At Sama Datsang.

Q: Do you remember the day you went to the monastery?

#1: I was about 8 years old when I joined the monastery. When you first join the monastery, you have to learn the texts. Once you are in the monastery, then you are not allowed to go to your parents.

Q: Earlier you said you were four. Were you eight?

#1: I think I was about 8. I remained a monk until the age of 18.

Q: You were never allowed to visit home?

#1: When I was 18, I became very fluent in reading the scriptures. Whatever texts the senior monks read like *Boom* or *Kagyur*, I could do the same. I was among the senior monks and there was no need to go home. I hardly went there.

Q: Did you like the monastery?

#1: I liked the monastery. I had a good teacher, who beat me and made me well versed in the texts. Until I was eighteen, it was good and I was happy.

Q: Who inspired you in the monastery? Was there a particular teacher that inspired you?

#1: I could read whatever texts were to be read. It was very good, until the age of eighteen. When I was eighteen, I had a visitor. My uncle had become the leader of our village. There were seven members in my immediate family and my nephew. When my uncle became the leader, he had his sister-in-law married to my nephew. Then he divided my family's entire property into two parts, giving one half to my parents and siblings and the other half to the nephew. Until then, I was a monk.

Q: Until then your family and uncle were living together and then they separated?

#1: My parents and siblings, the whole family of seven had only one half of the property and they became poor. So I couldn't remain in the monastery. In earlier days we were a wealthy family, so were required to pay high taxes.

Q: How did you feel about having to leave the monastery?

#1: The reason I had to go home was that my uncle had become the leader of the village and he had arranged the marriage of his sister-in-law with my nephew. He had ordered the family possessions to be divided equally among my nephew on one side, and my parents and siblings on the other. When that happened, there were seven mouths to feed in the family and they became very poor. So though I wanted to remain a monk, I couldn't. I came home. There was an elder brother, but he had poor eyesight and my father was 50 to 60 years old. So that's when I left the monastery and came home. Even though he was our uncle, he caused so much suffering.

Q: And how did you help the family when you left the monastery?

#1: The taxes were very high. One man and a horse had to continuously pay service.

Q: To whom?

#1: To the Tibetan government.

Q: One horse and one man?

#1: Yes, they had to go where there were things to be transported; they couldn't stay at one's own door. It was a distance of one day's journey. You had to take food for man, yak and horse and stay for one month there. There would be about 30 people at the place. My family had to pay a high tax, so we had to be the *genpo* 'leader.'

Q: What tax did you have to pay?

#1: Manpower, a horse to take the load, grass and feed for the horse.

Q: For whose horse?

#1: Then mattress, table, house, everything we had to get ready.

Q: For whom?

#1: The officials of the Tibetan government.

Q: The officials of the Tibetan government came to your village?

#1: Of course, they came. There were 500 soldiers and their commander and also the district administrator.

Q: The Tibetan government?

#1: Yes, they were Tibetan government officials. They stationed soldiers to defend the country against enemies.

Q: This was the Tibetan army?

[Interpreter to Interviewer] Yes, the Tibetan army.

#1: We had to pay taxes because we were tenants of the land belonging to the government. The taxes depended on the area of land.

Q: Did you feel this was very fair or not?

#1: I don't like to say, but it was difficult for the family. At times we come across unfair officials it used to sadden me. Other than that, the Tibetan government is dear to me and I did not have any problems.

Q: How did you help support your family? What kind of work did you do when you left the monastery?

#1: When I went back home to my parents, instead of helping them I had to bear the punishment for leaving the monastery! The penalty was 50 lashes or a payment of one *dhotse* 'currency unit' to the monastery.

Q: 50 lashes?

#1: Yes, if you did not have the money, you had to bear the lashes.

Q: If you did not take the lashes, what did you have to offer?

#1: Then you had to give money.

Q: You did not have money.

#1: If you did not have money, then the lashes.

Q: During those days you had money?

#1: We cannot say that we didn't have money because we were cultivating the Tibetan government lands. We were paying high taxes. They would tell us that we possessed land and house.

Q: Even if you had to help your family, it was still a penalty?

#1: Yes.

Q: You can't request them that you have family problems?

#1: No, you can't. The rules of the monks have to be observed by the monks and it cannot apply to the laypeople.

Q: So what happened to you when you had to leave?

#1: Though there wasn't much money in the house, we offered animals in lieu of the penalty to the monastery and once that was done, I could leave the monastery.

Q: You offered animals?

#1: Yes, we offered animals because we didn't have money.

Q: How did you feel about having to leave your monastery?

#1: In my heart I suffered with the feeling that my uncle did a very unjust thing. That was the reason I had to leave the monastery and the reason why I was feeling sad. As a monk I learned to read and write and now I had to become a *genpo*. So for many years I lived in another place and took the responsibility of the tax payment.

Q: Did you ever talk to him about your feelings?

#1: There was no way I could talk to my uncle as I was in the monastery and he was a layman living in the village. I heard about it only after several months and by the time I reached home my parents and siblings had become very poor. They had hardly anything to eat and the tax was high. Such things had happened.

Q: Did your parents tell you that you had to come home?

#1: No, never. They would never say such a thing and they cannot say it. My parents could not work and half of the land went with him. They had to feed five children and they were getting old, so it was very difficult for my parents.

Their oldest son could not see well and the tax was high. So, I left the monastery to take the responsibility of meeting the tax payment. My uncle became powerful, but the law of karma caught up with him and he didn't profit from what he had done. He left us in poverty, but his sister-in-law and the nephew didn't live long and died. There is the law of karma. My uncle was unjust and he died in the room, which housed the protective deity.

Q: What kind of work did you do to help your parents when you left the monastery?

#1: As I was telling you, I went as payment of tax. I had to take a yak, a horse, one's food and money; like all the people who tilled the land had to. Everyday without a break, we had to transport the loads up and down.

Q: How far from your village did you have to go?

#1: Yes?

Q: How far from your village did you go with the yak and the horse?

#1: It was one day's journey.

Q: Who were there, the Tibetan government officials and the soldiers?

#1: Yes, soldiers, Tibetan postal workers and other leaders who had passes issued by the Tibetan government. The transportation work was unending.

Q: What happened to your life next after you left the monastery? What happened?

#1: I was engaged in paying the taxes when I met a woman. She was about 19 or 20 years old and married into a family. That family was close to where I was staying. Then as fate would have it, I stepped in between the man and wife. They were traders. They had wealth and men. As for me, my parents were old. The son they had was disabled and girls were girls, so I couldn't take her home with me. Then we fled to Lhasa. I brought my wife by fleeing.

Q: What happened next?

#1: As we were walking one day, along the high snowy mountain passes, seven horsemen with a gun and knives gave us chase.

Q: With guns?

#1: Yes, with a gun and knives. There were seven horsemen.

Q: They were from the wife's family?

#1: Yes, they were pursuing us.

Q: How old was she? How old was the girl; nineteen, twenty? Did they catch you?

#1: When they were chasing us, we rested and were making some tea. I saw them coming. The place was a snowy mountain. I had a horse which I tethered. I then took my wife higher up and left her there. Somewhere in the middle I hid myself. They arrived and looked around the site where we had made the fire. Then they followed the path and came towards me. They called out to me, "Come down. We will not let the woman go. You cannot do this unlawful thing." I replied, "We met due to our destiny. I will never let the woman go even if I die. You can think it over." Thus we talked back and forth. They didn't dare kill me. They did not shoot. I had a very fine knife with me, but we didn't fight and they left.

However, they went to my house and greatly troubled my family. They went to my parents' house and told them that their son had eloped with the woman and that "we will not leave you easily." When my family heard this, they were terribly frightened. My older brother who couldn't see well, taking along a servant came in pursuit of me for three days. He told me, "If you take this woman, her family has no intention of letting you go. You will either be imprisoned by the Tibetan government or receive lashes, either way you are in trouble. And we are finding it very difficult to live in peace."

In my mind I thought that I could not forsake my parents and siblings for the sake of a woman, so I made the decision and went back to my village. In Tibet, the government's highest court of law was the *Kashag*. The top leader in the *Kashag* was Khenchen Dhakla. I surrendered to him in the sense that I became his servant.

Q: What about the woman?

#1: I kept her with me.

Q: You took her with you?

#1: Yes, I took her.

Q: You didn't hand her back?

#1: No, I didn't. I had told them earlier that I would give my life, but not hand her back.

Q: What happened to the girl?

#1: I took her to my house and left her with my family. I surrendered myself to the leader who told me that I should go to Dhartsedo. It was very far away and the journey took 30 days.

Q: Who was the leader?

#1: Khenchen Dhakla. He was an official of the Tibetan government. I had to serve him and it was very difficult, but there was no other way for me. So taking four other people with me, I set off for Dhartsedo. From Dhartsedo, we brought loads of tea bricks and in this way I served the Khenchen for seven years. Those people did not harm my wife and I was a servant of the Tibetan government official.

Q: [Interviewer to Interpreter] He mentioned he took a lady. Was it another woman he got involved with?

[Interpreter to Interviewer]: No, it was the same woman.

Q: [Interviewer to Interpreter] So he left her and worked for the government official?

[Interpreter to Interviewer]: His wife's family left them in peace. Earlier they were trying to pursue them and get the lady back, but now they did not. Now they let him and the wife stay together.

#1: So from them I did not face any enmity and the woman became my wife. I did not receive any salary and ate whatever food was given to me. In this way I worked hard for seven years.

Q: Where was your wife—with you?

#1: She was with me. Then I thought of something else. I'd heard that *Dapon* 'Colonel' Mogya, the highest Tibetan military officer was in search of a Khampa servant. He was the top leader. As he was on the lookout for a Khampa servant, I went to serve him. The army unit was called *Gadham Maga*. When I was in his service, the Chinese arrived at Dhen Choekhor Gong and destroyed the Dhen Choekhor Gon.

Q: What were his duties as he worked for this highest Khampa officer?

#1: The duty was to fight at that time.

Q: He'd said that he wanted a Khampa servant. What were the duties of the servant?

#1: He had to go to war. He wanted a Khampa. I had to saddle his horse, lead the horse and apart from serving him, there were no other duties. Wherever he went, I had to go.

Q: Did you like that kind of work?

#1: Then I became the *Dapon's* servant and went to Dhenkhor.

Q: Did you like the work? When you were the servant of the *Dapon*, did you like the work?

#1: I used to like fighting, guns and war. Then the Chinese arrived at Dhenkhor and we fought the Chinese. During one year unusual thunders rolled in the skies. I don't know if it happened in India; it was that year.

Q: You mean thunder in the skies or airplanes?

#1: It was something like thunder. In actuality it was the celestial beings—the beings of the Chinese and the Tibetans that were in disagreement. This was known throughout Tibet but I don't know about India; that was the year.

Q: Which year was it?

#1: I don't know the year.

Q: Then what happened? What happened in the year the skies thundered?

#1: The celestial beings fought and then humans fought. The war started.

Q: And what year was that about?

#1: That year Lhasa was not lost. Chamdo was lost. Chamdo surrendered and it was three years later that the Chinese entered Lhasa.

Q: In 1959?

[Interpreter to interviewer] Yes, three years prior to that.

Q: So 1956.

#1: The Chinese entered Tibet and in the Tibetan army, below the rank of the *Dapon* was the *Rupon* 'captain.' A *Rupon* named Bokang was killed by the Chinese, also a teacher. In total they killed five people.

Q: The *Dapon* for whom you worked was also killed? The *Dapon* Mogya was killed?

#1: No, he was not killed. The officer below him, the *Rupon* and another were killed.

Q: Did they fight in Chamdo?

#1: No, not in Chamdo. It was in Dhenkhor, which is on the border of China and Tibet.

Q: Were you anywhere near them?

#1: I was together with them. They [the Chinese] were firing at us and we were firing at them. We killed many Chinese. We even caught two of the Chinese.

Q: Did you also fight in the war? Were you in the army?

#1: I was in the army, but I was not a soldier. I was the servant of the *Dapon*. I did not have the army's uniform nor did I receive a salary.

Q: Did you see the leader killed?

#1: Yes, I even brought the body for a long distance to an empty land. There was nothing else to do.

Q: What were you fighting with?

#1: It was the previous Chinese not the present ones.

Q: With what weapons did you fight the Chinese?

#1: For weapons, we had two types of guns called *Enji Kharing* and *Enji Khadhun*. We did not have any artillery. We had these two types of guns *Kharing* and *Khadum*, which were purchased from India.

Q: Were you on horses or on foot?

#1: Let me show you. [gestures] If the Chinese were on this hill, we were on the opposite hill. We were firing on each other. Then gradually we inched forward until we were face to face and then it depended on who was more courageous.

Q: Were you on horses or on foot?

#1: There was no path to lead horses there. Otherwise, we all had horses.

Q: There were no horses on the hills?

#1: No, where we were fighting there were no horses.

Q: What area are we in? What part of the country?

#1: It is Dhen Choekhor Gong.

Q: Dhen Choekhor Gong? Is it near Chamdo?

#1: It is located between Dhege and Chamdo. The monastery is towards Chamdo.

Q: Was this your first fight or battle?

#1: That was the first battle fought by the Tibetan government.

Q: And the first one you were in?

#1: Yes.

Q: Were you wearing military clothes?

#1: I did not have military clothes. The others were sent from their particular places as soldiers depending on the area of land they cultivated.

Q: They had uniforms?

#1: They came from wherever their villages were depending on the amount of taxes they had to pay.

Q: They had uniforms?

#1: Yes, the army had uniforms.

Q: You did not have?

#1: No, I did not have. I had no salary and uniforms.

Q: But it sounds like you liked fighting?

#1: I liked fighting, but the actual fight was not simple. It was not easy to fire your gun because the enemies were firing at you. It was difficult to take aim.

Q: Were you scared?

#1: When the shots fell near you and people died, it was scary. There was no way to run because if you got up, they would fire on you. It was useless being scared.

Q: How long did the battle go on?

#1: We fought for six months. All the government's noblemen who lived in Chamdo, all of them fled setting their houses on fire. *Dapon Mogya* had 200 *Gadham* soldiers and 750 *Chodhar Losum*. Finally, the battle was lost and Chamdo surrendered. Ngabo and Mogya

were seized and imprisoned in separate houses. We were provided a mug full of *tsampa* with salt daily. They kept us there for one month.

Q: By whom?

#1: The *Khongten*.

Q: The Chinese?

#1: Yes, the Chinese.

Q: The Chinese captured Ngabo and Mogya and all of you?

#1: Yes, we were all captured. Since his capture, Ngabo has still not been released. He is with the Chinese.

Q: Is Ngabo still a prisoner?

#1: He is still with the Chinese. He was never released since then. He wasn't released when His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited China.

Q: Is he in prison?

#1: He does not have to remain in the prison. He is under house arrest. He is very old now. When we lost Chamdo, the Tibetan government surrendered at a place called Diwogong. Those who surrendered were the Thathang Maga, Gadham Maga; there were three divisions of the army. After our surrender the Chinese said, "Give us your guns, put a price on your horses and give them to us; we have to go confront the Americans. We are all children of the same parents, take a look at your face and you can see." So we gave them our guns and horses.

Q: You gave your guns and horses to the Chinese?

#1: Yes, we handed them over to the Chinese. Then they said, "We siblings have met, but we do not have big gifts to give you." And saying this they gave us the amount of 5 *Dhayen* 'silver coins' each along with a note. They said, "You can go back to wherever you were born. You do not have to pay taxes or repay your loans. You are free to go back."

Q: What did you do?

#1: I came from a Khampa background, but had so far spent my time with the central Tibetans. I did not feel comfortable going back to my home, so I went to Lhasa with the other soldiers. I reached Lhasa and related to my friends about the happenings that took place in my region and that I couldn't stay there and had come away. I told them that the Chinese would reach Lhasa soon. To this they said, "Don't talk about such things. You are not to say such things; the government will imprison you. From where will the Chinese

come? They cannot come from the sky. They cannot come from the ground. They will not come.” They did not believe me.

Q: You spoke to some people in Lhasa about this?

#1: Yes, to some of my friends and people I knew. I told them the reason why I had come to Lhasa; that we lost the region I came from and that the Chinese had beaten us.

Q: The Tibetan government?

[Interpreter to interviewer] Yes, that's right.

Q: When you went to Lhasa, did you go with your wife?

#1: Yes, we were together. She is still with me.

Q: The wife that you met, the woman you stayed with, you went for 30 days from Kham and met her in Utsang and took her back to Kham?

#1: My wife is a Khampa. Both of us are Khampas.

Q: Your wife is a Khampa?

#1: Yes, our villages were not too far apart, like Camp Number 1 and 2 here [in Bylakuppe].

Q: You said earlier that you traveled about 30 days to trade and met your wife. Wasn't that at Dhartsedho?

#1: That was Dhartsedho when I was serving the *Khenchen* and met a woman.

Q: Wasn't that the same woman?

#1: Yes, the same one. She had come in marriage to this family.

Q: The family lived close to your home?

#1: I was a wayward man and unlawfully took her away from the family and eloped.

Q: Where was your wife's home? Was it near your home?

#1: Yes, it was close.

Q: In Lhasa you told everybody about the defeat at Chamdo? And then what happened?

#1: I spoke about the surrender and about the killings to my friends, not just anybody, but confided to my friends and they didn't believe me. They told me that I was not to mention such things and could be imprisoned by the government. I had an earring at that time and they told me not to wear it. Then after three years, they came to Lhasa.

Q: The Chinese?

#1: Yes, the Chinese.

Q: Three years after you reached Lhasa the Chinese came there?

#1: For three years, the Chinese did not come.

Q: That was in '59 then? What were you doing when the Chinese came to Lhasa?

#1: For those three years, I had to make a living. I engaged in trading between Phari, Lhasa and Kongpo. I did trade. I had to make a living and look after my wife. I did petty trades for a living for my wife and myself. In the center of Lhasa there was a great family called Choe Dhonnyen Tsang.

Q: An aristocrat?

#1: Yes, an aristocrat, a very prominent one.

Q: A little you earlier you said that in Lhasa, they told you not even to wear the earring. They told you to take off your earring.

#1: That is a Khampa tradition and they told me it looked very peculiar in Lhasa. A person looked like a fake.

Q: What did it look like?

#1: It was round shaped. Some people here still have them.

Q: Was it big? Was it made of gold?

#1: Some are made of gold, some of brass; it depends on your wealth.

Q: What was your earring made of?

#1: Mine was made of gold.

Q: Were there other people around Lhasa still wearing their Khampa earrings?

#1: The Khampas don't wear it. The people of Utsang wore earrings.

Q: But just now you said you took off your earring because it was a Khampa tradition.

#1: It was the tradition of the Utsang people to wear gold earrings and there were hardly any Khampas who wore them.

Q: Oh, they thought you behaved like an Utsang man?

#1: They thought I looked like a Khampa turned into an Utsang man; a fake person. They said I shouldn't make myself look like a laughing stock. Then in three years, they arrived.

Q: You were telling us something about the aristocrat family.

#1: In three years the Chinese came. At that time I was a trader for the Choe Dhonyen Tsang family transporting wool.

Q: Please repeat the name of the aristocrat family.

#1: Choe Dhonyen Tsang. I was their trader.

Q: You were the trader for the Choe Dhonyen Tsang. Then?

#1: I had brought 1,500 bales of wool to Phari, which is close to Domo.

Q: What did you bring?

#1: Wool. Sheep's wool.

Q: 1,000?

#1: 1,500 bales.

Q: On what did you transport? On sheep or what animals?

#1: Yes, on sheep.

Q: You took wool to Phari. On which animal did you transport?

#1: For that we had to hire transporters. It could be yak or any animal.

Q: The 1,500 bales belonged to the Choe Dhonyen Tsang?

#1: Yes, that is right. I was their trader, their servant. Then one day in Phari I heard the news that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had left Tibet and that the Chinese had done terrible things.

Q: In Phari?

#1: Yes, in Phari. Immediately upon hearing this, I unloaded about 60 to 70 bales in Domo which was much closer. I had unloaded the bales in the warehouse and was on the verge of locking the door when a Chinese arrived. He said, “Lobsang, there is no need to lock. The *Tungyang* ‘the Chinese’ have arrived and there will be no thieves.”

Q: *Tungyang* means the Chinese?

#1: Yes, *Tungyang* means the Chinese. He said there was no need to lock as the Chinese had come and there would be no thieves.

Q: You heard His Holiness had left when you were in Phari.

#1: Yes, I heard it only at Phari. Until then I hadn't heard about it. Then what happened was that the Chinese told my landlord, “You cannot tell us that this trader has gone here or there. You are responsible for him and should be able to hand him to us when asked.” They said this in the presence of both the landlord and tenant. They said that I was to stay at the landlord's house.

Q: At Domo?

#1: Yes, at Domo. The landlord, who was the owner of the house, was the leader of Domo and his name was Gundhu Apo. The caretaker of the house was a man named Chokponla. So I was in their keep. I somehow evaded and made my escape through the hills.

Q: The Chinese had asked the landlord not to let you go anywhere?

#1: They said that he was not to allow me anywhere and that if I went missing, he would be arrested.

Q: Then how did you manage to escape?

#1: He helped me up the hills until we got to the hill near India.

Q: The landlord helped you escape?

#1: Yes, the landlord helped me. That's how I could escape. Then after crossing over the mountain pass, I reached Sikkim where the army was stationed. I was not allowed to go further.

Q: Which place did you reach?

#1: On the other side were the Chinese and on this side there were also soldiers.

Q: You mean the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

#1: No, not the *Chushi Gangdrug*; the soldiers of Sikkim. There were two types of military in Gangtok.

Q: You mean Gangtok? Sikkim? Denjong?

#1: Yes, the soldiers of Sikkim. The soldiers of Sikkim stopped me and wouldn't allow me further. They had spoken with the Chinese and they refused to allow people to either enter or leave the place. They said they would send me back.

Q: Who was in your party?

#1: There was nobody with me. I was alone. I told them that I lived in Kalimpong, that my phone number was 100, that the name of the house where I stayed was called Hegapa, that the Chinese seized 1,500 bales of wool, that I had three companions who were captured by the Chinese, and that if they would allow me to pass through, my home was in Kalimpong.

Q: Was that a lie?

#1: No, that was the truth.

Q: You lived in Kalimpong?

#1: Then they asked about it to Kalimpong, to my boss who was called Achung Das, the top person of that area. Through him I was allowed to go. Otherwise, the troops in Sikkim would not permit and people were turned back to the Chinese.

Q: Why did you decide to leave Tibet?

#1: The main reason I had to escape was that I was a trader and had a huge quantity of wool. They were capturing all the traders. In Domo, there were soldiers of the Tibetan government. The soldiers were seized and sent away in vehicles to be imprisoned.

Q: By the Chinese?

#1: Yes, the Chinese were capturing all the traders.

Q: How did you feel about leaving Tibet?

#1: When I had to leave Tibet and come?

Q: Yes, you were leaving your country and escaping into India. What were your feelings?

#1: His Holiness the Dalai Lama had left earlier. I had heard about that. Many were left in the mountains. Because His Holiness had escaped, the army of Sikkim let the people go through.

Q: What did you feel in your heart?

#1: The feelings in my heart? I felt if I was not a trader...[cannot understand the words spoken here]...a section of the Tibetans escorted His Holiness and a section was fighting the Chinese. Then it was a matter of strength.

Q: When you left Tibet and came, what feeling did you have? Sadness?

#1: In my mind, there was nothing to measure the situation. People were desperate—there was no food, no clothing, no country and His Holiness' situation. The despair was beyond expression. Except for suffering there was not one iota of peace of mind. On this whole earth nothing worse could happen to anybody than what happened to the Tibetans, in this whole world.

Q: Where was your wife?

#1: When I went to the north to buy wool, she was with my boss at Kalimpong. I went to Tibet to buy wool.

Q: This aristocrat family, Choe Dhonyen Tsang, did they live in Kalimpong?

#1: Yes, Choe Dhonyen Tsang was a Tibetan government official.

Q: You were their trader.

#1: Yes, I was their trader.

Q: They had a house in Kalimpong?

#1: Yes, they did.

-Q: So your wife was in Kalimpong?

[Interpreter to interviewer] Yes, in Kalimpong at that time.

Q: Did you get together?

#1: The Sikkim army let me through, but I was penniless when I reached Kalimpong. Whatever my boss possessed was with me and that the Chinese had seized.

Q: What did you do next?

#1: Then His Holiness the Dalai Lama came to Dorjiden [Bodh Gaya, India]. Every Tibetan from the three provinces of Tibet gathered there. We heard that the United States was going to help us; that they were going to drop us money from the sky and that they would drop us aid. All the Tibetan aristocrats obeyed the orders of His Holiness to set up

Tibetan settlements. These decisions were taken at that time and I came to the settlement here.

Q: They said that America was going to send help?

#1: Yes, they did. They are like our parents.

Q: Where did the aid reach?

#1: They said the aid would be dropped from the sky and that it would reach our peoples' hands and that we were not to fight among ourselves for it. People took oath and swore in Dorjiden to be honest.

Q: This was not correct; America did not drop aid from the sky.

#1: They did drop aid.

Q: Where did they drop?

#1: I don't have the names of people who received them.

Q: Where did they drop the aid?

#1: It was said that they dropped aid at Lho.

Q: At Lho?

#1: That is a place in Tibet, a very big place.

Q: That was not in India?

#1: No, no, it was right in Tibet. It used to be said that aid was dropped, but I haven't seen it. Then nine of our people were secretly trained in the United States. One of the men, Sonam Wangyal lives at Laxmipur camp here; another was Yabtsang Say Dhonyoe; many went. The United States have helped us greatly.

Q: Did you know any of those men?

#1: Among them one lives in Laxmipur camp, I know him. Then Yabtsang Say Dhonyoe, I know him, he comes here. They did the training. There were nine of them.

Q: Why do you think the Chinese invaded Tibet?

#1: That is very difficult to say. I dare not say. I can think of two things. I told you that my uncle destroyed my family of seven. It is like that. He was my mother's brother and favoring his wife's sister, ruined my family. Such things, all the Tibetans should keep in

mind in the future—unlawful, shameless, no awareness of virtue and sin. He was dead there on the second day of the Tibetan New Year, in the temple of the two deities. There is always God above.

Q: What do you think should have been done to help the Tibetan people?

#1: If possible, there is nothing that the Tibetans don't need. We need support on the issue of independence for Tibet as is advocated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In my mind I think that is the most important. We have truth on our side.

[Tape change]

#1: His Holiness the Dalai Lama came to Dorjidhen. That was the place where all the decisions took place in setting up schools and settlements by requesting the Indian government. When I first came to this settlement, except for the camp number one, there were no people to be seen. Everywhere, it was a jungle. No humans could penetrate it. Then we cut the trees and built roads. For six months we worked in constructing the lake there and hoed our lands for cultivation. Then it was announced that joining the 22 unit of the Indian army was beneficial, so I was there for 7 to 8 years. I worked hard in the fields and also went to trade sweaters. To keep hunger at bay, we have done a lot of hard work. Now due to the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, when we have grown old, my wife and I are in the Home for the Aged. We have been here for 10 to 11 years now.

Q: You liked the army.

#1: I was in the army for seven years.

Q: Did you like being in the army?

#1: At that time whether you liked the army or not; our country was lost to the Chinese and there was no hesitation in me if I had the chance to confront them. I felt I had to do something whatever the consequences.

Q: How long were you in the army?

#1: Seven years.

Q: Where were you stationed?

#1: When I first joined, I was in the 36th Battalion and later the 9th Company.

Q: What was the name of the place?

#1: It is a secret and one cannot reveal that.

Q: You were in your late 30's at that time and you were married and did you have a child at that time?

#1: We had a child when we were in Tibet, but no children here.

Q: You have a child in Tibet?

#1: Our child was left behind in Tibet. He was a clever child and studied Chinese. He later became a Chinese leader. My wife went to meet him. He told me to come to Tibet, but I didn't. As a Chinese leader, he went on a vacation and his vehicle fell over and he died.

Q: A son or a daughter?

#1: A son.

Q: You had a son in Tibet, but no children in India?

#1: Right.

END OF INTERVIEW