

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #45N – Badho
April 15, 2015

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #45N
2. Interviewee: Badho
3. Age: 84
4. Date of Birth: 1931
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Nangchen
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: April 15, 2015
10. Place of Interview: Jampaling Tibetan Refugee Settlement, Dulegaunda, Tanahun, Nepal
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 30 min
12. Interviewer: Katharine Davies Samway
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Henry Tenenbaum
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Badho was born in Nangchen Dhiyagong under the King of Nangchen, who ruled a large region with 18 divisions and a population of 120,000. Badho belonged to a poor family and he and his brother performed various kinds of work for the local monastery like carrying water, herding animals, collecting dung for fuel and carrying soil and rocks during construction of houses. They received food and housing but no wages for their work.

Badho recounts about how the invading Chinese initially appeared to be friendly and paid for food with silver coins. Gradually their behavior grew worse and they tightened their grip with arrests, imprisonments, torture and physical struggle sessions of influential people, lamas and leaders. Badho's other brother was a monk, who was killed by the Chinese when 300-400 monks hiding in a cave were bombarded from the air.

Many of the poor Tibetans were coerced into helping the Chinese, but Badho resisted. Badho was imprisoned for one month and interrogated. The Chinese forced the prisoners to cut into pieces the swords, cauldrons and Buddhist statues from monasteries to be converted into weapons. Badho recounts his daring escape back home to his mother who urged her two sons to flee before the Chinese captured them.

Topics Discussed:

Kham, servitude, first appearance of Chinese, oppression under Chinese, imprisonment, destruction of monasteries, escape experiences.

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Interview #45N

Interviewee: Badho

Age: 84, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Katharine Davies Samway

Interview Date: April 15, 2015

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:09

Interviewee #45N: The name is Badho.

Q: How old are you?

#45N: Eighty-four years.

Q: Where were you brought up? Where were you born?

#45N: Nangchen Dhiyagong.

Q: Which province is that in?

#45N: Under the King of Nangchen.

Q: There are three provinces in Tibet: Kham, Utsang and Amdo. Which province is that in?

#45N: Under the King of Nangchen.

Q: So Nangchen, is this a town or village or settlement?

#45N: Nangchen is a large region with 18 divisions and a population of 120,000.

Q: How many divisions in Nangchen?

#45N: Eighteen divisions.

Q: And the population?

#45N: 120,000 people.

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama had asked us to record your experiences, so 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?

00:02:28

#45N: Yes.

Q: Thank you. During this interview if you would like to take a break or stop at any time, please let us know.

#45N: Okay.

Q: If you don't want to answer a question or talk about anything, please also let us know.

#45N: Okay.

Q: If your interview were to be shared in Tibet or China, would it be a problem for you?

#45N: There will be no problems.

Q: Thank you.

#45N: Okay.

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

#45N: Okay.

Q: Thank you. So Nangchen, you said that there are 12,000 people and 18 groups. Those 18 groups, were they settlements or villages or towns?

#45N: 120,000. There were small [divisions] and large ones called Bego and Bekyang. Bego is slightly larger while Bekyang has less [people].

Q: Belo?

#45N: Bego is slightly larger and Bekyang is smaller.

Q: Do you mean regions?

#45N: Yes.

Q: So was this community a nomadic, semi-nomadic or a farming area?

00:04:48

#45N: Some engaged in farming and some in nomadic activities.

Q: Your family, what did your family do?

#45N: My family lived in the monastery that provided food and work.

Q: So your family worked in the monastery. What work did you do in the monastery?

#45N: I have an elder sibling who was the monastery's water carrier.

Q: Male or female?

#45N: Male, male.

Q: The monastery's water carrier?

#45N: Yes, water carrier.

Q: And then?

#45N: One was a monk.

Q: And then?

#45N: And then me. There were three [siblings].

Q: And what did you do in the monastery?

#45N: I fetched water at times and ran any errand that I was asked to do.

Q: What kinds of places were you sent? What kinds of things were you asked to do?

#45N: Yes?

Q: Where did the monastery ask you to go?

00:07:06

#45N: [I] was sent here and there or to bring in the animals and such. Wherever [I] was asked to go for any kind of work, I did it.

Q: For people who are not familiar with monastery life and working at the monastery, could you tell us in a bit more detail what kinds of work you would do in a week's day?

#45N: One had to transport dung—the dung of yaks is used as fuel to make fire—from the nomads. Rich nomads informed that they would make an offering of dung to the monastery, which 3-4 men including me transported on yaks owned by the monastery called *tseyak* 'yaks freed for life.' Food was provided but not wages.

Q: You were given no food by the monastery...you were given no wages by the monastery or by the nomads?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: We were given food by the monastery but not wages.

Q: How old were you when you were doing this work?

00:09:21

#45N: [I] was 18-19 years old then.

Q: Until what age did you work in the monastery?

#45N: [I] worked for the monastery from a young age until the Chinese occupied the country.

Q: So the work that you did for the monastery, what was the hardest work that you had to do?

#45N: The hardest...there was not any that could be called the hardest. [I] had to do whatever was assigned.

Q: What about the easiest work that you did? What was the easiest work?

#45N: When houses were being constructed or razed, it was hard carrying the soil and rocks.

Q: Was this work, constructing houses and carrying rocks work that you did for the monastery?

#45N: Yes.

Q: And what was particularly hard about it?

00:11:33

#45N: During the construction of houses, one must carry soil and rocks on the back.

Q: I see, carrying soil and rocks on the back.

#45N: Yes, carrying soil and rocks on the back and handing them to the builder that built the walls. Then one must stamp on the mud with the feet to knead it.

Q: What did you like most about working in the monastery?

#45N: The best...if there were animals being offered to the monastery like yaks, goats or sheep [I] was asked to bring them to the monastery's animal herders. This was the least difficult job. One went to the nomad who would provide food and then drove the animals in.

Q: How long would it take you to go and get those animals and bring them back?

00:13:26

#45N: It was very far. One could return in a day's time.

Q: And the nomads were they part of your settlement?

#45N: There were the ones called *norma* that took care of the monastery's animals. We lived close to them but we did not own animals.

Q: *Norma* were...

#45N: Belonged to the monastery.

Q: ...those that herded the monastery's animals?

#45N: Yes, [they] were animal herders that made stocks of butter and cheese, which was accounted to the monastery. *Norma* were paid to do this job.

Q: Were you a *norma*?

#45N: No, I was not a *norma*.

Q: These people, these *norma*, they were hired by the monastery?

#45N: Yes.

Q: So did the monastery pay them for taking care of the animals?

#45N: Yes, they were paid annually.

Q: How were they paid?

00:15:24

#45N: [They] were given animals. An annual account was conducted and they were given yaks or *dri* 'female yaks' or sheep depending upon the quantity of work.

Q: Could you give us an example of the kind of work that you would do to get a yak in payment?

#45N: The work entailed removing dung, the dung of yaks and *dri* and drying it in the sun. Then milking the *dri*, grazing [the animals] during the day, bringing [them] home in the evening to be tethered there. In the morning milking the *dri*, removing the yaks' dung and drying it. Such were the duties of a nomad.

Q: So if I were a nomad...if I was a *norma* and I was paid with a sheep, what kind of work would I have done?

#45N: The work involved grazing animals and taking care of them. That was the only work, taking care of animals. The monastery provided food as usual.

Q: What work did your parents do? What was their livelihood?

00:17:54

#45N: There was no father and [we] were said to be illegitimate. I have never seen Father. Mother was there. Mother stayed home and did spinning, and also tanned hide by stamping with the feet. [She spun] and placed the thread in bunches over the head. [The thread] was used to stitch *lokpa* ‘traditional dress made of sheepskin.’

Q: To stitch what, *pa-la*?

#45N: Woolen thread to stitch *lokpa*. [Mother] also tanned hide.

Q: Was your family considered poor or middle class or wealthy?

#45N: [We] were among the poor.

Q: How could you tell that your family was a poor family?

#45N: [We] did not have riches right from the beginning. Right from the beginning [we] did not possess anything, living by serving others and surviving on the wages. Mother tanned hide and spun thread from wool. Then there was *doma* ‘tiny wild sweet potato’ to be dug. [Mother] could dig *doma* unlike anybody. My mother was an excellent worker.

Q: Did your mother have any animals?

00:20:26

#45N: There were no animals. [Mother] had three sons, one of whom was a monk, the other a water carrier for the monastery and I lived in the monastery running whatever errands assigned and ate there.

Q: Was it your mother or was it you and your brothers, who decided that you three brothers would go into the monastery?

#45N: [Smiles] That was decided by each one of us. The monastery’s water carrier was asked, “Please come to carry water.” And [he] replied in the affirmative. The monk decided to become a monk himself.

Q: Did you live at home with your mother and brothers or did you live in the monastery?

#45N: Most of the time [I] lived in the monastery and when there were no prayer assemblies in the monastery, [I] went to stay and eat with mother.

Q: Did the monks educate you?

00:22:26

#45N: There was no education. Nobody gave an education. Being the child of a poor [family] no one taught [me] Tibetan and such as a little one. There was not anyone that gave education to the children of the poor.

Q: [You] weren't taught to read and write?

#45N: No.

Q: What about your brother who is a monk?

#45N: He did. [He] was killed by the Chinese.

Q: Did he get an education?

#45N: Yes.

Q: Did he get an opportunity to study?

#45N: Yes.

Q: How was he killed by the Chinese?

#45N: I heard it later. I had escaped over the pass. There were around 400-500 monks left there that pretended to flee and went up a high mountain called Panji Gamga where there was a cave and secured the area. One day the Chinese flew two or three airplanes and attacked from the sky. None survived. The 300-400 monks were killed together.

Q: How did the plane kill them?

00:24:34

#45N: Bombs were dropped from the planes.

Q: How did the Chinese know that all of these monks were up in the high mountain in a cave?

#45N: There were many bad people and there were many good people. The bad ones passed the information to the Chinese. In Tibet there were different committees that were "running dogs" of the Chinese. If they came to know [they] immediately passed the information.

Q: So when did you...did you see the Chinese coming into Kham?

#45N: Yes?

Q: Did you see the Chinese coming into the region, saw the Chinese come?

#45N: [I] saw many. We lived close to the Chinese. There were many Chinese in the place called Nangchen Shonda.

Q: Were there many Chinese?

#45N: There were.

Q: What were they doing there?

#45N: When the Chinese first came to Nangchen, they said nice things. They paid 2-3 *dhayen* ‘Chinese silver coins’ for a cup of curd. They pretended to be good initially. Then gradually they began to constrict.

Q: Did you ever speak with the Chinese or listen to them speaking to a lot of people in your community?

00:27:12

#45N: Yes, that happened many times. They were nearby. There was a saltpan called Nege Tsakha located a mountain pass away from the monastery. Actually it belonged to the Tibetans but the Chinese had occupied it.

Q: What?

#45N: Salt.

Q: Saltpan?

#45N: Yes, there was a saltpan watched over by many Chinese.

Q: What kind of messages did the Chinese convey to Tibetans about why they were in Tibet?

#45N: To the Chinese?

Q: What did the Chinese say to the Tibetans about why they were in Tibet?

#45N: Initially the Chinese said, “We are friends and are like siblings from the same set of parents. We will treat you well. We will never treat you bad anytime.” The Chinese spoke sweetly and paid 2-3 *dhayen* for food in the beginning. Then [they] grew worse and worse, grew rougher and rougher, and then spoke big, “If you do not obey the [Chinese] government, you have only one way to go.”

Q: And what was that one way to go?

00:29:29

#45N: It meant, “[We] will kill, execute.”

Q: I understand that the Chinese said at one point that they came to help the poor and I understand that land was taken from the wealthy, animals were taken from the wealthy and given to the poor. Is that what you heard and saw?

#45N: [I] saw it. [The Chinese] did such things. The rich families were categorized in the wealthy class and [their] wealth was to be divided equally with those that did not have. “You cannot keep all the wealth but it must be divided equally with those that do not have,” the Chinese said so to the wealthy class later. Now they were becoming worse and worse.

Q: When you heard them say that did you ever think, “I’m going to stay in Tibet so that I can become a bit wealthier”?

00:31:38

#45N: I did not think so. He [wealthy man] had saved his wealth by working hard and if it was to be divided equally, he would not do so willingly and we would not want it. I never looked forward to receiving such wealth.

Q: Were there other people that you knew who did accept that offer?

#45N: There could be. There were the many running dogs of the Chinese that accepted those.

Q: Were these any of your friends?

#45N: There are those that [I] know in the hometown if they are not dead.

Q: Did you know any of those people that were the running dogs of the Chinese then?

#45N: [I] do know [them].

Q: What did you say to them?

00:33:07

#45N: “You should not listen to what the Chinese are saying. It is bad and [you] should not pay heed.” They replied, “We have no choice but to obey for the Chinese have enlisted us. We have to work for the Chinese.”

Q: So did they feel obliged to stay and work for the Chinese or do you think that they could have refused and gone with you when you went into exile?

#45N: They were obliged and were a part of the committees and sub-committees. The senior monks of our monastery, the senior lamas, the disciplinarian—the disciplinarian of the monastery—and the supervisor, we were staying together at the place called Dhompaga. [They] were taken away every night, taken every night to meet Chinese leaders. When [they] returned—returned from the prison—all these [touches various parts of face]

were bruised and red and these [touches arms] were swollen. [They] had been subjected to *thaptsoe* ‘physical struggle.’

When asked what happens during a *thaptsoe*, it was said that the monks had been placed in the center surrounded by [members of the] committees and sub-committees. The disciplinarian was told, “You used to beat the young monks.” He was pushed to this side and that side and punched during the *thaptsoe*. [The monks] were thus beaten. Later there were two monks and a layman called Bongsu Pinam; the three were together with me. [We] stayed together for a week and one night they were gone, never to be seen again.

Q: What’s the name of the three monks?

00:35:27

#45N: Names of the monks?

Q: Yes. Bongsu Pinam?

#45N: Bongsu Pinam was not a monk but a layman. One of the monks was called Bonpo Tadak.

Q: Yes?

#45N: Bonpo Tadak, Bonpo.

Q: Bonpo Tadak?

#45N: Yes. One was called Choedak.

Q: When you heard this what was your reaction?

00:37:11

#45N: I felt sad that [the monks] were beaten like that. The monks were forced to kill yaks. Monks that do not commit negative acts were made to kill yaks and forced to sleep with women by the Chinese. “Sleep with women. You are not allowed to refuse.” Such was the oppression. For around a week [the monks] were subjected like that to *thaptsoe* and beating and then returned. A week later [they] disappeared and were never seen again.

Q: Was your brother amongst these monks or was he on the mountain when they bombed the cave?

#45N: No, he was atop the high mountain called Panjiganga with around 400 monks in a cave because the area seemed safe.

Q: Was [your brother] there?

#45N: [He] was amongst them.

Q: When you went into exile was this before the Dalai Lama went into exile or after the Dalai Lama went into exile?

00:39:17

#45N: After His Holiness the Dalai Lama left...it was around the same time.

Q: About 1959?

#45N: Okay.

Q: Could you please tell us in as much detail as you can your story of going into exile? Who did you go with? What happened? Were you ever captured by the Chinese?

#45N: It was like this when I came into exile: My elder brother who lives in Tibet, the monastery's water carrier was sent as a messenger from Jang Namtsokha by the lamas. [They] messaged the monks in the monastery, "We are running away. You should not stay back. Come away. There is no need to think about the monastery's properties. Abandon these. Someone or other will harvest the fields. There should be no regrets. You have to come away." However, they did not and remained. So all the monks were annihilated.

Q: Who was living in the monastery?

#45N: Yes?

Q: Who was left behind in the monastery?

#45N: The large number of monks was there. There were 700-800 monks.

Q: What was the name of the lama?

00:40:54

#45N: The lama was called Dhato Rinpoche, Dhiya Dhato Rinpoche. There were two lamas and the other was called Tulku Sappa Rinpoche who presently lives in Nepal.

Q: They sent your brother who was the water carrier from Jang Namtsokha to the monastery asking to abandon the properties and the monks to escape...

#45N: Yes, but the monks did not pay heed and stayed back to protect the monastery and then were annihilated.

Q: Were they not on the mountaintop?

#45N: They were on the Panjiganga in a cave believing the area was extremely secure, but were bombed from this side and that side from the sky by three planes and were completely annihilated.

Q: Three planes?

#45N: Yes.

Q: What about your flight into exile?

00:42:59

#45N: The lamas had sent a letter through my brother, the water carrier. [He] was sent from Jang Namtsokha to our hometown. It mentioned that the monks were to leave and that the two lamas were at Jang Namtsokha then and planned to flee further. [My brother] was sent to the monastery with the letters. He was alone; he was sent alone and my home was near the monastery. Mother was present then. [My brother] said, "I am going back to the lamas as a messenger and you have to accompany me. Let us, the brothers leave."

Carrying packs and begging along the way...in the beginning the monastery provided a bagful of supplies but the distance was great. The [two] lamas had continued onwards to the mountain pass of Thoe. When [we] asked [people along the way] if they had seen lamas from such a monastery, some replied they had not and some replied they had. After a while, [we found] the stones from their campfire that were warm and the dung from the animal still fresh. Then [we] caught up with the lamas at Thargo Dharang Yumtso.

Q: What's the name of the place? Thago...?

#45N: Thargo Dharang Yumtso.

Q: How long had it taken you to get that far?

00:45:56

#45N: It took around six months.

Q: It took you six months to...

#45N: [Interrupts] ...carrying packs [indicates on the back].

Q: And did you have enough food for six months?

#45N: [We] begged food from the nomads.

Q: What would they give you?

#45N: Some nomads said, "Poor things. We are unable to flee with the animals. It is good, it is good if the lamas have left. You should serve [the lamas] well. We will try to flee too." Taking [us] inside the home, [the nomads] gave curd and milk, and butter, cheese and *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley' for the next day.

Q: Was it one lama or two then?

#45N: There were two lamas. One was Tulku Sapga and the other was called Dhato Rinpoche. Both the lamas died and reincarnations have been born and are presently in Nepal.

Q: So some nomads said, “You need to go and serve the lama but we have all these animals and we can’t go.” Did any of the nomads not help you?

00:47:55

#45N: Some nomads refused to give. There was [one tribe of] a nomad with a strange headdress that was shaped like this [makes a circle with forefingers on head]. [We] encountered some such nomads. [They] did this [covers nose with coat] and carrying a grain or two in a small plate threw it [at us] deeming [us] unclean, doing this to the nose [covers nose with coat]. The headdress on top of the head was a strange custom and looked like some sort of a round horn. Some such women came [covers nose with coat] and threw [the grain at us]. When there was nothing to eat, what can [we] do with the grain?

Q: What did you do when they did that, throw it at you?

#45N: What to do when there was not anything to eat? I did carry a spear in the hand. [I] carried a spear in the hand and a square-shaped wooden staff called *bhey* that could kill a man if hit correctly. *Bhey* is a square-shaped staff that was tied to [my] waist. [I] did not have any thought of quarrelling then. When the grain was scattered, [we] did not care and left.

Q: So what happened after they threw the grain? What happened then after they threw the grain at you?

00:50:21

#45N: Then [we] went away.

Q: So you didn’t pick up the grain or anything like that?

#45N: No, one cannot eat the grain. It was raw grain. It was their custom to give grain in a small plate, which they threw [at us] after [covers nose with coat].

Perhaps they were from Tsang. All the women had something like horns that was round on the head. They considered [us] very unclean for [they] threw the handful of grain [at us], considering [us] very unclean.

Q: I’m wondering why they thought you were very unclean? What gave them the impression?

#45N: [I] do not know. Should [they] not consider [us] unclean there was no need to cover the mouth with the sleeve of the *lokpa*. It would have been proper to give alms, even if it is grain in a good manner. They considered us very unclean. [We] came upon such an area.

Q: What’s *lokpa*?

#45N: Yes?

Q: *Lokpa*? Is it dress?

#45N: Yes, it is the dress, the *chupa* ‘traditional dress’ made from sheepskin and bordered with cloth.

Q: These were all women, were they?

00:52:37

#45N: Yes, women.

Q: So do you think they were afraid?

#45N: [They] did not seem afraid. Theirs was a large village and [we] were nearly bitten by dogs. When asked for something to eat, [they] gave grain.

Q: Were you still in Tibet?

#45N: Yes, in the Thoe region of Tibet.

Q: Where about in Tibet?

#45N: Thoe...there were those from Bungpa and...

Q: Is it in the direction of Mt. Kailash?

#45N: No, it is not towards Mt. Kailash. There were the people of upper and lower Bungpa and many other groups that begged along the mountain pass of Thoe.

Q: So it took you six months to catch up with the lamas. Then how long did it take you to reach the border?

#45N: Then [we] came to the place called Likkse.

Q: Likkse?

#45N: Likkse are the people of Tsang in the north.

Q: How long did it take?

00:54:30

#45N: I do not know how long it took. I came as the lamas’ servant herding the horses and mules. From then on I came as the lamas’ servant.

There was a large river at Likkse that [we] crossed in a coracle along with the belongings.

Q: You mentioned that you had a stick and a staff. Did you have other weapons with you?

#45N: [Smiles] There was not any other. The staff was called *bhey* and made of wood that was hard. The [piece of] wood was fashioned into square shape, heated on fire and rubbed with butter such that it became like metal.

Q: Did you ever have to use your staff or stick when you were going into exile?

00:56:25

#45N: [I] nearly had to but just about escaped it. It happened like this. There were a few nomads from who [I] sought alms. Before alms could be given or refused, a dog pounced upon me. When the dog became unleashed I had the staff tied at the waist. [I] swung it like this [swings right hand] and hit it here [touches nose] severing the snout.

Q: The dog?

#45N: Yes, the dog's snout was cut off. [I] swung the staff which severed the snout. Then a large number of people rushed towards me. "Why did you kill the dog?" "I will not feed a dog with warm human flesh. I swung the staff in desperation and hit it. Kill me if you wish to for I am just one person. I have a sibling and you can kill him too. I have no regrets."

Then [I] held on to the spear. "Where are you from?" "I am a servant of Dhiya Monastery." "Where are you going?" "I am on the way to see a lama." "Okay. Let's leave this." Then he did not cause me any harm. I had just swung the staff sideways and it cut off the snout. [The nomads] fell upon me saying that I had killed the dog. There were 2-3 people.

Q: I understand that the monasteries had a lot of weapons stored there. Did any of those weapons go with the lamas?

00:59:09

#45N: There was not any chance because the Chinese had taken [the weapons] away. Earlier I mentioned about loading the yaks and [travelling] to the place called Dhompaga. Being a servant of the monastery the Chinese ordered me to do so. There were the leader of the place called Norma, I, and a member of the Chinese' Committee; the three of us drove 28 yaks that were laden with weapons and also cheese that was to be fed to the Chinese' horses.

Q: Cheese?

#45N: Yes, cheese. [We] reached [the cargo] along with the cheese at Dhompaga. At Dhompaga was a large house for keeping *yari*, an extremely large house in which we were imprisoned. On heavy days there were 200 or 300 prisoners that were brought from different places.

Q: What did [you] say the large house was meant for?

#45N: *Yari*.

Q: What's *yari*?

#45N: *Yari* means the calves of yaks. *Yari* means the calves of *dri* and yaks. [Laughs]

Q: Why did the Chinese take you away and imprison you?

01:01:27

#45N: I was not subjected to any beating in the prison but there were three people, the supervisor, the disciplinarian and one called Bongsu Pinam that were subjected to suffering because they were influential people.

Q: The supervisor and...?

#45N: The supervisor and the disciplinarian.

Q: Disciplinarian?

#45N: Disciplinarian.

Q: And then?

#45N: The other was called Bongsu Pinam who was a layman. The three were influential people and they [the Chinese] subjected [them] to physical struggle—beatings and such things as I mentioned earlier. A week later, [the three] disappeared.

Q: How were you treated in prison?

01:02:44

#45N: I was interrogated. There was a *dhopdhop* 'obstinate monk [one who failed his exams]' from Sera [Monastery], a tall man who was an interpreter, as we would say here, for the Chinese. He said, "If you speak honestly you will get to go with the People's Liberation Army and will be issued a gun. If you do not speak up, there is only one way left for you." Saying so [the interpreter] moved a pistol over [my] cheek [touches right cheek].

Q: What? A gun?

#45N: Yes, a pistol, a gun. [Touches right part of neck]. "You have to speak the truth," [the interpreter] said. [I] replied then, "I do not have anything to say for I am the child of a beggar." "Where has your lama gone?" "I do not know where the lama has gone. You are a Tibetan and know that a child of a beggar is not allowed to go near lamas and leaders. You know [he] would be told to go away. So I did not see where the lama of the monastery went." I was taken every day [to be interrogated] but was not beaten. [I] was asked to speak every day and [I] said the same thing.

Q: But you did know where the lama went?

01:05:00

#45N: I knew but did not reveal it.

Q: And where was the lama?

#45N: At that time the lama had left for *yardhong*. During summer the lamas of the monastery visited all the nomadic sites on *yardhong* when animals, butter and cheese were offered. [The lamas] left once for *yardhong* and then for *gundhong* [to receive offerings in wintertime] to the farmers who made offerings of grain and such to the lamas. Nobody knew anything except that [the lamas] were on *yardhong*. However, I knew.

Q: Were the lamas on *yardhong* then?

#45N: On *yardhong* and then had continued to walk towards Thoe through the nomadic sites.

Q: So was this the high lama that they were talking about?

#45N: Yes.

Q: What was the lama's name?

#45N: Dhato Rinpoche.

Q: Dhato Rinpoche.

#45N: And the other was Tulku Sapga Rinpoche.

Q: Two lamas?

#45N: Yes, there were two lamas in the monastery who were very great lamas.

Q: Do you know if these two lamas survived the Chinese invasion?

01:07:08

#45N: Yes?

Q: Did the two lamas survive the Chinese invasion and come into exile?

#45N: Yes, [they] did and presently live in Nepal. Both the lamas passed away but have taken rebirth. [The reincarnations] live in Kathmandu.

Q: So how long were you kept in the prison?

#45N: I was around a month in prison. Then one night I had a strange dream, a dream. As [I] slept... Well, there was not any space to sleep for all the men were like this [presses all

fingers together]. [The Chinese] interned 300-400 prisoners in the room. There was no place to urinate and whether it was being done in hands or cups, it was sprayed like raindrops. That was the condition.

Q: Who did that?

#45N: There were the prisoners, the many prisoners, 300-400. It was like this [presses all fingers together] and there was no space to sleep. The Chinese surrounded the area.

Q: Urinated in cups and did what?

#45N: Threw in the air.

Q: The prisoners did it?

#45N: Yes, [I] do not know whether the prisoners were urinating in hands or cups, it was sprayed like rain. Well, people were desperate.

Q: And then?

01:08:35

#45N: Then I had a strange dream. One night as [I] fell asleep for a short while [I] dreamed that I was with mother. [I] dreamed of Mother giving me a bowl of curd in a silver bowl called *nyulnam* in my hometown. [I] dreamed [Mother] gave me curd in a silver bowl. I sat thinking that I must run away.

Then one night I made an effort to flee. [I] got up around midnight and from the stonewall of the *yari* house of Dhompaga [I] took down one stone at a time, placing it where it could not be seen. Then I just about managed to flee and directly...on one side [indicates right] the spies and our guards were sleeping with the guns placed here [indicates front]. I crept on [my] knees and elbows slowly down a slope until I reached flat ground. There were Chinese tents. After that there were no Chinese and I fled non-stop. Just before nightfall I reached Mother. [I] had a dream that was fortunate. Mother said that I must run away for good and packed food supplies for me in a bag and [gave me] a *chingpa* ‘felt’ that we used in our hometown when it rained.

Q: *Chingpa*?

#45N: Yes, a *chingpa* rolled and tied with a rope. Then there was the *gyedhagopi* that was used to pack *tsampa* and cheese in, tied with a rope and then when some horsemen appeared, Mother told me to flee. [I] fled through a valley.

Q: What’s the name of the *tsampa* container?

01:10:25

#45N: It is called *gyedhagopi*.

Q: Yes?

#45N: Gyedhagopi.

Q: *Gyedha*?

#45N: Yes, like a bag.

Q: *Gyedhagopi*?

#45N: Yes.

Q: And the other was called *chingpa*?

#45N: The thing to wear is called *chingpa*.

Q: Is *chingpa* a dress?

#45N: Not a dress but a sheet that was made from sheep's wool, from a young sheep. [The wool] called *yumbu* was sheared in the hometown. Then the *yumbu* was combed and rolled in a sprinkling of water. The *chingpa* can be made into any size.

Q: Is it like a blanket?

#45N: Like a blanket and waterproof.

Q: So then you left. Were you on your own?

01:12:52

#45N: [I was] when I reached Mother's place.

Q: Were you alone running away, running away from mother's place?

#45N: No, when I fled from the Chinese...

Q: Mother provided you with a *chingpa* and *tsampa* in a *gyedha*...

#45N: After I had reached home and the Chinese appeared, Mother said, "You have to flee." There was a bag made from woolen cloth called *gyedhagopi*. *Tsampa* was packed in one of its sides and cheese in the other. Then there was a piece of meat and a *chingpa* that was tied with a rope. When a number of horsemen appeared, Mother said the Chinese were coming and I was to run away. [I] fled through a valley and up a pass to a hilltop. When I could not spot any Chinese from the hilltop [I] went back to Mother.

Q: Back to Mother and...?

#45N: And then stayed with Mother.

Q: How did [you] escape after that?

#45N: Later my water carrier brother came as a messenger and asked me to accompany him. Mother said, “[I am satisfied] if you siblings can escape. I am old and [we] do not have a horse. So [I] cannot walk. It does not matter if I die for I have no regrets whatsoever.” When asked the monk [brother] refused to come saying, “I will not leave until Mother is no more. I will never go away. You two should leave.” So the two of us came as messengers of the monastery. The monk [brother] stayed back, stayed back to protect the monastery. The narration has not been sequential. Then on the Panjiganga around 400 monks were killed together. Three planes came flying and dropped bombs.

Q: The monk sibling was in that group?

#45N: Yes.

Q: So how many of you traveled when you eventually left your home?

01:15:30

#45N: There were only two people fleeing from the hometown.

Q: You and your sibling.

#45N: And sibling. From the north, as mentioned earlier [we] came begging along the way of escape.

Q: What kind of memories do you have of the rest of your journey to exile?

#45N: Memories of the escape...the sibling said, “You have to come with me and not stay back. One should not live under the Chinese, more importantly when you have escaped from prison. Being an escapee [the Chinese] will hold a grudge against you and treat you badly. Come, let us go.” We then fled together as messengers of the monastery.

Q: Did the Chinese go back to your village and go to your mother’s house after you escaped from prison?

#45N: I do not know about that.

Q: Did your mother stay in Tibet?

#45N: She died in Tibet. [She] was old.

Q: Thank you very much for sharing this with us. Is there anything else you’d like to tell us about your life in Tibet?

01:17:44

#45N: When I was in the prison in Dhompaga, there were swords, guns and cauldrons of the monastery, large copper ones, which the Chinese forced [the prisoners] to cut up with knives. After cutting into pieces like meat these were packed in leather bags. The Chinese ordered, “You have to pack.”

Q: Told you?

#45N: Yes. And when I struck the copper with the knife, it cut about so much [indicates palm size]. [I] cut up two copper cauldrons in that manner. Then there were many statues that I was ordered to cut up and pack in leather bags. The leather bags were packed at a liftable weight. Then [I] was ordered to sew. After sewing, I was ordered to attach wooden hooks so [the packs] could be loaded on yaks. That was during my one-month stay in prison.

Early in the morning...they possessed many horses that had feed bags containing cheese [indicates hung over the mouth]. That was good because [I] got to eat a lot of cheese. When the horses swung [indicates head] the cheese fell out. So [I] would clean horse dung eating the cheese and it did not seem hard. However, cutting up the statues was very bad. I had no option and was forced to do so. If [I] refused to cut up [the Chinese] threatened to kill me.

Q: I imagine it was very difficult for you. How did they force you to do that?

01:20:20

#45N: The interpreter said, “You have to pack these.” The interpreter also said, “If you do not do it well, you will be killed.”

Q: What were you thinking or doing as you did this work that you so hated to do?

#45N: [I] felt, “Alas, I am in such a situation as to cut up the cauldrons of the monastery and the statues. I am not purified of my karma from the past life.” I felt great remorse. However, one cannot show remorse because the interpreter was coming with a gun.

Q: Why do you think the Chinese didn’t destroy the images and the vessels themselves?

#45N: People used to say that they [Chinese] were going to manufacture ammunition [from the monastery items]. Once turned into ammunition, it had the power to destroy a person who could not be harmed by weapons. There were people that wore protective amulets who could not be killed by weapons. If the ammunition contained images, copper and other old items belonging to monasteries—they added these into the making of weapons—then it penetrated such a person. [Monastery items] were considered precious and packed.

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

01:23:00

#45N: [Smiles] Well...I was small at that time and being poor, could not travel much and just lived at the monastery like an adopted child of the monastery. I do not know of any other story. However, at the place called Dhompaga...a relative of Tulku Sapga...there was a high mountain called Kanagisum and two grassy points [raises three fingers] and below that was...[not discernible]. There was an encounter atop it that lasted three days. One [of the fighters] was called Barma Thutop who was a relative of the lama.

Q: Barma?

#45N: [He] was called Gejey Barma.

Q: Gejey Barma.

#45N: Yes, called Gejey Barma; the name of the leader was Thutop, Thutop. They fought for three days.

Q: Fought the Chinese?

#45N: Yes, the Chinese atop the mountain. We could see the Chinese approaching at times. There was firing and fighting for three days. It became silent after three days after he had been killed.

Q: Who?

#45N: The leader.

Q: The leader, Thutop?

01:24:09

#45N: Yes, after killing the leader Thutop [the Chinese] brought the head and hands and also the gun and asked, "Does anyone recognize this? If you know him, speak up." "No, we do not know who he is," [we] replied. It could be recognized for the head and hands were brought there.

Q: Brought where?

#45N: To Dhompaga when I was in prison.

Q: Brought to Dhompaga?

#45N: Yes, to Dhompaga. There was a water body, a lake, and a mountain called Kanagisum with grassy tops where there was fighting for three days.

Q: His head and his hands.

[Interpreter interprets question as: Did you see the head and hands being brought?]

01:25:50

#45N: [I] did. “Can you recognize him? If you do, it would be good to speak up. A reward will be given, a big reward,” [the Chinese] said. I recognized [him] but I did not say so for [he] was my leader. [I] did not say anything. Nobody spoke up about recognizing him.

Q: Why did the Chinese bring his head, his remains down to where you were and ask if you knew who he was?

#45N: “A big reward will be given to anyone who recognize this. Can anyone recognize him? The People’s Liberation Army killed him and none of you can escape. You cannot succeed if you run away, if you flee abroad. There is no way.”

Q: But nobody revealed his name?

#45N: None revealed it.

Q: Why do you think no one collaborated, you know, given that they offered a reward?

01:27:49

#45N: No one revealed it.

Q: You’ve told us a very, very powerful and interesting story. Thank you very much. Is there anything else you’d like to tell us?

#45N: It would take a whole day if [I] spoke about the story of the Chinese and such. Though we did not live with the Chinese but [I] witnessed everything. Where we lived it was like Nepal being surrounded by Chinese. The Chinese had taken control of the saltpan. There was not any place free of Chinese. There was a large gathering of Chinese at Nangchen Shonda that was close by.

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

#45N: Okay.

Q: Once again if this interview was shown in China or Tibet, would it be a problem for you?

#45N: There is no reason why I should face any problem. I have no mother or father in the hometown or relatives. There is no reason why I should face any problem.

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

45N: Yes.

Q: Thank you. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW