

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #52M – Tinlay Dhondup
April 6, 2010

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TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #52M
2. Interviewee: Tinlay Dhondup
3. Age: 78
4. Date of Birth: 1932
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Lhopra
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: April 6, 2010
10. Place of Interview: Kalachakra Hall, Camp No. 3, Doeguling Settlement, Mundgod, Karwar District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 36 min
12. Interviewer: Rebecca Novick
13. Interpreter: Namgyal Tsering
14. Videographer: Ronny Novick
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Tinlay Dhondup's began grazing animals at the age of 8 and working in the fields from the age of 11 years. His village followed the system of *lakhor*, which is work performed jointly by all the people in turns.

Tinlay Dhondup recalls his experience of going on pilgrimage to Lhasa in 1946 and in 1950. He visited the holy shrines and the great monasteries. He is overwhelmed by shops in the Bakor, central market square, and caught a glimpse of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for the first time during the Monlam 'Prayer Festival.' He speaks of the *raka* who collected fees from recent arrivals for the disposal of corpses of people who were visiting and died while in Lhasa.

Tinlay Dhondup first saw Chinese in Lhasa who were civilians engaged in running restaurants in Lhasa, and on his second visit he now saw soldiers constructing houses. He tells of an encounter in Tsethang between the Chinese and the Tibetan soldiers. Tinlay Dhondup describes how the poor people of his village were trained by the Chinese to conduct *thamzing* 'struggle sessions.' He then witnessed three rich and influential people being subjected to *thamzing* by the trainees.

Topics Discussed:

Childhood memories, pilgrimage, first appearance of Chinese, life under Chinese rule, oppression under Chinese, *thamzing*.

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Interview #52M

Interviewee: Tinlay Dhondup

Age: 78, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Rebecca Novick

Interview Date: April 6, 2010

Question: Can you tell us your name?

00:00:16

Interviewee #52M: Tinlay Dhondup.

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record the experience and stories of older Tibetans, men and women, to share with the future generations of Tibetans and also with the Chinese people and the rest of the world to help everyone understand what the true life was like back in Tibet.

#52M: Okay.

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

00:01:27

#52M: Yes.

Q: If you don't want to answer a question, just let us know.

#52M: Okay.

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

00:01:55

#52M: There will be no problem. Other than one's true experience, I do not have anything to relate that is not true. Even if one did relate, that is useless.

Q: Great, thank you very much.

#52M: [Nods]

Q: We very much appreciate your coming and taking this time.

#52M: Okay.

Q: Please feel free to take your time to answer a question if you need some time to reflect, to think.

00:02:40

#52M: Okay.

Q: And if there is anytime you wish to elaborate or add something to an answer that perhaps we didn't ask, please feel free to do so.

#52M: Okay.

Q: Is it okay to use your real name?

00:03:16

#52M: It is okay.

Q: Actually we usually ask that at the end. That's fine.

#52M: My real name is Tinlay Dhondup. Here people call me Chocho to make it easier. Otherwise, my real name is Tinlay Dondup.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Would he like us to use his pet name?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: No, no. You can use the real...

Q: Chocho.

00:03:41

#52M: [Speaks in Hindi] My people call me Chocho. The real [name] is Tinlay Dhondup.

Q: Can you just first of all tell us about your early life growing up in Tibet?

#52M: Okay. When one was very small, the job was grazing cows and other animals and when one grew older, it was field work.

Q: Were you *samadok* 'farmers and herders?'

00:04:21

#52M: Yes, I was a *samadok*. All our work entailed doing *lakhor* for each other.

Q: What is *lakhor*?

#52M: Suppose my work was performed today [by everyone] and if the work was completed, tomorrow it was your work [that would be done by everyone together] and it rotated that way.

Q: At what age did you start to work?

00:04:43

#52M: I started to graze animals from the age of 8. At the age of 11, I began working [in the fields].

[Brief conversation between interviewer and interpreter]

Q: So how many people in your family?

#52M: There were my parents. My mother gave birth to 12 children.

Q: Yes?

00:05:35

#52M: There were 12 children but only 6 survived.

Q: How did the six children die?

#52M: From the six, some died when they were small. There was a large well in our house; there was water below and people stayed on the top. The animals were fed water from below and on the top we stored our provisions. [Once] we'd gone to attend a big festival at the monastery. At that time there was an old man [at home] who was mother's grandfather.

Q: Mother's grandfather?

00:06:21

#52M: Yes, [a little sister] was left in his care. He was hard of hearing. The child went to drink water [from the well] and fell in it. When we came back from the monastery, the girl was dead.

Q: Was the child a girl or boy?

#52M: A girl.

Q: How old were you when this happened?

00:07:26

#52M: [I] think I was about 7 years old then.

Q: How old was the child?

#52M: The child was around 5 years old.

Q: When did you first go to Lhasa?

00:08:02

#52M: [I] first went to Lhasa at around the age of 14. It was a sort of pilgrimage and that was the first time. [I] visited the monasteries.

Q: Yes?

#52M: It was the first time and a pilgrimage to the great monasteries [Sera, Drepung and Gaden] and Lhasa.

Q: So this is 1946. Can you describe that pilgrimage in as much detail as you can give us?

00:08:51

#52M: First I visited the Jokhang or Tsuglakhang ‘Central Cathedral.’ Then I saw the Potala Palace.

Q: And then?

#52M: Then [I visited] Sera, Drepung and Gaden [Monasteries] and the Ramoche.

Q: Ramoche?

#52M: Yes, the Ramoche Jokhang. It is in the middle of Lhasa. The Ramoche is located right in the center of Lhasa.

Q: How many days did it take?

00:09:36

#52M: Sera and Drepung are located on the same side.

Q: How many days did it take to make the pilgrimage?

#52M: [The pilgrimage to] Sera and Drepung was just a day. It took one day for the Potala Palace. One could visit the Jokhang frequently as it was situated in the center of Lhasa.

Q: Did it take about a week?

00:10:22

#52M: [I] stayed in Lhasa for about 15 days.

Q: So before you left your house to go on the pilgrimage, was there a lot of preparation? How many people came with you; what was the journey like? Can you describe a little bit more what you saw, what you felt, what you heard, you know?

#52M: When the decision to go [on pilgrimage] was made and it was certain, relatives came to give contribution just like we do here. There was money and provisions.

Q: Who gave them?

00:11:35

#52M: They were our relatives, well-wishers and neighbors. At the time of departure, it was the custom to offer *khata* ‘ceremonial scarves.’

Q: Who did you travel with on the pilgrimage?

#52M: For companions, there were traders with whom [I] traveled.

Q: It was his first pilgrimage or his family’s?

00:12:17

#52M: It was mine.

Q: What kind of feeling went through your mind, what kind of thoughts went through your mind, you know when this happened; when everybody came to give you all these things?

#52M: I thought that they considered it a fortunate thing for me to embark [on the pilgrimage].

Q: Yes?

00:13:10

#52M: I thought that they felt happy that I was going on a pilgrimage.

Q: What was your understanding of the purpose of pilgrimage?

#52M: When I lived in my village, Lhasa was greatly renowned and it was the seat of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government. And then there were the three great monasteries. Those who had visited it told us that there were many holy sites to see and that it was extremely good if one could make a pilgrimage. Those people that had been there spoke a lot about it. That was why I thought it would be good if I could pay a visit.

Q: Were you quite religious as a child?

00:14:55

#52M: In general there were festivals at the monasteries and initiations bestowed by lamas. Though I was a child, being Buddhists, it was natural that we liked the dharma and reciting the *mani* ‘mantra of Avalokiteshvara.’

Q: When you went on this pilgrimage to Lhasa, did you go on horses?

#52M: No, one went walking.

Q: How long did it take?

00:16:09

#52M: It did not take more than 6 days [provided] one started before dawn. One could reach Lhasa from Lhoka in 6 days.

Q: Was anybody in your party doing prostrations on the way?

#52M: [Speaks before question is interpreted] One carried one's [belongings] on the back. [Laughs]

Q: People were not doing prostrations?

00:16:55

#52M: No. There were many [who did prostrations] in Lhasa. It was done in the Mount Kailash area. However, it was not possible to do prostrations in our region because the roads were very bad.

Q: What had you heard about Lhasa?

#52M: In Lhasa, most importantly there was the Jowo Rinpoche 'statue of Buddha Sakyamuni' and the great monasteries to be viewed. Then there were the palaces of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to see. If [the visit] coincided with the Tsongchoe and Monlam 'Prayer Festivals' one could see His Holiness from afar. One could only get the opportunity to see [him] from afar.

Q: What was your idea of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in your mind? What kind of being or person did you think he was?

00:19:05

#52M: As a child I did not think that he lived on this earth. It was in my mind that he might be a protective deity. But when I saw a few photographs...Even in Lhasa one got the chance to see His Holiness only during the Monlam and Tsongchoe. That too was from a long distance and one could not see him clearly. It was from afar as one was not allowed to come close. [One would be] chased away.

Q: Were you surprised when he looked like an ordinary monk?

#52M: Initially one was ignorant and [on seeing him] felt that this is the real Dalai Lama and he lives on this earth.

Q: Earlier you thought that he was a protective deity and then...

00:20:57

#52M: Then I thought that he truly lives on this earth.

Q: What was the first thing you remember seeing when you arrived in Lhasa?

#52M: When I first arrived in Lhasa, it almost seemed like except for your parents, everything else was available [for sale] in the Bakor 'Central Square' area. It was not like

that in the village. There were shops, things to eat, every different kind of things were available. I felt that this was a place where everything is found.

Q: What did you think of the people there in the way they were dressed and the way they acted? What was your impression of that?

00:23:10

#52M: There was a difference between the people of Lhasa and our village. We who came from the village were sort of dazed. The people of Lhasa were smart and when they walked, their feet were light. There were those people called *raka* that collected a fee.

Q: Yes?

#52M: There were those people called *raka* who collected a fee from new arrivals. They immediately recognized the [new] people. They noticed them. Normally it would be difficult to notice someone when people were walking like this [moves hand off camera].

Q: When a person arrived from the village, did he have to pay something like a tax?

00:25:13

#52M: Yes, one needed to because they [the *raka*] claimed that they took care of the corpses of people who were without family.

Q: Were they appointed by the Tibetan government? Did the money go to the Tibetan government or did he keep it for himself?

#52M: It was for himself. If a person hailing from a long distance away died there, they [the *raka*] were obliged to take care of the corpse. They lived in houses that were entirely built from the horns of animals. They were located at the edge [of town].

Q: Yes?

00:25:51

#52M: Their houses were located on one side [of town].

Q: Do you remember how much this commission was?

#52M: In the early days in Tibet, we had [a currency unit] called *ngusang*. It was three or four *ngusang*. If one of their tribe had collected the fee, another person never asked for it.

Q: Were there many such people?

00:27:15

#52M: There were many [such] people. If there were not many people, they would not be able to cover [the entire place].

Q: Was the *ngusang* collected from each person?

#52M: It was collected from each person.

Q: Can you describe what else you saw in Lhasa?

#52M: Other things...

Q: Sorry, wait a minute. When you were walking through Lhasa the first time, can you describe what are the things you saw?

00:28:23

#52M: There were never such things in the village in those days. It was something to be amazed at. Wherever one visited, the monasteries, the Potala Palace, then the Jokhang/Tsuglakhang, the great monasteries around the place, everything was great. The houses of the noblemen were grand. They were great.

Q: Was it during the Monlam that you arrived?

#52M: It was not during the Monlam. My next visit coincided with the Monlam.

Q: So the first time you went, did you see His Holiness the Dalai Lama the first time you went?

00:29:54

#52M: [I] did not.

Q: The first time you went, did you notice any Chinese in the city?

#52M: There were Chinese. They were running restaurants.

Q: Was there a Chinese military presence there or just civilians?

00:30:29

#52M: There were only civilians.

Q: Was that the first time you've seen Chinese people?

#52M: Yes.

Q: You had never seen Chinese prior to that?

00:30:40

#52M: [I] had not.

Q: Yes?

#52M: [I] had never seen Chinese before that.

Q: So the second time that you went to Lhasa, when was that?

00:30:58

#52M: That was...

Q: How old were you then?

#52M: I was about 18 years old then. [The visit] coincided with the Monlam.

Q: 1950. Can you describe what you saw during the Monlam?

00:31:36

#52M: During the great Monlam, one could climb up and see the proceedings of the Monlam assembly in the Jokhang from *gyamdhong*, from the top.

Q: From where?

#52M: There was the *gyamdhong* [points upwards], from the top.

Q: What's *gyamdhong*?

#52M: There was an empty space atop the prayer hall. One could view from the top. When one looked, there was an incredible number [of monks]; so many monks that you felt sick. The soldiers of the Drapchi Division [of the Tibetan army] were not allowed to go there. They were not allowed in. The soldiers and the monks of Sera [Monastery] used to clash a lot. So [I] was told that for those 21 days, the soldiers of Drapchi were not permitted there due to the fear of a clash.

Q: The soldiers of Drapchi and the monks of Sera?

00:32:43

#52M: Yes.

Q: Why?

#52M: [I] believe they normally had fights. Each one was boastful to the other. And for us visitors, if we drove horses and mules and when we went to feed them water, we were not allowed to have bells on the horses and mules during the period of the 21 days of Monlam.

Q: Were the Drapchi soldiers the army of the Tibetan government?

00:33:49

#52M: Yes, yes.

Q: And during that time, did you see His Holiness the Dalai Lama?

#52M: One saw [him] from afar.

Q: What was he doing?

00:35:04

#52M: One could not see his face clearly. [Laughs] We just visualized and offered prayers but could not see his face.

Q: Did you notice any changes in the city from the first time you went in 1946 and until this time, which is 1950-1951?

#52M: There was quite a great change that had occurred because a huge number of Chinese had arrived. The Chinese were constructing many houses and there were talks that some aristocrats had sold their houses to the Chinese.

Q: So the first time that you went it was just Chinese civilians who were there running hotels and restaurants and shops, yes? But now did you see Chinese troops in Lhasa?

00:36:39

#52M: There was a lot of Chinese.

Q: Were they soldiers?

#52M: Yes.

Q: Can you describe where were the troops? What were they doing?

00:36:58

#52M: Most of them stayed in the direction of Gyamokhang. They were building a lot of houses, new houses.

Q: Where is Gyamokhang?

#52M: Gyamokhang is located towards Lhasa's edge.

Q: So there weren't Chinese troops on the streets of Lhasa?

00:37:45

#52M: They did not come much into the center of Lhasa.

Q: What color uniform were they wearing?

#52M: It was brown.

Q: Yes?

00:38:12

#52M: It was brown.

Q: Did you notice Chinese flags in the city?

#52M: I did not see the flags.

Q: Was there any announcements that were made that you heard over the loudspeaker, megaphone?

00:38:49

#52M: [I] did not hear.

Q: When you saw the Chinese soldiers in Lhasa, the ones you did see, what were you thinking?

#52M: I thought that they were there to just construct houses and manage shops and never imagined that they were there to do that to Tibet.

Q: What was the next time you had any experience with Chinese soldiers?

00:40:07

#52M: I do not have anything to relate about what they did in Lhasa at that time.

Q: Never saw any more soldiers again?

#52M: Then before we escaped, Tibet was conquered—the Chinese did that.

Q: So you never saw any fighting between the Tibetan army and the Chinese soldiers?

00:40:52

#52M: A lot of fighting took place at the Tsethang region, but I did not witness it. There was fierce fighting at Dhuwazong.

Q: At Dhuwazong?

#52M: Yes. Long ago the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] had made camp at Dhuwazong. The one who set it up was Amdo Lekshay. They [the guerrillas of *Chushi Gangdrug*] demanded grains, *tsampa* ‘flour made from roasted barley,’ meat, butter, *zempa* ‘hay’ and wood from the villagers and caused them a lot of suffering.

Q: In your village?

00:41:36

#52M: Yes.

Q: Let’s go to that day, yes? The day you saw this fight between the Tibetan army and Chinese soldiers, can you describe where you were and what you saw?

#52M: The *Chushi Gangdrug* did not fight. When the Chinese arrived, the *Chushi Gangdrug* fled. As soon as Lhasa was conquered, there was the clash at Dhuwazong which

was fought by the Kusung Magmi ‘Personal Security Unit’ who had escorted His Holiness the Dalai Lama to India and was returning. It was the Kusung Magmi of the Tibetan government army. Huge numbers of Chinese were killed during that time.

Q: Did they demand food, meat, butter and cheese from you?

00:43:05

#52M: Those [provisions] finally fell into the hands of the Chinese. A battle was fought but we were bound to lose in the end. We did not have an unending supply of arms or men, while there was no end to their [the Chinese] men.

Q: If you could imagine at this—that your memory is like a movie and then you’re trying to describe this movie: this happened and this happened and this person did this, then that person and that person died and then some more people came and like this, you know. Because if you could try to describe in more detail because I can’t see this in my mind when you’re telling me, yeah?

I know you said there was a clash but what does that mean, you know? Where were you when you saw this and what did you see? What happened? And then this happened and this happened. If you can remember going back to that very day, that very afternoon or that very morning that you saw this, yeah? And then you try to tell me, “This happened.” I know it is difficult because if you can’t remember, just say I can’t remember, yeah? But if you can remember some more detail of what happened, it’s very important information. Everything you saw.

#52M: However, we could not venture close to the battle zone...

Q: One second. First of all where was he? How was he seeing this? Was he hiding behind a hill? Was he involved in the fight? Where was he?

00:46:09

#52M: [I] was far away. There was no way one could remain close.

Q: How far away were you, to give an example?

#52M: If the actual fighting was going on at Drepung [Monastery in Mundgod], [I] was about here. [Interpreter describes distance as 2-3 kilometers.]

Q: Was he on a hill?

00:46:33

#52M: We were lower down. Dhuwazong’s District Headquarters was located above. There was a hill and the monastery was situated at its base and the District Headquarters was located above the monastery.

Q: Where did the fighting against the Chinese take place?

#52M: It took place where the monastery and the District Headquarters were located.

Q: Where were you?

00:46:57

#52M: I was far away. There was no way one could get close.

Q: You couldn't actually see what was really happening?

#52M: No, one could not see. There was no way to get there.

Q: So you heard this?

00:47:32

#52M: [I] heard about it, but we were not close enough to see. There was no way to get there.

Q: Okay, so through other people you've heard about this, that there was a fight between the Tibetan army and Chinese soldiers and the *Chushi Gangdrug*.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Not *Chushi Gangdrug*. It's the Tibetan army, those who guided His Holiness to the exile and when they came back, there was the clash between those army and the Chinese.

Q: So how did that go?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: That was the same. This was it.

Q: What was the result of that?

00:48:19

#52M: After a lapse of time, both the sides were exhausted and when the rest of the Kusung Magmi emerged, [I] heard that there were no Chinese to counter them. Those who survived [the battle] managed to escape later.

Q: You mean the Tibetans?

#52M: Yes.

Q: How many Chinese died?

00:48:40

#52M: [I] heard that a huge number of Chinese died.

Q: Were there survivors on their side?

#52M: Yes, there were.

Q: For how many days or hours did the fighting go on?

00:48:53

#52M: It might have taken around 5-6 hours.

Q: Earlier I think you said that the *Chushi Gangdrug* drove the Chinese army away. I think I heard you say this.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: No, he said there was located (the) *Chushi Gangdrug*'s army at Dhuwazong. During the (time) they were staying at Dhuwazong, they (the villagers) were asked to bring all the necessary things to Dhuwazong for the *Chushi Gangdrug* with their requirement. But there did not take (place any) clashes. *Chushi Gangdrug* and Chinese authorities—army did not have clash.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Okay.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: When the Chinese came, they just ran away.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Oh, the *Chushi Gangdrug* ran away. Oh, I thought you meant the Chinese army ran away.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: *Chushi Gangdrug* ran away.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So you know, Namgyal-*la*, it would very much help me if you could sometimes instead of just saying “they,” I know it sounds repetitive but if you could say “the Tibetan army,” “the Chinese army,” because sometimes I’m not sure who you mean, yeah, when you say “they.”]

Q: And you also saw training that was given to Tibetans in *thamzing* ‘struggle session,’ is that right?

00:50:42

#52M: Yes, I saw.

Q: How were they trained?

#52M: This was what happened. After His Holiness had left and the Chinese had ended the attacks, then they [the Chinese] told all the poor people that they had been exploited and rendered [poor] by the *ngadak* ‘leaders’ and the rich farmers. They were led away to open fields far away and were trained to conduct *thamzing* for two to three months.

Q: Who? The poor people?

00:51:28

#52M: The poorer ones.

Q: For two to three months?

#52M: Yes. A person was made to sit there...We were categorized in the middle-class farmers, so we were neither in the poor group nor in the wealthy group. [We] were somewhere in the middle. Then they were taught. A person was made to sit there...

Q: Were you trained?

00:51:53

#52M: No, no.

Q: Were other people trained?

#52M: Others were trained.

Q: Did you go there?

00:51:58

#52M: I went to watch. [People] like us were allowed to go there. When the selection was made, it did not fall on us as we were in the middle group. However, they [the Chinese] would have done so eventually. The *thamzing* were conducted by telling [the poor] that what they had suffered earlier must be avenged. Those poor people who were beggars, butchers and loafers that had arrived from other places were trained. Those people volunteered to be trained.

There was a village located below the District Headquarters called Lhakang Zong of our village. In that village were three big *tsodak* [leaders?]; in the east lived Benpa Khenchung Sera whose [head of the family's] name was Kalsang Tenzin-*la*; the other *tsodak* that lived near the District Headquarters was called Lhakang Kyirap, Kyirap Kunga Yeshi [was the name of the head of the family] and then at Dhathoe was the Dha Betsap [family] whose son was Tsering Samdup. They were subjected to *thamzing* and had been captured on the same day. They'd been [captured] earlier by the Chinese.

Q: Where was the training? Where did it take place?

#52M: Lhakang Zong.

Q: Is that the name of a village?

00:55:21

#52M: It was the village of the District Headquarters.

Q: Was it in a house?

#52M: There were huge open grounds of wealthy families, exceedingly large grounds where animals were tethered.

Q: How many Tibetans were being trained? Did you see it?

00:56:02

#52M: There might have been 15-20 people.

Q: Men and women?

#52M: Most of them were men.

Q: Were there women?

00:56:28

#52M: There were.

Q: The people who were being trained, did you know any of them?

#52M: I do not know the names of all of them.

Q: You can mention a few.

00:56:57

#52M: There was Yeshi who was from Yulkhang. The village where he lived was called Yulkhang. Then there was...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: It's okay. We don't need the names. We are just asking, "Did he know?"

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He knows a few. For example like Yeshi from Yulkhang.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Right. No, that's fine. It does not matter, *pa-la* 'respectful term for father.'

Q: What professions were these people from?

00:57:58

#52M: They were the leaders of the village: the three *tsodak*.

Q: No, those poor people that were trained in *thamzing*. Were they farmers or engaged in animal rearing or...

#52M: No, some of them did not own lands.

Q: What was their livelihood?

00:58:15

#52M: They roamed about and some of them slaughtered animals and sold meat, some worked as blacksmiths and there were some who lived in one village, but went to another village to earn a living.

Q: And then?

#52M: And then on the day of the *thamzing*, people living in surrounding villages were asked to assemble. They were in different groups and were made to carry many flags. Everyone was asked to gather and watch the *thamzing* proceedings.

Q: Who was subjected to *thamzing* first?

00:59:33

#52M: The three of them.

Q: Who were they?

#52M: Lhakang...

Q: [Interrupts] Lhakang? Is Lhakang the name of the person?

00:59:43

#52M: Lhakang is the name of the region, the village. The name of the family was Kyirap.

Q: Yes?

#52M: Kyirap Kunga Yeshi.

Q: And then?

01:00:01

#52M: Then Khenchung Sera. Then the other one's name was...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Namgyal-*la*, is he thinking of names of people who were...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...who were first *thamzined*.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: No, actually I'd like to...

#52M: Kalsang Tenzin-*la*.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Let's not jump ahead too much. Namgyal-*la*, there's so many questions I still need to ask about the training. Let's stay with the training, yeah? Because this is the first time I've ever heard anything like this.

Q: So when you saw the training, were you able to just sort of walk around and see exactly what was going on or were you watching from a distance?

01:01:04

#52M: We just went to see who the bad ones were that were volunteering to do such things.

Q: There was no restriction on venturing close?

#52M: No, there was not. Later our turn [to be trained] might have arrived, but at that time we were not...[We] were grouped somewhere in the middle.

Q: How were the Tibetans, who were being trained, how were they responding to the training?

01:02:08

#52M: They were eager to conduct [*thamzing*], those bad ones.

Q: So they were enthusiastic.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah.

#52M: The Chinese had advised them a lot.

Q: Did you ever see any Tibetan raise any objection to what was going on to the kind of training they were being given, argue or have any...

01:03:07

#52M: There were none among the bad people.

Q: So you never saw anybody object?

#52M: No. They [the poor] assembled separately and they [the Chinese] gave them a lot of lessons.

Q: Part of the training, did they have somebody who was pretending to be the person being *thamzined* and then they would, you know react to this person? Did they have someone pretending to be that person?

01:04:03

#52M: One among their people was made to sit there.

Q: Their man? A Chinese?

#52M: Our [Tibetan] man; a person from among the people that had volunteered to conduct *thamzing*. He was made to do it—trained. First they would hold a meeting. There were many different types of meetings; meetings where [we] were allowed or not allowed to attend. Different types [of meetings] had been created. When such meetings were being held, people like us were not allowed to attend. They [the Chinese] made great plans to obliterate people like us and advised them [the poor].

Q: Did you ever get an opportunity to talk to any of the people who'd been trained to do this?

01:06:06

#52M: No, [I] did not. After conducting *thamzing*, they [the poor people] became leaders and we could not...

Q: People who were trained were given... What kind of posts were they given?

#52M: They had rights and if a meeting was held, they could sit at the top. We, the common people had to sit lower. And there were many meetings which [we] could not attend.

Q: Did they dress differently?

01:07:11

#52M: No, they did not have [uniforms]. There were no such things given by the Chinese. They [the Chinese] took [clothes] from the wealthy families claiming that such and such [family] had good clothes and gave to them [the poor people].

Q: Did other people become afraid of them then?

#52M: They [the Chinese] gave all the power to them [the poor people].

Q: Was there fear?

01:08:03

#52M: There was. Whatever orders they issued, one was forced to obey them.

Q: Going back to the training, when you saw the training, it was outside in a flat area, yes? Were the Tibetans sitting in chairs or were they sitting on the ground? There was Chinese soldiers giving them training? What was the set-up?

#52M: The training was not given close by but far away in an open ground.

Q: Yes, and were there chairs or were they sitting on the ground? How did they do it?

01:09:12

#52M: The Chinese leaders and the officials dressed in blue had chairs.

Q: Were there chairs?

#52M: [They] took chairs along.

Q: What type of chairs were they?

01:09:22

#52M: There were different types of wooden chairs.

Q: Were they foldable?

#52M: There were foldable ones and not foldable ones.

Q: Were chairs provided to the Tibetans who were being trained to conduct *thamzing*?

01:09:39

#52M: They were not provided chairs at that time.

Q: So if they didn't wear any kind of uniform there was nothing to signify this post, was it sometimes difficult to know who these people were or did everybody know who they were?

#52M: They [the Chinese] would call out the names [of those who would conduct *thamzing*] in serial order. There were Chinese in every village and they trained people in groups of five or six. Those [poor Tibetans] were the worst of all people.

Q: Everybody knew them?

01:11:01

#52M: [People] knew because in every village the Chinese had appointed the bad people [as leaders] like *tsukdang, u-yon, shangdang*. They were the ones who were trained.

Q: Yes, but the people who'd been trained to do the *thamzing*, everybody knew who these people were. There was no question...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: No question ...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: ...that person had been trained?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah, that person had been trained. Everybody knows.

Q: Did anybody tried to ever convince them, you know, that...or to dissuade them, you know for doing these things, "Look, you're a Tibetan. What are you doing? You are doing this to your own people." Did anyone say such things to them?

#52M: I do not think so because they were already appointed as leaders in the villages by the Chinese.

Q: Did anybody tell them that what they were doing was not good after their appointment?

01:12:30

#52M: If [anyone] said that it would be reported [to the Chinese].

Q: You actually saw two people being *thamzined*, a monk and a village leader, where did you see this?

#52M: At the District Headquarters.

Q: District Headquarters?

#52M: At the Lhakang District Headquarters.

Q: Can you just describe what you saw?

01:13:17

#52M: [I] saw it. The three men were brought out from the prison, the three *tsodak*. [I] did not mention one of their names. It was Betsap Tsering Samdup. There were three of them. Dha Betsap Tsering Samdup. Those three were brought out from the prison and people from all the villages were ordered to assemble at Lhakang. Each group arrived bearing flags with them.

Then the three of them were brought out from the prison which was below the District Headquarters and it [the *thamzing*] was perpetuated in the huge yard of a wealthy family.

Q: When you were called for this *thamzing* session, did somebody come to your house to tell you to come?

#52M: First a meeting of the village was held. Each individual village held its [meeting]. There were those leaders who called [the people to attend it].

Q: Who called the meetings?

01:15:16

#52M: They were our [people] appointed as leaders by the Chinese.

Q: When you say “called the meeting” he didn’t just shout out to everybody. How did you know the meeting was going on? Who told you?

#52M: They gave the message.

Q: Did they go from family to family?

01:15:42

#52M: They would say that there was a meeting.

[Question is repeated.]

#52M: Yes.

Q: Who went door to door?

01:15:52

#52M: They went.

Q: The Tibetans who were working for the Chinese?

#52M: Yes.

Q: So it was a Tibetan who went to tell you that a *thamzing* was...?

01:16:10

#52M: Yes. The Chinese who were dressed in blue came and did the talking and they [the Chinese appointed leaders] joined in—that one must go there at such and such a time [for the meeting] and that it was imperative to attend.

Q: Did they say what kind of problem you might face if you didn't...?

#52M: Meetings were held every evening and they would say a lot then.

Q: In case one did not go to watch a *thamzing*?

01:17:02

#52M: It was imperative for one to attend.

Q: Would they beat you, impose a monetary penalty or what would they do?

#52M: One would be punished.

Q: Financial penalty?

01:17:16

#52M: [They] did not impose financial penalty. It could be an extra task that one was given. [They] would give a punishment.

Q: Did any people try to refuse to go?

#52M: There was no particular [person] who did not attend because it was imperative to go. Their law was such.

Q: So going back to the *thamzing* session you saw, can you continue to tell us what you saw? What happened?

01:18:22

#52M: When subjected to *thamzing*, [the prisoners were] almost rendered half dead. After a lapse of time, the Chinese stopped the proceeding.

Q: Who, the lama? Who are you talking about?

#52M: As for monks, [I heard] that the monks of the monastery were forced to subject a *lopon* ‘spiritual master’ to *thamzing*. The young monks were made to do it. [He] was a *chinbu* [?]. It was certain that it occurred. It took place at the monastery.

Q: Which were the ones you witnessed?

01:19:36

#52M: I witnessed the three [being subjected to *thamzing*].

Q: What happened to them?

#52M: They beat [them] with their hands, they beat [them] with sticks and said, “You have been a leader earlier. You became rich on account of us.” The Chinese had taught them well and created [the charges].

Q: And the people who were doing this, these were Tibetans, yes?

01:21:19

#52M: Yes, yes.

Q: It was not being done by the Chinese?

#52M: The Chinese were not doing it. However, the Chinese had taught them everything.

Q: Did you recognize some of the people who you’d seen at the training?

01:21:44

#52M: I cannot recall the names.

Q: No, I didn’t mean it. Did you recognize their faces, not names? Did you recognize their faces?

#52M: Those people ...There were 3, 4 or 5 people from each village that were selected to conduct the *thamzing* by them [the Chinese]. From my village there were Yeshi and then... I cannot recall the names.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: No, Namgyal-*la*. The question is the people he saw in the training, was some of these people the same people who he’d seen during the training?

01:22:37

#52M: Yes. There were people selected by the Chinese in every individual village to conduct *thamzing*.

Q: So how were the Tibetans who came to see like him—Tibetans who came to see—how were the Tibetans reacting in the crowd, people who were watching?

#52M: There was no joy. There was no one who was happy among the people. However, [people] had no power. There was no right.

Q: Do you think everybody felt uncomfortable or do you think some people were supporting what was going on?

01:24:43

#52M: There was no one.

Q: Did you know the lama and the village leader who was being *thamzined*?

#52M: Those three people were [subjected to *thamzing*] right in front of our eyes.

Q: Did you know them?

01:25:09

#52M: Yes.

Q: What about the monk?

#52M: [I] heard that he was subjected [to *thamzing*] but I was not there.

Q: The three persons?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah, the village leaders.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: The village leader.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah.

Q: You saw the village leader. So you knew him personally? What kind of person was he?

01:25:50

#52M: Actually they were not too bad at all. However, the Chinese gave training to the worst of people and gave them the authority of leaders. They [the Chinese] could also give them rights in the future. That was how the situation became like. They [who were subjected to *thamzing*] never mistreated the people severely nor did they cause any undue suffering.

Q: What did you feel personally when the *thamzing* occurred?

#52M: I do not have any instances to relate about the sufferings [they who were subjected to *thamzing*] had caused [the people]. [They] were fair and good.

Q: So during the *thamzing* session, there were three people, three village leaders. What kind of things did they say?

01:27:19

#52M: “You became good [wealthy] because you sucked the blood and pus from the poor people. You were happy on account of that. Your time has come to an end from this day.”

Q: Was this uttered by the Tibetans who were conducting the *thamzing*?

#52M: Yes. All those [charges] had been taught by the Chinese. They obeyed the Chinese.

Q: And the village leaders who were being *thamzined*; what did they say? Did they say anything?

01:29:28

#52M: No, they were not in a position to speak, not at all.

Q: Why?

#52M: They were beaten and tied up in a ball.

Q: Were they supposed to accept that they had made a mistake? Were they supposed to say, “Yes, I agree. I’ve made this mistake and I’m sorry. ” They weren’t supposed to say something at the end of the...?

01:29:12

#52M: No, [they] could not.

Q: They couldn’t?

#52M: Not at all.

Q: Why?

01:29:17

#52M: Because [the person being subjected to *thamzing*] was surrounded by those who had been trained by the Chinese. There was no time to say anything.

Q: Did they hurt him physically?

#52M: Hair might have been pulled out. However, those people [trained *thamzing* conductors] crowded around and besides seeing that he was beaten, we could not see clearly because of the crowd.

Q: Beating with fists or...

01:30:35

#52M: [They] used hands and kicked and beat with sticks. [They] did different things.

Q: And there is something here about the division of wealth of the rich by the Chinese army. Is there something you can tell us about that; how the wealth was divided?

#52M: That was divided among the poor and the beggars.

Q: So was anything taken from your family and given to other...?

01:31:51

#52M: It was bound to take place gradually, but at that time it was only the wealth of the rich people that was divided.

Q: Is there anything else that you'd like to tell us that we haven't covered?

#52M: Then those three people were taken to Tsethang. I do not know what happened to them once they were taken to Tsethang. Later [I heard] two of them were released by the Chinese while one died in prison. Kalsang Tenzin-la and Tsering Samdup were released later. The one called Kunga Yeshe expired in the prison.

Q: The people who were trained for the *thamzing*, I'm imagining that they probably stayed in Tibet. But have you ever heard of any of those people who came into exile?

01:33:45

#52M: [I] have not heard.

Q: Anything else?

#52M: [There is nothing left] except talking about the escape.

Q: Anything else?

01:34:22

#52M: [Thinks]

Q: Okay, well if you think of something, then we'll give you a phone number you can call, yes? If you have another thought or another experience you want to share, you can come back and do so and we'll give you a phone number.

#52M: Okay.

Q: I just want to ask you one more question. After the *thamzing* sessions, did you discuss this with your family or did the other village members discuss what had happened with each other?

01:35:19

#52M: One could not talk too much to each other.

Q: If this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you? I have to ask you one more time.

#52M: There will not be.

Q: Is it okay to use your real name?

01:35:32

#52M: There will not be [any problem]. This is a story that really happened.

Q: Thank you very much for sharing your story with us. This was the first time I'd ever heard about this training. You're the first person who's ever seen this and we've interviewed hundreds of people and you are the first person I've ever met who saw this training. So this is very important information. Thank you.

#52M: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW