

# **Tibet Oral History Project**

**Interview #5D – Dhungpa Jamyang  
May 21, 2012**

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# TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #5D
2. Interviewee: Dhungpa Jamyang
3. Age: 82
4. Date of Birth: 1930
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Dhingri
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1974
9. Date of Interview: May 21, 2012
10. Place of Interview: Hotel Tibet, Mcleod Ganj, Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India
11. Length of Interview: 0 hr 40 min
12. Interviewer: Rebecca Novick
13. Interpreter: Thupten Kelsang Dakpa
14. Videographer: Ronny Novick
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

### **Biographical Information:**

Dhungpa Jamyang is from Thoe Dhingri also known as Dhingri Gangkar and his family grew crops. Since his father was a soldier in the Tibetan Army, the family moved to Shigatse, Nagchu, Chamdo and various other regions in Kham to help secure the border as part of the Gadhang Regiment.

After the death of his father Dhungpa Jamyang was inducted into the army at the age of 13. After five or six years he became a *dhungpa* 'conch blower' in the army. He describes his various responsibilities and trainings.

Dhungpa Jamyang went to Lhasa where he worked as a servant to a trader after the regiment was defeated by the Chinese army and permanently disbanded. He was then appointed by the Chinese as a leader of 6-7 families in his village. The families were required to cultivate crops and Dhungpa Jamyang had to evaluate their work efforts. He was not happy with his life under Chinese occupation and fled to India in 1974.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Childhood memories, farm life, Tibetan army, resistance, life under Chinese rule.

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**Interview #5D**

**Interviewee: Dhungpa Jamyang**  
**Age: 82, Sex: Male**  
**Interviewer: Rebecca Novick**  
**Interview Date: May 21, 2012**

Question: Could you please first tell us your name?

00:00:14

**Interviewee #5D: Jamyang.**

Q: Where are you from in Tibet?

**#5D: In Thoe Dhingri. It is in Dhingri Gangkar.**

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record your experiences, so that we can share your memories with many generations of Tibetans, Chinese and the rest of the world.

**#5D: Okay.**

Q: Your memories are going to help us to document the true history, culture and beliefs of the Tibetan people.

**#5D: [Nods]**

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

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: Thank you very much.

**#5D: [Nods]**

Q: If you want to take a break at any time or go to the bathroom, just let us know.

**#5D: Okay.**

Q: If there's any question you'd rather not answer, that's fine.

**#5D: Okay.**

Q: If this interview was shown in Tibet or China or anywhere else, would it create any problem for you?

00:01:46

**#5D: There will be no problems.**

Q: We're very honored to record your story and appreciate your coming today.

**#5D: Okay.**

Q: *Pa-la* 'respectful term for father,' could you start by telling us a little bit about your childhood and growing up?

**#5D: I was born in my very village in Thoe. Since my father was a soldier, [I] was taken to Shigatse [with him]. From Shigatse, [father] was deputed to Nagchu. And from Nagchu [he] was sent to Chamdo. At that time in Chamdo, the ruler of Dhomay [Amdo Province] was Yuthok.**

Q: Was he deputed to Yuthok?

**#5D: Yuthok was the ruler. My father was sent as an attendant to his [Yuthok's] two sons to Lhasa. Father passed away in Lhasa and could not return. I was drafted into the army at the age of 13.**

Q: What was the livelihood of most of the people in your village? What were most of them doing?

**#5D: In my village?**

Q: Yes.

**#5D: [They] cultivated lands.**

Q: So what were you farming?

00:04:15

**#5D: The crops were peas and grains. [We] also grew turnips.**

Q: Yes?

**#5D: Radish and turnips.**

Q: What kind of food did you have at meals?

**#5D: In my village [we] ate radish and lettuce and mainly *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley.' There was not much rice.**

Q: So not much meat? You didn't eat much meat?

**#5D: [We] did eat a little meat.**

Q: Before you went into the army, what are some of your most vivid memories?

**#5D: Before [I] joined the army, when [we] went to Gonjo, Cherka, Dege and Lhatok in Kham [Province], [my] parents were healthy then and [I] was happy. [I] cannot recall much.**

Q: That was in Kham?

**#5D: Yes, in Kham.**

Q: You were living in Kham?

00:05:54

**#5D: That was when [my] parents were in the army in Kham.**

Q: Was your mother a soldier too?

**#5D: Yes?**

Q: Was your mother a soldier too?

**#5D: Mother was not a soldier. [We] lived for around 12 years in Kham.**

Q: Because your dad was in the army. Actually you were raised in Kham mostly then?

**#5D: That's right.**

Q: I see. Okay, okay. The army that your dad was in, was that the Tibetan Government army, yes?

**#5D: [A] Tibetan Government soldier.**

Q: Okay, and what year was this—did you first move there?

**#5D: The first time [we] went to Kham, [I] might have been around 2 years old.**

Q: It's 1933. Were there many members of the Tibetan army posted in Kham at this time?

**#5D: There were 1,000 Gadhang soldiers.**

Q: Khadhang?

**#5D: Gadhang.**

Q: Gadhang.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: This is...Gadhang *magmi* 'soldiers'?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Gadhang *magmi* is one of the regions like Khadhang, Gadhang, you remember?

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Okay. So this is a region in Kham?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Gadhang is one of the regiments.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: It's a regiment.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah, like Ngawang [Interview #2D] had told us.

Q: And what is this regiment?

**#5D: The Tibetan army [regiment names] consisted of the 30 [Tibetan] alphabet, *ka, kha, nga, cha, chha, nya* and so on.**

Q: Where you were living, were you living in an area where there were other Tibetan army soldiers living? Did you all live together in the same area?

**#5D: At that time it was the custom of the Tibetan Government army to take all the [family members] together.**

Q: Were all 1,000 Gadhang posted in Kham or were they separated in different regions?

00:08:36

**#5D: They were all together.**

Q: The 1,000 men?

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: What were they doing actually in Kham at this time?

**#5D: [They] were guarding the borders.**

Q: What was happening at the borders at this time?

**#5D: At that time we were living at Gonjo Serga when the Siling Thoegya and Gadhang soldiers fought for two or three months at the border.**

Q: With whom?

**#5D: Siling Thoegya.**

Q: Siling?

**#5D: The Chinese called Thoegya.**

Q: For two or three months?

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: This is the Kuomintang?

**#5D: It was not the Kuomintang. [They] were called Siling Thoegya.**

Q: Siling Thoegya.

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: And who were they?

00:10:01

**#5D: They were under the Chinese, but actually a separate country.**

Q: Were they a separate country?

**#5D: [It] was a separate country. At that time they were not under the Chinese.**

Q: Did they work under the Chinese?

**#5D: Working under the Chinese? [They] did not.**

Q: Were they not Chinese?

**#5D: They were Chinese. There was the upper and lower Siling Thoegya. The lower [Siling Thoegya] came under China and they [that fought the Gadhang army] belonged to the upper region.**

[Interviewer to videographer]: Do you have any idea, Ronny?

[Videographer to interviewer]: Yeah, it maybe...[not discernible]. I think it was a warlord or something, possibly a warlord.

Q: Do you know the Commander of the Siling Thoegya?

**#5D: I do not know the Commander, as I was only around 10 at that time.**

Q: Did you ever see these Chinese?



**#5D: I had never seen [them]. There were 500 soldiers of Dhingri [Regiment]. When the Gadhang Regiment was fighting the Siling Thoegya, 200 Dhingri soldiers went to assist them.**

Q: Around 200 men?

**#5D: Yes, 200 soldiers. As the 200 Dhingri cavalry marched forward from a mountaintop, they [the Siling Thoegya soldiers] saw them as tall, red and wearing long boots. They saw them as strange. There was not any need for an attack that night because they [the Siling Thoegya] had fled.**

Q: They'd fled?

**#5D: [They] had fled.**

Q: Where in Kham was this?

00:12:55

**#5D: Dhema.**

Q: Dhema?

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: You were there until you were 13 years old and then you actually joined the army yourself. Did you...was this your idea? Did you want to join the army and be like your father?

**#5D: When my father was in the army, he left [for Lhasa] as attendant to the sons of Yuthok. [He] passed away in Lhasa and could not return. Since there were great problems in Kham, I was drafted as substitute of father.**

Q: What problems were there?

**#5D: When father passed away there were three children, two daughters and I. When father was no more, there was no income.**

Q: Were there three daughters?

**#5D: There were two daughters.**

Q: Did you have one brother?

00:14:34

**#5D: [I] did not have a brother. I was the only [son].**

Q: Did [you] have two sisters?

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: So the father went to Lhasa, and *pa-la* stayed back in Kham and took over like his father's situation. In the army what was your father's rank?

**#5D: [He] was an officer but did not have any rank.**

Q: Was he an officer?

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: So when you joined the army, can you remember like what...you were 13 years old, so what were you asked to do?

00:15:35

**#5D: One must undergo training after joining the army. The adults carried guns while I was given a gun made of wood.**

Q: And anything else?

**#5D: Five or six years after joining the army at the age of 13, [I] was given the responsibility of blowing the conch, [I became] a *dhungpa* 'conch blower.'**

Q: Five or six years later?

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: So did you have to go ahead of the army when you did that?

**#5D: Yes, ahead [of the army]. The *dhungpa*, musical instrument players and drummer marched in front.**

Q: When you said that you were being trained in military strategy, can you remember what that involved?

**#5D: The training involved 'Left, right,' 'Forward march,' 'About turn;' such things were taught, as well as training in combat.**

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Sort of like maneuvers.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Maneuvers.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Stylized maneuvers.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: And how to shoot a gun.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Okay.

**#5D: [Speaks in English] Left, right, one, two...all these were taught.**

Q: Did you ever have to use your military strategy? Did you ever have to use any of it in combat?

**#5D: [We] did not have to go to war then.**

Q: What were the relations like between the members of the Tibetan army, the Gadhang in particular, and the local people? The local Khampa people, what were those relations like?

**#5D: There were cordial [relations].**

Q: So how long were you doing...You said for five or six years you were playing the trumpet?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: After five or six years...

Q: After five or six years, you were put as trumpeter of that unit. What happened after that?

00:18:51

**#5D: After that [I] gave training to the new *dhungpa*. There was not anything else besides that.**

Q: So you never saw any more of the Siling Thoegya? They were taken care of, were they?

**#56D: There were no more [Siling Thoegya] because China had occupied all the countries.**

Q: You didn't have any encounters with the KMT [Kuomintang] at that time in the earlier years?

**#5D: Apart from the Siling Thoegay, the Kuomintang...at that time I was in my region while the Gadhang [Regiment] was still there [Kham]. The Kuomintang...[the Gadhang Regiment] fought the Communist Chinese for quite a while. There was a *rupon* 'captain' in the Gadhang Regiment called Rupon Boekang. He was a great fighter. [The Gadhang troops] fought, but could not withstand the onslaught. The Rupon and others hid under a rock. The Chinese fired cannons at the rock killing the Rupon under it.**

Q: Did you see any of this action actually?

**#5D: [I] did not see it.**

Q: When you came to the end of your stint as a trumpeter, what happened then?

00:20:58

**#5D: After that the Chinese occupied Tibet and formed *rukhak* 'groups.' A *rukhak* consisted of 6-7 families and [I] became a *tsukdang*, something like a *chupon* 'leader of ten.'**

Q: Appointed as a leader?

**#5D: [I] was appointed a leader.**

Q: Were you appointed?

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: ...Of 6-7 family members?

**#5D: ...6-7 families.**

Q: In which place was this?

**#5D: Yes?**

Q: In which place was this?

**#5D: In Dhingri.**

Q: When you say the Chinese, do you mean the PLA [People's Liberation Army]?

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: What were your duties? What was expected of you?

00:22:04

**#5D: The responsibility involved cultivating lands. The families worked one day each in rotation in the fields of the seven members [of the group].**

Q: These six or seven families, were they working together then? Were they made to work together?

**#5D: [They] worked together.**

Q: So everything that they farmed was then shared between them?

**#5D: [The grains] need not be shared because each [family] owned their individual farms and could use what [they grew] in their land. Later, communes were established and all the lands were combined.**

Q: All combined together?

**#5D: Combined together. We were four groups and lands belonging to each [family in the] group were combined together. A person was assigned to keep track of daily work attendance and another to evaluate the number of stars entitled to each person; two men**

were thus appointed. The lands, *dzo* ‘animal bred between a yak and a cow’ and oxen for plowing were pooled together.

Q: And you were one of those people [appointed to maintain records]?

**#5D: I was the evaluator. There was another person, my subordinate to note the daily work attendance.**

Q: Did you have to make regular reports?

00:24:42

**#5D: [I] did not need to present [the books] to the Chinese.**

**“What is the amount of work done [by a person] in a year? How much grain is [he] entitled to?” The harvest was piled together and depending upon the amount of work done in a year, grains were distributed.**

Q: Did [you] have to give the grains to the Chinese?

**#5D: It was not given to the Chinese. It was for us.**

Q: During that time, did people have enough to eat?

**#5D: The food was so-so, but not very good since everything was pooled together.**

Q: Was it less than before when people were working individually?

**#5D: [The food] was better earlier.**

Q: What other changes you said that people had to work collectively and so what other changes were in your region?

**#5D: The changes were like that and then there were great difficulties. Though I was appointed a leader, [I] was not happy and did not feel like staying. So, [I] fled here in the year '74.**

Q: When you talked about the *kongri* ‘commune,’ the year that this started, how old were you when this started?

00:27:08

**#5D: [I] might have been around 41.**

Q: You were 41 years old?

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: Oh, 41years old. Okay, so that would get us to 1972, *pa-la*?

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: So very late—just a couple of years before you came to India, yeah?

**#5D: That is right.**

Q: Okay. Just going back a little bit, you were five or six years as a trumpeter in the Tibetan army in Kham. After that you went back to your region and I think you must've been 21 at that time. So, between 21 and 41 that's 20 years, so for 20 years you were...what were you doing? I think we need to back up. You were right back when you were 21 and what did you notice then when you were 21 years?

**#5D: [I] worked as a servant to a trader.**

Q: Yes?

**#5D: A trader's servant. [I] traveled around six times to Lhasa taking goods.**

Q: How many years did you spend in Lhasa?

**#5D: [I] lived for around six years in Lhasa.**

Q: Okay. So you were in Lhasa for six years. What was going on in Lhasa during that time?

**#5D: There was no talk about Chinese at that time in Lhasa. [I] sold *dretsa* 'rice straw' and delivered rice to Sera and Drepung [Monasteries].**

Q: [You] went to deliver to the monasteries?

**#5D: Yes?**

Q: To the monasteries?

**#5D: They would place orders and [I] went to deliver.**

Q: After those five, six years in Lhasa you came back to your village, right?

00:30:12

**#5D: [I] came to Dhingri and then the Chinese arrived. From the 500 Dhingri troops...Our arms and armaments were stored at Shekar. Shekar was a monastery in which they were stored. When the Chinese arrived, 100 troops [of the Dhingri Regiment] went to Shekar. The 100 troops, including me stayed at Shekar for a month then.**

Q: Were you also there?

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: Was Shekar a monastery?

**#5D: Yes, a monastery.**

Q: Where was that?

**#5D: It was located at a day's distance from Dhingri.**

Q: One day?

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: What kind of weapons were they?

**#5D: The weapons were guns given by the English called *Enji khadhum* 'English-made short-barrel [rifles].' There were machine guns and cannons.**

Q: What did you do for one month there?

00:32:21

**#5D: [We] stayed to guard our arms.**

Q: Stood guard?

**#5D: Yes, because it was said that the Chinese were coming.**

Q: You were guarding the store of weapons, is that right?

**#5D: The guns were stored there and the troops encircled it.**

Q: Did you ever have any problem in protecting the armory?

**#5D: During the time that we were there for a month, there was no problem. Later another 100 troops replaced us and then the Chinese arrived and seized all the guns. The [Dhingri] soldiers were taken to Shigatse.**

Q: Were [they] imprisoned?

**#5D: Yes, imprisoned.**

Q: So what happened when you went back home?

**#5D: [We] went back and other troops replaced [us].**

Q: [You] joined another regiment?

00:33:42

**#5D: Another batch of 100 soldiers were sent [to Shekar Monastery].**

Q: What happened to you?

**#5D: I lived in Dhingri working as a servant for a trader.**

Q: Was the trader from Dhingri?

**#5D: Yes.**

Q: Just to back up a little bit, when you went to Lhasa to work for the businessman, why were you no longer working with the Tibetan army? What happened?

**#5D: Yes?**

Q: You were still with the army?

**#5D: At that time the soldiers were sent on holiday.**

Q: On holiday?

**#5D: Sent on holiday, as there was no work.**

Q: For five or six years?

00:34:48

**#5D: Then the holiday was became permanent since [the regiment] was lost to the Chinese.**

Q: The regiment got lost?

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Yeah. I think we need to explore that a little more. What does he mean lost? What happened exactly?

**#5D: The Chinese arrived in Shekar and arrested the soldiers and then seized all the weapons. All the troops were arrested.**

Q: Wasn't the arrests made later, *pa-la*?

**#5D: Yes?**

Q: [They] were arrested at the Shekar Monastery?

**#5D: Right.**

Q: But the arrests didn't take place prior to that for 5-6 years.



**#5D: [They] were not arrested at that time.**

Q: Even though there were no arrests then, were the soldiers sent on holiday?

00:55:36

**#5D: At that time, a part of the army was sent on holiday.**

Q: The Chinese had stopped coming? There was no problem at the border anymore?

**#5D: At that time?**

Q: Yes.

**#5D: At that time we were living in Dhingri while the arms and armaments were at Shekar. The Chinese had already occupied and once [the country] fell under the control of the Chinese, that was [the end].**

Q: The time that you left Kham to go to Lhasa, was there no fighting happening at the borders?

**#5D: [We] did not fight.**

Q: No fighting at all? Not even between ordinary people and the Chinese? There was no conflict at all?

**#5D: Yes?**

Q: Were there no conflicts even with ordinary Chinese?

**#5D: After the defeat of the Gadhang Regiment, Chamdo and everything, we did not have to fight at Dhingri then. [The Chinese] seized the arms and ammunitions, arrested the 100 troops and took [them] to prison. That was the end.**

Q: Okay. When you went into the army, how did the older soldiers treat you, Tibetan soldiers? Were they nice to you? Did they make fun of you? How was it?

00:37:37

**#5D: I was a small child then and [the older soldiers] trained [me] and were loving. [They] gave [me] treats and were loving.**

Q: How many other soldiers went on holiday at the same time as you when you went to Lhasa?

**#5D: [Nobody] went back to Kham.**

Q: Did most of them stay back [in the army]?

**#5D: One lived in one's village.**

Q: In one's village?

**#6D: Yes.**

Q: Where?

**#5D: There were 500 Dhingri soldiers at Shigatse. [They] were present up to the fort of Shigatse.**

Q: Did most of them go back to their families?

**#5D: [Returned] to their families.**

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So the Gadhang...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: The Gadhang and the Dhingri are the...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: The Dhingri contingent which was 500, they all...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...went back to Dhingri.

Q: What about the other 500 in the Gadhang army? What happened to them?

**#5D: The Dhingri contingent?**

Q: No, no. There were 500 Dhingri troops in the Gadhang army.

**#5D: Right.**

Q: Where were the rest of the 500? Where did they live?

**#5D: [They] came from Gyangtse, Shangnamling and Wuyuk.**

Q: Did they all go back to their respective places then?

**#5D: Five hundred of the Gadhang troops were stationed at Shigatse and the rest returned home.**

Q: Just one final question. How old were you when you went to Lhasa and to work for this businessman?

**#5D: At that time...**

Q: Just approximately. It doesn't have to be exact.

00:40:03

**#5D: [I] must have been 35 or 36 years old.**

Q: Well, I think we're going to stop there. Thank you so much for coming and talking to us today and we're really sorry to keep you waiting so long.

**#5D: [Joins palms]**

Q: I just wanted to say again if this interview was shown in Tibet, China or anywhere else, would it create a problem for you?

**#5D: Yes?**

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

**#5D: There will be no problem.**

Q: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW