

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #61M – Sither
April 7, 2010

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

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

Copyright © 2012 Tibet Oral History Project



TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

www.TibetOralHistory.org

INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #61M
2. Interviewee: Sither
3. Age: 74
4. Date of Birth: 1936
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Nelung
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1960
9. Date of Interview: April 7, 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:

Sither belonged to a humble family and his father passed away when he was 10 years old. His family was *kyangkyang* meaning they did not own land and cared for goats and sheep belonging to a wealthy family. He recounts in detail how the system worked, the wages they received in the form of provisions and animals. They owned a small number of animals from which to get milk and wool; their animals grazed in the grasslands of the wealthy family.

Sither talks about his life as a servant of the Dagthon family, his duties and wages, how he was treated and the kind of relation he shared with his master and the two sons. He was privileged to attend school for a while with the Dagthon's two sons. Sither recalls the Reformation Committee initiated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to bring about changes in the tax system. Sither's master Dagthon Chogyal Dorjee was the District Administrator of Kyerong and Sither helped with the trade in salt, rice and grains.

Once the Chinese arrived Sither's master was arrested and as a form of tax, Sither was selected along with many other villagers to construct roads for the Chinese. The workers lived in large tents and were paid wages based on the length of road constructed. He witnessed *thamzing* 'struggle sessions' perpetrated on two men at the road construction site.

Topics Discussed:

Childhood memories, nomadic life, taxes, education, invasion by Chinese army, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas, forced labor, oppression under Chinese, *thamzing*.

TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

www.TibetOralHistory.org

Interview #61M

Interviewee: Sither

Age: 74, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Rebecca Novick

Interview Date: April 7, 2010

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:17

Interviewee #61M: Nyima Sither.

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record the experiences of older Tibetans to share with the younger generation of Tibetans, with Chinese people and with the world in general, to document the true history, beliefs and culture of the Tibetan people.

#61M: [Nods]

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

00:01:44

#61M: Yes.

Q: If anytime during the interview you want to take a break, let us know.

#61M: Okay.

Q: If there's any question you'd rather not answer, just tell us.

#61M: Okay.

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

00:02:24

#61M: There'll be no problem.

Q: Okay, we very much appreciate your agreeing to come and share your story with us.

#61M: [Nods]

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your early life back in Tibet when you were very young?

00:02:55

#61M: When I was small, we were *samadok* ‘farmers and herders,’ who owned a few animals and also some land. To tell you about my life when I was young, I belonged to a humble family. I spent my days grazing animals until I was about 14 years of age. My parents worked in the fields and also served other people. That was how it was during [my] childhood.

Q: How many animals did your family own?

#61M: My family was very humble and did not particularly own any land. My father passed away when I was 10 years old. There were two older sisters, a younger sister, an older brother, me and a younger brother. We were six children in all. There was mother, and we used to work for some rich families and graze animals.

[Question is repeated.]

00:04:07

#61M: We did not particularly own any animals. The animals we had belonged to other people. There were about 50-60. We would not find grass for our animals. It was difficult to pay tax in Tibet. If one did not pay tax in Tibet, one did not get grasslands or farm lands.

There was this thing called *kyangkyang* in Tibetan. *Kyangkyang* meant a person who did not own lands. A person who did not own lands was called a *kyangkyang*. A *kyangkyang* worked for the rich families. If he was capable and owned some animals, he grazed them and if he did not, he grazed animals that belonged to others. A boy grazed animals and a girl did nomadic tasks like milking the sheep and *dri* ‘female yak’ in summer and wool work during wintertime. If one owned lands, he did field work during summer.

Q: Were you the oldest?

#61M: No, I was the fourth child.

Q: So your family, you worked for other families in your village and you said you had to give something back? What did you mean?

00:06:50

#61M: [We] did not have to give anything.

Q: You looked after animals [belonging to others]. For example, I let you look after my animals and you have the cheese and butter, what did you have to give in return to the family [which owned the animals]?

#61M: There was nothing in return [that one gave]. Even if it was a small number of animals, they were brought down [from the nomadic hillside] around the 15th or 16th of the 4th Tibetan lunar month for milking. Take sheep for example: they were brought down to the village for milking until the beginning of the 6th or 7th Tibetan lunar month. One milked the animals as one worked for the family. There was no giving and taking. [We] did not pay

for keeping the animals because one of our family members worked for that family. That was why [we] kept the animals.

Q: So you can use as much milk and cheese as you want from the animal? You can use as much as you want?

00:07:56

#61M: One could use it. The animals could be taken back [anytime] because they were left for safe keeping. Since one of our [family] members was working in that family, the animals [belonging to the humble and rich families] were looked after together. During summer when they were brought down, their animals as well as ours were milked in the morning and evening. [We] could milk the number of animals [that were entrusted to us]. One did not have to give anything [to the owners].

Q: Okay. So are you talking about milk or are you talking about meat as well?

#61M: No, one did not do that [kill the animals]. The animals were marked. One could not do such things. One did not do such things. [The animals] were kept for safe keeping and one could not kill or do such things. One did not do it.

Q: And wool from the sheep? Could you use that?

00:09:05

#61M: [We] sheared the wool.

Q: Did you not have to give it to the owners?

#61M: No.

Q: So what animals were you given to look after, sheep and yak?

#61M: There was an agreement initially. If I worked for a family, if I was a farm worker, how much grain would they give me in a year? The average was about 20 *de* [a measurement] per month. So in this way a person might be paid his wages twice or thrice a month. If one was responsible for grazing sheep, the three, four or whatever number of sheep that he was given [as wages] could be kept by him and any increase in the number could be utilized by him. They [the owners] did not take them. So, in this way there was an increase in the number and it was not because he had purchased [the sheep]. That was how the humble people came to own animals.

Q: For example, if you were given 20 animals and it increased to 25, you could keep the 5 with you and did not have to give it back?

00:10:14

#61M: Not just 5, we took care of all the 25 animals. They did not keep the animals. We were keeping their animals as they did not take care of the animals. The animals grazed together. If the flock was large, they were milked together in the evening during

summertime. They grazed together in the mountains. For example, if someone owned 50 sheep, a person did not accompany just 50 sheep. They were sent along with [another flock]. They were sent along in the care of another shepherd.

Q: Are we talking about sheep and yak?

#61M: Suppose a family owned 1,000 sheep and I am the shepherd to look after the 1,000 sheep. If I was being paid 12 sheep annually, the 12 sheep remained with the family [flock]. Those sheep were mine and they were marked. If they gave birth to six lambs, the number rose to 18. So as *tok*, it continued in that way. They [the employer family] did not use or kill them. They owned their animals and we ours. Since we worked for them, we did not need to pay for the grass nor supply them butter or milk. It was called *tok*, which meant the wages for the work performed.

Q: Since the *tok* animals belonged to you and you grazed them along with their animals, in case you wished to eat meat, could you...

00:12:15

#61M: If one needed [an animal to eat], one was free to take it.

Q: Did your family look after the animals of many different families? It sounds like you looked after the animals of few different families, not just one family, yeah?

#61M: There were two parts. For example, there were those people that were solely nomads without any farmlands. They were those that lived in Phumo Changthang. If I was a shepherd in a family which owned a huge flock of sheep, my sheep grazed along with theirs. An assessment of sheep was conducted every three years and a higher number of sheep meant entitlement to more land. They received better grasslands and houses since it worked on rotation basis. They [the employer family] benefited a lot since the servant's sheep was counted along with theirs. Therefore, he [the servant] did not have to do [pay] anything.

In our case, we worked permanently for one family. If the family owned 1,000 sheep and I owned 100, since I did not have grass [land, my animals] ate [from the grasslands of the employer family]. [The sheep] were sheared in a day and I could take the wool [from my sheep]. If one required meat, whether it was of one [sheep] or two, since we owned only a small number of goats and sheep, only the old or male animals were killed. Aged males were normally killed in the 10th Tibetan lunar month. It was during the 10th Tibetan lunar month that the animals were slaughtered and not at all times.

Q: Did you work for one family?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He worked for one family.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: One family only.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Only.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: I see.

Q: You looked after sheep and goats, is that correct?

00:15:41

#61M: Yes, it was only goats and sheep. Wealthy families owned flocks of *dri* and goats and sheep. Goats and sheep were in a single group and not separate. They grazed together.

Q: The family you worked for did not own *dri*?

#61M: No, there were no *dri*.

Q: Your family was able to use as much milk as you wanted and then obviously, then the rest of it you just would give back to the family—the rest of the milk and everything?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Not like that.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: No? How do...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: For example, they have been given limited animals, that milk can be used by self. Others' milk and everything [from] the 1,000 goats and sheep...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: When you say limited, do you mean that there was a set amount...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Set amounts are given to them for looking after the animals.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Yes, yes. So we are talking about a certain amount.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Hmm, sure.

Q: So what was that amount? How much were they allowed?

00:16:51

#61M: As I told you earlier, we did not take any wages for the sheep that were entrusted to us. If the person was working as a shepherd, he might be given two...[name of a measurement?] of grains twice a month. If he was paid in goats and sheep, it might be two or three, but they were reared with the same [flock].

Q: What was the average annual [wage]?

#61M: If [the wage] was in the form of sheep, it might be five or six.

Q: Goats?

00:17:22

#61M: There was no discussion about goats. Normally sheep were received and not goats. Goats were not considered superior and also there were not many goats. Sheep were greater in number. Since the man worked for the family, he did not need to pay the family for keeping his goats and sheep [with their flock]. That was the reason why it was called *tok*. He worked for the family and his sheep were cared for along with theirs. The wages were paid separately.

Q: How many animals were you altogether looking after?

#61M: There were various [number of] animals. Since our village consisted of farmers who were also nomads, they were not the ones with the largest number of animals. The maximum number was around 1,200-1,300 and then 800-900.

Q: Both goats and sheep?

00:18:40

#61M: Yes, including goats and sheep.

Q: Was five sheep a year, was that adequate for your family's needs?

#61M: One could not say anything because it worked according to the situation in the village. One could not say whether it was more or less as one did not own any land himself. That was sufficient and there was no reason why it should not suffice. All the births that took place in the year belonged to him as he worked [for the family]. [The flock] grew as he was engaged in working there. [The flock] grew and he did not have to pay anything and could keep the milk and the wool. One did not need to pay anything and the [flock] gradually grew. It increased in number.

Q: You weren't allowed any goats, so you couldn't get any milk, right?

#61M: [We] got milk.

Q: How?

00:20:14

#61M: The goats were milked separately. Goats and sheep [milk] were not mixed. The goats were milked separately. Butter made from goats' milk was considered inferior. The butter was less tasty.

Q: It was less tasty.

#61M: It was less tasty. Sheep [butter] was considered better. They were milked separately. If there were 50 goats, they were milked separately and the sheep separately. The churning of curd was also done separately.

Q: The sheep milk was better.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah.

Q: But not much milk comes from sheep, does it really?

00:21:16

#61M: There were different types. Much depended upon the abundance of grass in the region. If the number of sheep was few and there were vast and good grasslands, the animals looked different. The sheep grew to this size [raises hand to level of chest]. If there was scanty grass in a region and a high sheep population which had to be on the move to seek grass, they became poorly and gave less milk. Their wool was also inferior.

Q: Just so I am clear, they were given these five sheep per year and they could do whatever they wanted with those five sheep and they weren't allowed to use any of the other animals—they didn't drink goat milk or do anything with the other animals, right?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Right.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Because earlier you said they could use whatever they wanted. So I just want...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: They could [use] only the animals they were given. They can use the meat or milk or anything.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: I see.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: But not touching the other animals.

Q: The family, he said he looked after the animals on the family property because he didn't have any property, so where did you live? Did you live in a house or in a tent? What was...?

00:22:57

#61M: In my region we lived in houses, except during summer when tents were used at the nomadic sites. There were houses and [we] did not live in tents.

Q: You owned houses?

#61M: If it was a humble family, they were allowed to live in a spare house of the family.

Q: You did not own a house of your own?

00:23:12

#61M: No, [we] did not.

Q: You lived in their house sometimes?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes, always. Mostly. Whole life was spent in their house.

Q: In their house. So what kind of living situation were you given in their house?

#61M: It is natural [that they would live better]. They would provide a spare house where we had to live.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Sorry? You said he stayed in their house.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Many houses were there but [in] that main house [they] were not allowed to stay. They were kept in a separate house.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Ah, so it was a separate house.

Q: Can you describe your house?

00:24:25

#61M: In Tibet most of the roofs of the houses were built of earth, whether they belonged to a wealthy family or a poor family. There was no cement or tin roof. In our region earth was used and then plastered with clay, which did not let in water. There was no leakage. Houses in Tibet were very strange. The roof was laid with wooden planks and *yamba* on top. *Yamba* are thin slabs of stone and then a thick layer of earth was plastered on it. There was no seepage when it rained. For the poor family who lived in a spare room or two, it was the same building. There was no difference because it was the same earth, wall and roof. There was no special glass [windows] or any such things.

Q: Were there difference in the size of the houses?

#61M: The rich family might have a shrine. There were some rich families who had a shrine or a prayer room. Basically, all the houses were the same except for an extra floor or something.

Q: What was the house you lived in like?

00:25:30

#61M: The home where I lived was with the Dagthon [family]. I was a servant to the family called Dagthon. Actually I was like a member of the family. We paid tax and had a house with four rooms. We were obliged to pay a small tax. Generally the people lived the way I told you earlier. Similarly all those who served the rich families lived in houses with one or two rooms.

Q: So this position of being a servant is called a *sempon*, right?

#61M: *Tsempon*? A tailoring master is called a *tsempon*. We used to be called *yokpo* ‘servant.’ A man was called a *yokpo* and a woman was called *yokmo*. Those that worked under someone were called *yokpo* and *yokmo*.

Q: What is *tsempon*?

00:27:14

#61M: A tailor is called a *tsempon*.

Q: During the pre-interview you have mentioned that you helped take care of children in the family and you were called—was it *chenmo*?

#61M: Yes? Oh, that is *sempon*.

Q: Yes, *sempon*. Who is a *sempon*?

#61M: *Sempon* was someone who took care of children and served a family. He was superior to the other servants. They [the other servants] were the ones who worked in the fields and such. *Sempon* was someone who worked in the house like serving food and washing clothes. That was a *sempon*. He had to accompany the children to school.

Q: That was your job?

00:28:17

#61M: Yes.

Q: Did you go to school?

#61M: Yes, I did.

Q: Along with the children?

#61M: Yes, along with the children in Kyerong. I went to school in Kyerong.

Q: Did you go to school in Kyerong?

#61M: I went to school in Kyerong. [I] think it was around 1951 that I went [to school]. It was in the Year of the Wood-Horse. I was four years in Kyerong.

Q: Studying?

00:28:49

#61M: Yes. Not in school, but the District was Kyerong and my boss Dagthon was the District [Administrator]. At that time His Holiness the Dalai Lama established the Reformation Committee.

Q: Yes?

#61M: His Holiness formed the Reformation Committee in Lhasa to reduce taxes. At that time all the District Administrators were replaced.

Q: When was that?

00:29:09

#61M: It was in the Year of the Wood-Horse. Perhaps it was around '54. [I] stayed for four years in Kyerong. It must be '54. It was the Year of the Wood-Horse.

Q: Did you go there to study?

#61M: I was 17 years old and working as their servant. That's how we came to be in Kyerong. My place of residence was Nyero in Gyangtse. When my chief left, we had to leave too. The first government-run school was started in the district for the children of the poor. Earlier there were no schools for the children of the poor. There were no government-run [schools] then. A government-run school was started. It was managed by the government.

The responsibility of the District [Administrator] was that, earlier whatever [the taxes collected by the District Office] did not reach the government. Though there was a lot collected from the people, it did not reach the government. Therefore, the government [appointed and] paid salary for five chiefs and servants. And whatever taxes were collected from the people had to be given to the government. The same applied to every District [Office].

It was around '54. The Reformation Committee had already been formed in Lhasa. And then the District [Administrator] was appointed. It [formation of the Reformation Committee] was around the time His Holiness the Dalai Lama went to China from Lhasa. It was in '54.

Q: So your boss was the District Administrator?

00:31:40

#61M: Yes, [he] was the District Administrator.

Q: Of which District?

#61M: [His name was] Nyero Dagthon.

Q: Was this the same school his children attended?

00:32:11

#61M: Yes, [his children] were sent to the school. [He] had two children.

Q: Did all three of you go to school together?

#61M: Yes, we did. The older [child] was much older and he later studied astrology. He was a teacher at the Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute for a long time. He was among the first to work at the Institute when it was started in Dharamsala [Himachal Pradesh, India].

Q: He went to school from '54 to '58?

00:33:07

#61M: That's right. Actually I studied for only about eight months at the school.

Q: Yes?

#61M: I studied only eight months in the school. It was a very good school.

Q: Why [only eight months]?

00:33:13

#61M: [I] was a servant and used to be sent here and there.

Q: And the other children?

#61M: Yes?

Q: The two children?

00:33:39

#61M: They attended school as the school was there. [I] attended school for only eight months, but I learned grammar along with the older son from a renowned *geshe* 'monk with a degree in Buddhist philosophy.'

Q: Where?

#61M: In Kyerong.

Q: For how many months?

00:33:58

#61M: Three months. [I] was not very old then, about 18-19 years old and did not understand it much, though I learned to read and write. [I] did not understand grammar much [laughs] as I was young.

Q: So for eight months in 1954?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Is that what we are talking about?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Sure.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: He went to school in Kyerong.

#61M: Kyerong District.

Q: What did you study at school?

00:34:36

#61M: Nothing except Tibetan. There were two District [Administrators] in Kyerong; a monk and a layman. The *tsedung* ‘monk official’ was very accomplished in Tibetan as he had studied at the Tse School. His Tibetan surpassed any competition. The teacher was the *tsedung*.

Q: What’s a *tsedung*?

#61M: There were two types of aristocrats in the Tibetan government. [The *tsedung*] were the monks. Monk [officials] were known as *tsedung*. There were the *tsedung* and the *shondung*, one consisting of monk officials and the other of lay officials. The bigger districts were appointed with a monk official and a layman official. But most of them left monkhood. He [the *tsedung* at Gyangtse District] later arrived in Dharamsala. He was called Woesser Penpa and hailed from Mokro and had studied at the Tse School. He was accomplished in writing [Tibetan].

Q: He taught at the school?

00:35:28

#61M: The school was started by the District [Office]. Earlier there were never any schools in the districts. There were no schools for the children of the common man. There were about 30-odd students [in the district school] all aged 13-14.

Q: So your teacher was a monk?

#61M: The teacher was the *tsedung*, Woesser Penpa. He was sent as the District Administrator and he [also] taught. His Tibetan was better.

Q: Was he teaching?

00:36:24

#61M: Yes, he taught because there were no teachers. It was decided by the government that the District [Administrators] would teach. It was so in all the districts where the *tsedung* did the teaching. If the *tsedung* was absent the lay official did the teaching. He [Woesser Penpa] has passed away now.

Q: You said something earlier about socialism.

#61M: No, it was not socialism; it was called the Reformation Committee. His Holiness the Dalai Lama spoke about it. His Holiness had to start something like that to bring about Revolution of Democracy in Tibet. It was called Reformation Committee.

Q: Reformation Committee means...

00:37:36

#61M: To bring about change. The Reformation Committee's duty was to bring about changes.

Q: After His Holiness went to Beijing?

#61M: It was before His Holiness left. It existed since long ago. When His Holiness left for China, the District [Administrators] had already been appointed. Perhaps the Reformation Committee began in '53. [I] think [His Holiness] started the Reformation Committee in '53.

Q: You mentioned His Holiness' visit to China earlier.

00:38:41

#61M: It was in '54.

Q: Why did you mention that? What time frame? Did something happen after His Holiness' visit to China?

#61M: [His Holiness] left for [China] while we lived there [in Kyerong] in '54. We went there in the latter part of the year '54 and His Holiness left [for China] in the beginning of the year. Perhaps it was the 4th or 5th month when His Holiness left.

Q: Where did you live earlier to that, before you left for Kongpo?

00:39:50

#61M: What's Kongpo?

Q: The place you where...

#61M: Kyerong. That was not Kongpo. It was Kyerong.

Q: Where did you live before leaving for Kyerong?

00:40:20

#61M: You mean my boss?

Q: The boss and yourself.

#61M: I started to work for the boss in '53-'54. [District Administrators] were changed every 3 or 4 years. Earlier he was working at Kongpo Shokha District. After that he arrived in Lhopra and I told you about the formation of the Reformation Committee. To put it in a nutshell, a lot of concession was given [to the people] by the government.

Besides the revenue collected from the people for the government by the District [Office], there were many other [taxes] that the District [Office] collected which were not recorded in the revenue collection. All of those [collections from people] were annulled and there was none left. His Holiness made great efforts to cancel those collections. The District [Office]

could not utilize the extra grains [that were collected] as the government paid salaries for five officers and servants working [in the District Office].

The [collections], whether it was rice or whatever, was sent to the government and the rest for the Monlam ‘Prayer Festival’ in Lhasa. That was the main point. Earlier there was no [such control] and the District [Office] could do what they liked. They sent the tax collection to the government and that was it. They could collect as much as they liked [from the people].

Q: So his boss was not the District Administrator before, he became District Administrator in 1954 of Kyerong, yes?

00:43:02

#61M: He was the District Administrator of Kongpo Shokha District.

Q: And earlier to that?

#61M: That was the only District Administrator post he held earlier. Before that he was sent as the *chasho* to Nepal.

Q: What does *chasho* mean?

00:43:13

#61M: *Chasho* means—there was a lot of tea in the Dhomay [Amdo] regions and tea tax used to be collected by the government from that region. Later it was said that the tea storehouse of Dhartsedho was destroyed by the Chinese. He had been sent there for around two years. After that he was in Kongpo Shokha District. After his stint at Kongpo Shokha District, he spent a year in Lhopra. Those are long stories. And then he was appointed to Kyerong in ’53.

Q: So in 1953, there were some reforms that were made by the Tibetan government and they included tax cuts and that every district should have a school. So the tax cuts, can he describe what those tax cuts were? I mean how did they affect your family? What kind of tax were you paying before and what kind of tax did you pay after this reform in 1953?

#61M: There was no particular benefit for me as such. When taxes were being collected, we did not particularly have any debts. We were poor people who worked as servants and did not give or take loans. It was the middle-class that had huge debts. For example, the aristocrats in Lhasa had a lot of debts. The noblemen of the government had huge debts to pay to the Tse Lacha, which was the bank of the government. The noblemen had a lot [of debts].

The poor people availed grain loans from the rich. It was mainly grains that were loaned in the villages. Poor things, since food was scarce, they took grain loans which they could not repay during that year and paid just the interest. Interest could be half a *khel* [a measurement] or one *khel* for a *khel* of grains. They repaid the interest, but could not repay the principal. There were many such instances. All such cases were annulled.

Q: These reforms that you say came about through the authority of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. How did you learn about them? How were they announced? How were they, you know ...

00:46:58

#61M: I was living there as the servant of the District [Administrator]. The [reform] had to be carried out by the District [Administrator]. His Holiness had done everything and the District [Administrators] had to implement it. I knew about what the District [Administrator] was doing.

Q: Did the common people know of it?

#61M: Yes?

Q: For example, did somebody come to the village to explain this to everybody? Did the common people know of it?

00:47:16

#61M: Yes, [they] knew it clearly.

Q: Was there an announcement?

#61M: Yes from the government.

Q: There was an announcement. Somebody actually came to the village from the government?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: No, their Administrator went because they got information that this should be done, by instructions. They have gone to the village and announced like that.

Q: So what was the general feeling then learning about these reforms? Was it treated as good news?

00:48:05

#61M: [People] felt that. [People] felt that, but it did not last for a long time.

Q: How long did it take before you started noticing difference?

#61M: [Speaks before question is interpreted] If it had lasted for a longer period, it was certain that the poor people would see progress since all debts were written off. However, the Chinese arrived and though we had heard and knew about it [Reformation], there was not much time to carry it out. The Chinese did as they liked. The Tibetan government wrote off all the debts that could not be repaid. However, the Chinese oppressed all the influential people and without any discussion destroyed all the documents. So it did not bring about much benefit due to the lack of time. Otherwise...

Q: How were you treated by the District Administrator whom you worked for? How were you treated?

00:49:58

#61M: There was no [reason] to treat [me] badly. I looked after the children when they attended school and in general accompanied my boss wherever he went. [My duties] entailed washing clothes and serving food. That was the duty of a *sempon*. There was no need to work in the fields. There was no [reason] to treat [me] badly.

Q: They cared for you?

#61M: Yes. Unlike others, the boss Dagthon was a man of good nature because he came from the lineage of Bakpo Ramjam. Dagthon came from the lineage of Bakpo Ramjam.

Q: Bakpo Ramjam?

00:50:55

#61M: You know the Bakpo...[not discernible] in Lhasa? That was the estate of Dagthon. Their kind was such that they taught all the young servants. None of their servants were left untaught. All the servants were literate. [They] were taught to read and write. All the servants were taught to read and write.

Q: And the children whom you looked after, the children of the Administrator, did they treat you as one of their own, as an equal?

#61M: They did not treat [me] like that [differently]. [I] was treated as an equal. One of the children was younger to me by 5-6 years and the other was younger to me by a year or two.

Q: They were both younger to you?

00:51:57

#61M: [The older one] was younger to me by two years. I was 19-20 years old when I was taught to read and write. One [of the children] was about 17-18 and the younger one might have been 14-15 years old.

Q: So they looked up to you?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah, looked up to him.

Q: You were never made to feel that your position was lower than them?

#61M: No, [I] did not feel like that. We were six men there.

Q: Yes?

00:53:46

#61M: We were six male servants. Every month we received two measurements of grains and performed our respective tasks. There was no oppression of any sort as we worked for

the District [Administrator]. If one lived on the estate, one might suffer because one would have to work in the fields. [At the District Administrator's home] there was nothing particular to do. One performed whatever responsibility one was given. The mule worker took care of the mules, the cook did the cooking and the trader did business. That was it. There was nothing particular besides that.

Q: What did you receive in return for the work that you did for this family?

#61M: There never was any salary. [They] provided us with clothing. As I told you, they gave us two measurements of grain for our monthly subsistence. [They] gave us tea and vegetables. We ate our own *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley.'

Q: Could you not eat what they ate?

00:54:17

#61M: Yes?

[Question is repeated.]

#61M: We could not eat that.

Q: Did you prepare your own food?

00:54:22

#61M: No, there were cooks.

Q: Were there separate cooks for the servants?

#61M: Yes, there were. There were cooks in the home who prepared [the food]. Separate food was cooked for the boss [and his family]. We must eat our own *pa* 'dough made from *tsampa* and tea.' There was nothing but *tsampa* to eat in Tibet. They provided grains from which [we] made *tsampa*. Vegetables, *thukpa* 'noodle soup' or tea was available in the house.

Q: Did you ever get any time off?

00:55:18

#61M: There was nothing like that. We spent our whole lives there and there were nothing like Mondays or Tuesdays. Everyday was the same.

Q: Were you quite happy then in this work?

#61M: There were no difficulties.

Q: So who is Takthon Chogyal Dorjee?

00:55:47

#61M: [Speaks before question is interpreted] There were problems [for servants] of other noble families. My boss did not have his wife. The wife had passed away since long ago. In the case of other noble families, the wives made [the servants] suffer by not providing good food and complaining a lot. There were many such cases, but with us there was nothing like that. The boss was alone and if we served him well, that was enough. He was very kind hearted and extremely loving towards his people.

Q: Who was Takthon Chogyal Dorjee?

#61M: It is Dagthon. Dagthon is the name of the family and Chogyal Dorjee was the name of the boss.

Q: So you also worked inspecting grain stocks? Is that right?

00:57:03

#61M: You mean grains?

Q: Yes. Did you go to inspect grains under him?

#61M: [I] did not go to collect grains, but it was like this as I told you. Grain was the only produce of the region of Kyerong. Well, there were others, but tax was paid in the form of barley. *Tawu* ‘buckwheat’ and *gyara* [type of grain similar to corn?] also grew there. The grain [barley] had to be given to the nomads who came there.

Q: Nomads?

00:57:28

#61M: Yes. They arrived from Thoe Shungru, which is the village of Tsewang [resident of Mundgod]. They arrived bearing salt from their region into Kyerong. The grain had to be given to them in return for salt. Now what do [we do] with the salt? People from Nepal came with rice and barter was conducted. Rice was required to be sent to Lhasa for the Monlam ‘Prayer Festival.’ About 60 loads of rice had to be dispatched for the Monlam. That [rice] was the food during the Monlam [for the monks]. Each District was obliged to send their assigned quantity. There was a lot to do around this.

First, the grain was exchanged for salt. And then salt was given and rice received in return. It was not simple to just receive the rice [paddy] because the husk was there and it had to be beaten to de-husk and turned into white rice. And then packed into bags of yak-skin— [I] think the yak-skin bags were also a form of tax—which weighed about 25 kilograms each. They were packed in yak-skin bags and dispatched to Lhasa.

Q: Was it the work of the District Administrator?

00:58:35

#61M: Yes, it was the District Administrator’s job.

Q: It wasn't your trade, right?

#61M: No, we did not do any trade.

Q: The rice...

00:59:28

#61M: It was meant to prepare food during the Monlam. It had to be dispatched to Lhasa. It had to be sent during the Monlam.

Q: How much was the quantity?

#61M: It was about 40 bags, each weighing around 25 kilograms. It was about 40 bags of such size [gestures off camera].

Q: So you would travel with Chogyal Dorjee, the District Administrator? You would travel with him to do this trade?

00:58:58

#61M: It was not necessary to travel. They arrived there. The nomads and the Nepalese arrived there. The trading went on in the house of the District [Administrator].

Q: And what was your job?

#61M: I did just that. I did the bartering. One had to ask how much grain they wanted for a measurement of salt.

Q: Did they make the decision?

01:00:45

#61M: One must bargain the price. Once the price was fixed, the same applied to the 20 or 30 people. There was some difference in the quality of salt. Some were moist for which an appropriate price was fixed. Likewise some paddy had thicker husks and so the exchange of paddy with salt meant fixing an apt price. It took place right in the house.

Q: What did you give in return?

#61M: We gave salt to the Nepalese.

Q: And the grain was given to...

01:01:16

#61M: The grain was given to the nomads who'd brought the salt. The salt was given to the Nepalese from whom we received rice. Two types of trade took place.

Q: The District Administrator, Chogyal Dorjee, after the Chinese started taking control of the country, what happened to him?

#61M: We left from there in '59. [His appointment] at Kyerong was over. When we arrived in Shigatse, Lhasa had been conquered.

Q: Yes?

01:02:11

#61M: Lhasa had been conquered. He could not go there once Lhasa had fallen. Actually he had to go to Lhasa to inform that the new District [Administrator] had arrived there [at Kyerong] and report his presence to the government. He did not get the opportunity to go to Lhasa because of what the Chinese had done. So we went to our village, but there were a lot of problems. It is not possible to relate all those problems.

The Chinese had created so many problems in our village and then the Khampa [people of Kham] of *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] caused a lot of suffering to the people. Poor things, when we reached there most of the women were living in the mountains. The valuable things from the houses had been seized as well as the good horses. It was like that.

Q: Where?

#61M: In our village.

Q: Which village was it?

01:03:04

#61M: Nyero. It was called Nyero Dagthon. The Khampas were camped at Thalung. Andrug Gonpo Tashi's [founder of *Chushi Gangdrug*] camp was at Thalung, two days' journey from our village. It was quite close. So my boss said that that was not the right thing to do. There were the people of the nine groups of villages. It was not a large town but there were separate groups [of villages].

Q: How many families were there?

#61M: There might have been quite a number of families.

Q: About how many?

01:03:28

#61M: There were about nine groups. Our village consisted of about 30 [families], but I do not know about the others. There were about nine separate [groups]. He called all the fathers of the families and said, "This is not the right thing to do. If they are the real soldiers of Andrug Gonpo Tashi, we should do like this. We'll collect grass, *tsampa* and meat from the people and keep them. Andrug Gonpo Tashi should send his real men to us and we will receive them. If they are not genuine, we will not receive them. Fake men are arriving." They discussed and all the people of the village stood united.

So when the real [soldiers] arrived, they were received and provided grass—one could not travel without horses—and poor things, they were said to be on the way to fight. Most of them were Khampas. They were provided grass and received with food at night. The bad ones were caught and returned to their respective places. It was done like that.

Q: So the Khampas were coming into the village and they were just kind of taking whatever they wanted without asking, including women—like taking women for sex I’m assuming that’s what...

#61M: [They] were forcing the women.

Q: Did they face such problems?

01:06:41

#65M: Yes, they did. It was said that they were not genuine [*Chushi Gangdrug* guerrillas]. Fake ones were coming. So Chogyal Dorjee’s reception was to separate the genuine from the fake [in collaboration] with Andrug Gonpo Tashi. There were about 15-20 influential men who had gathered there to form a group to receive the Khampas. They agreed that the Khampas should not indulge in certain things and [informed] Gonpo Tashi, “The genuine [men] can come directly, but we will not let go the fake ones.” They spoke this way and received quite a lot of people. However, Nangatse fell soon to the Chinese. After it fell, all the people of our village were captured.

Q: Which men?

#61M: All the many influential people.

Q: From your village?

01:07:28

#61M: Yes. They [the influential men] had formulated a written agreement. Without a written agreement it was not possible to collect meat, *tsampa* and butter to help the Khampas of the Defend Tibet Volunteer Force which was a big name. That was done, but finally when the arrests began many people said, “Dagthon Chogyal Dorjee headed this. We are not involved. He is the one who started it.” Finally Chogyal Dorjee was blacklisted.

Q: Why?

#61M: “He started it and told us to bring [the provisions],” they said thus to the Chinese when arrests were being made for [helping] the Khampas. Though they had united and put their signatures initially, later many of them said, “We did it because of Chogyal Dorjee. Otherwise we would not have done it.” Chogyal Dorjee was blacklisted, but in the end he was cleared. The Chinese used to say that if someone admitted to [his crimes] he would be spared. So he was subjected to lesser *thamzing* ‘struggle session.’ [He] did not suffer much *thamzing*.

Q: Chogyal Dorjee?

01:08:22

#61M: Yes, he did not suffer much *thamzing*. [He] said “I did it” which was [true] because he started it. “[I] started it because the Khampas were creating problems for the people. Although I was not affected in anyway, [I] did it because of that. What they are saying is the truth as I did it.” He said that and did not suffer much *thamzing*. However, he could not escape and went to jail. [He] was many years in Gyantse.

Q: He went to prison?

#61M: Yes, he was taken to prison. Most of them went to prison, but he did not suffer much beating unlike the others.

Q: I want to get back to the *thamzing* (your [to interpreter] favorite subject), but first of all, when the Khampas came Chogyal Dorjee was saying, “If you are a true *Chushi Gangdrug* then this is fine, if you are just some random guy acting badly we are not going to help you.” Was it true then that the *Chushi Gangdrug* troops were more disciplined than the other Khampas that came through?

01:10:51

#61M: Yes, those that were the real [*Chushi Gangdrug* troops] were better behaved and came directly. In case fake ones arrived—they were questioned because it was necessary—many of them were sent back. They were the *dhopdhop* ‘obstinate monks’ from the monasteries who’d seized horses. Their horses were confiscated. There were very fine horses in the region of Kala, which the monks had seized. All those horses were confiscated and they were sent away.

Q: Was it done by the special group that was formed?

#61M: Yes and the main person in the group was Chogyal Dorjee. Messages were sent [to the owners] to come and collect their horses and they did. The horses were magnificent and belonged to wealthy families. However, they could not retain their horses because most of them [the wealthy family members] were captured and their properties confiscated. That was what was done temporarily but none could escape the Chinese. [My] boss fell into Chinese hands.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Did he answer the question? Did he answer the question?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Means?

[Interviewer to interpreter]: The question was—was *Chushi Gangdrug* more disciplined?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He said that it was more disciplined.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: They had more discipline.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: After the discussion was made, after the agreement was made.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: No, no.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: After the...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: But in general. It's a general question. The people who fought in *Chushi Gangdrug*, were they generally, in general terms, more disciplined than these other people he's talking about, these other fighters, yeah? Because there were people who were fighting under *Chushi Gangdrug* and Chogyal Dorjee was making a strong distinction between these people and the Khampas who were just fighting on their own or whatever. So the *Chushi Gangdrug* forces, were they more disciplined? Did they act better? Do you understand?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: I understood... Than the normal Khampas.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Yeah.

01:13:38

#61M: Of course, there was a difference. The real ones did things properly. Suppose someone required a horse, he paid for it irrespective of the amount. The others just seized [what they wanted].

Q: The others paid...

#61M: The real [men of] *Chushi Gangdrug* paid for the horses. They cannot be blamed for wanting a horse. If possible a male [horse] was needed as they were fighters. It is believed that male horses have protective powers. If that was not available, at least a good female one was required. They provided some amount, but not the full price because they had no money, the poor things.

They were supposed to be the real ones [*Chushi Gangdrug*]. They said, "When we return later, we will give back the horses." The fake ones just seized the horses. Besides that they took the clothes from the homes. They took away clothes and forced the women. It was understood that they were the fake ones and they were sent back to their villages. Whatever could be done was done.

Q: You mentioned Gonpo Tashi. [To interpreter] What did he say about Gonpo Tashi? I heard him say it twice.

01:15:03

#61M: They [Chogyal Dorjee and Andrug Gonpo Tashi] did not meet. Gonpo Tashi did not stay long at Nangatse in order for them to meet. The army camp was established there. The Lhoka unit of Gonpo Tashi's army was established at Thalung.

Q: Did Gonpo Tashi and Chogyal Dorjee meet and discuss?

#61M: They did not meet personally, but only through letters.

Q: When Chogyal Dorjee went through his *thamzing* session, were you asked to attend?

01:16:23

#61M: I did not witness it at all. We were separated. All the servants were sent back to our respective homes.

Q: When the *thamzing* was going on, were the servants not told to come and conduct the *thamzing*?

#61M: No, the servants did not conduct the *thamzing*.

Q: Why?

01:16:40

#61M: [He] was arrested by them [the Chinese] because his was a serious charge. It had been said [by the villagers to the Chinese], “He is the main person. We did it because he told us to do it.” When the actual *thamzing* took place, I was not present. I had left to work on Chinese road construction. After his capture, I left for road construction. [I] heard he was not subjected to much *thamzing*.

Q: You did not witness it?

#61M: No, I was not there during the *thamzing*. A few of the servants were there.

Q: Did they subject him?

01:17:05

#61M: No, they did not.

Q: Would they not face problems from the Chinese for not doing it?

#61M: There were a lot of people there.

Q: Were the servants specifically not made to conduct the *thamzing*?

01:17:15

#61M: No, there was nothing special like that. There was nothing like that. None of the servants did the *thamzing*.

Q: The Chinese came and recruited you into road construction?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Means?

[Interviewer to interpreter]: You said he went to road construction. How did that happen? Who told him to go?

#61M: Every village was taxed to send its men to construct road.

Q: By the village?

01:17:55

#61M: Not by the village but by the Chinese. A huge road construction [project] called Kargogang was started to [construct road] from Gyangtse Taring to Nangatse and from Nangatse to Thalung. There were about 1,600 men. Nomads from Yamdok and people from every region were called for the road construction.

Q: Where was the road constructed?

#61M: [Roads] were constructed from Gyangtse to Nangatse and from Nangatse to Thalung. And from Gyangtse to Rinabu, Yeshinang and Gambali. Roads were constructed throughout the winter.

Q: About how many months?

01:18:35

#61M: For about six months. First [road was built] from Gyangtse to Thalung. Thalung and Nangatse were close. When one reached the place called Wongo, towards one direction was Thalung [points to right] and Nangatse was a little further away [points to left].

Q: You were asked or you were told?

#61M: Each village was told to send a certain number of men. Our village was divided into east and west sections. A total of 40 men were required to go.

Q: And the 1,600 people working there were all Tibetans, right?

01:19:44

#61M: They were all Tibetans.

Q: How old was the youngest people working there?

#61M: There were no young [people]. I was about 23-24 years old then and most of them were older to me. There were not many who were younger.

Q: Were there no one younger?

01:20:13

#61M: Most of them were my age and not many were younger. There were many who were like me. The majority were sturdy young men and women.

Q: So can you just describe your life during the road construction and what the conditions were like? What your daily life was like? Actually, let's do it a different way. Let's say from the moment you got up in the morning to the moment you went to bed at night, can you tell us what you did during the day, during the six months?

#61M: [I] think it was 8:30 in the morning to 5 in the evening that [we] worked on road construction.

Q: What did you do as soon as you got up in the morning?

01:21:10

#61M: [We] did not need to do anything. [We] ate our breakfast in the morning.

Q: Yes?

#61M: In the morning one must eat breakfast. At around 10:30 there was a break of 15 minutes. Other than that one continued to work and could not dawdle.

Q: Lunch?

#61M: The lunch break was an hour.

Q: When was that?

01:21:33

#61M: It was 12-1 or 11-12, just an hour. Then there was a break of 15 minutes between 2 and 3 o'clock; other than that one had to work continuously. One could not dawdle and was forced to work because there was competition. [The Chinese] made the competition for wages.

Q: Were you paid wages?

#61M: Yes, wages were paid, but we never knew what type of rock or soil we would be working on.

Q: What time did you finish work in the evening?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He told 5 o'clock.

Q: What were your sleeping conditions like?

01:23:23

#61M: Tents were provided.

Q: What type of tents?

#61M: They were huge Chinese military tents. A huge tent was provided for every 10 people.

Q: Were they given by the Chinese?

#61M: Yes. The tents were good and big.

Q: What were you paid? How were you paid?

01:23:52

#61M: Here we would measure [distance] according to feet or meter. They [the Chinese] called it *kongpa* or something. If one built [a road] of 100 feet, the payment depended upon whether it was rocky area or an area of soil. There was no set rule to say that a measurement of rocky area would be paid such an amount.

Q: Would you describe it as a decent salary?

#61M: It was average. The way the Chinese worked was unlike here where we would set up an office with many clerks. There was only one person to oversee the work called Serchok Kungo Decha, a Tibetan leader. The Chinese man [in charge] was either from Siling or Amdo called Tang Shecha. He spoke some Tibetan; most probably he was a Tibetan. He was an extremely good man. However, they only oversaw the work and did not interfere in the salary. The person who measured the area was the one who paid the salary. The one who measured the site was a Chinese. He took along a Tibetan named Lobsang, a short statured man who was from Gyantse or elsewhere and spoke Chinese.

Say for example that I was the group leader and I undertook 100 feet [of road to be constructed]. He measured the 100 feet and advised the width of the road. After it was constructed, he came to measure [again]. The salary was paid on a certain day and not to individual persons. There was a salary day, whether it was once a week or once in 15 days. Everyone was paid together. He came with an abacus and a bagful of Chinese money. Only once were we paid in *dhayen* ‘Chinese silver coin’ and the rest of the time in paper money. He made the calculations and paid two or three bundles of 100-currency notes. Then depending upon whether a person had earned 15 or 30 or 40, it was divided. He did not explain whether working at a certain area fetched more or what the rest had averaged.

Q: What kind of coins? Were they Tibetan coins?

01:26:59

#61M: It was Chinese money in paper. Earlier we were once paid in *dhayen*, but we received very little, only 15 or 20. Later new paper [currencies] arrived. They called it *renminbi*. It was red colored paper which went “tak, tak, tak” [when counted].

Q: But then it was Chinese money. Could you use it?

#61M: Yes, [you] could. Chinese money was used as there was no longer Tibetan money.

Q: Was there no money in Tibet?

01:27:47

#61M: Tibetan money was replaced by Chinese money.

Q: When did you work on the road construction?

#61M: Yes?

Q: In which year did you work on the road construction?

01:27:55

#61M: It was between '59 and '60.

Q: Was the Tibetan money no longer in use then?

#61M: No, it was no longer [in use]. Once the Chinese arrived, one could not give it anywhere. [We] had to use their money. While we worked on the road crew, tiny shops of theirs [Chinese] arrived; tiny shops belonging to them.

Q: Did the shops belong to them?

01:28:22

#61M: Yes, small shops belonging to them. They sold cigarettes, hats, pants and nice socks. They were quite cheap, but the salary was also not much. A sum was paid after completion of 100 feet without mentioning what each individual had earned. We kept aside a man to cook for the 20 men and another to gather firewood and had to pay them equally.

Q: Why did you stop working on the road crew after six months? What happened?

#61M: Then the road construction came to an end. Earlier there was a small road up to Gyangtse Taring which was built during the time of the Gyangtse Tong. Starting from Taring the road was constructed right through the valley up to Nangatse, not Nangatse, but up to Thalung. From Thalung [we] came to Wongo and [built the road] up to Nangatse. There was a road at Nangatse from Gamba since earlier times. Starting from [Nangatse] it touched Nyero. Earlier there was no road to Nyero. Encounters took place at Nyero and at Ralung. The road led there.

Once that was completed, they [the Chinese] did not let us return [home] but took [us] to Gyangtse. There was a valley through Gyangtse called Rinayunglay and the [road was constructed] right through and touched Yesi near Nangatse. There were three roads that led to Nangatse: one was from Lhasa, another from Nyero and one through Gyangtse. There were three roads.

Q: We're not going to be able to have time to talk about your journey and your 21 years in Bhutan. I'd love to find out about that but we just don't have time. So thank you very much for sharing your story with us. It's been really interesting.

[Discontinuity in video]

Q: Okay, so we have one more question. Were any of your family members asked to participate in the *thamzing* sessions that went on?

01:31:23

#61M: My family members were not there. I had a younger brother who was with me constructing roads.

Q: Not any other...

#61M: No one else. My sister was small and the elders did not conduct the *thamzing*. They did not do so to anybody else.

Q: They didn't do it, but did they not go to watch it?

01:31:56

#61M: Oh, [everyone] was ordered to come. Everyone was forced to gather.

Q: Did they witness the *thamzing* of the boss?

#61M: Yes, they did.

Q: Which of your family members witnessed it?

#61M: Yes?

[Question is repeated.]

01:32:07

#61M: They called every one of the family members.

Q: Including the parents?

#61M: Suppose there were three men that day...

Q: Were your parents also called?

01:32:14

#61M: I did not have my father. My mother and others went. I was not there. Every one of the villagers would be called because though I did not see the *thamzing* in my village, I saw one being done at the road construction in Longwa. Two monks were subjected to it. One was a very holy lama called Chagyor Rinpoche of Ralung and the other was a *ngagpa* 'shaman' named Diwu Ladang. They were subjected to *thamzing*.

We did not understand it. Most of the people that conducted the *thamzing* were the youth of Gyangtse. The Chinese had started a youth [organization] at Gyangtse then. The Chinese had already formed a youth [organization] just prior to '60.

Q: In Gyangtse?

#61M: The Gyangtse Youth Organization was one of the groups at the road crew. Then there was a monk group at the Gyangtse road construction. The reason why they were being subjected to *thamzing* was because monks were said to have exploited [the people]. Then a layman was subjected [to a *thamzing*].

There was nothing particular to accuse the monks of, “During Tibet’s old system, you did not give us this or that.” Such were the charges and nothing substantial. Everybody cannot be the same. They [*thamzing* victims] lived at Ralung and Diwu respectively and those at Gyangtse had no knowledge about them. There was no need to subject them to *thamzing*, but it was done. They [the young people] had been trained by the Chinese.

If it was someone from their village, it could have been like “You have done this and this to me.” I heard that those people that used to beg for *tsampa* were given power and they beat the influential people saying, “You did not give me *tsampa*.” It was useless and baseless. Everyone had to keep watching while the beating went on. There was no need to participate because the perpetrators had already been arranged earlier. They got up [to conduct the *thamzing*]. There was no need for everyone to get up to conduct a *thamzing* because they did not know anything. One did not even know the people, so what was there to subject them to *thamzing*?

Q: Were you made to participate in it?

01:35:30

#61M: No, most of the people did not have to participate. Most of them were the road crew. The road crew had been called to watch it. Perhaps there were 400-500 people.

Q: Thank you so much. It’s been really interesting listening to you. Really, I’ve learned a lot.

#61M: Okay.

Q: I need to ask you again. If this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

01:36:24

#61M: There will be no problem because they cannot recognize me.

Q: Is it okay to use your real name?

#61M: There’ll be no [problem]. They probably do not know my name. I left when I was young. I arrived in Bhutan when I was 24.

Q: Thank you very much. We really appreciate it. We have a small gift for you.

END OF INTERVIEW