

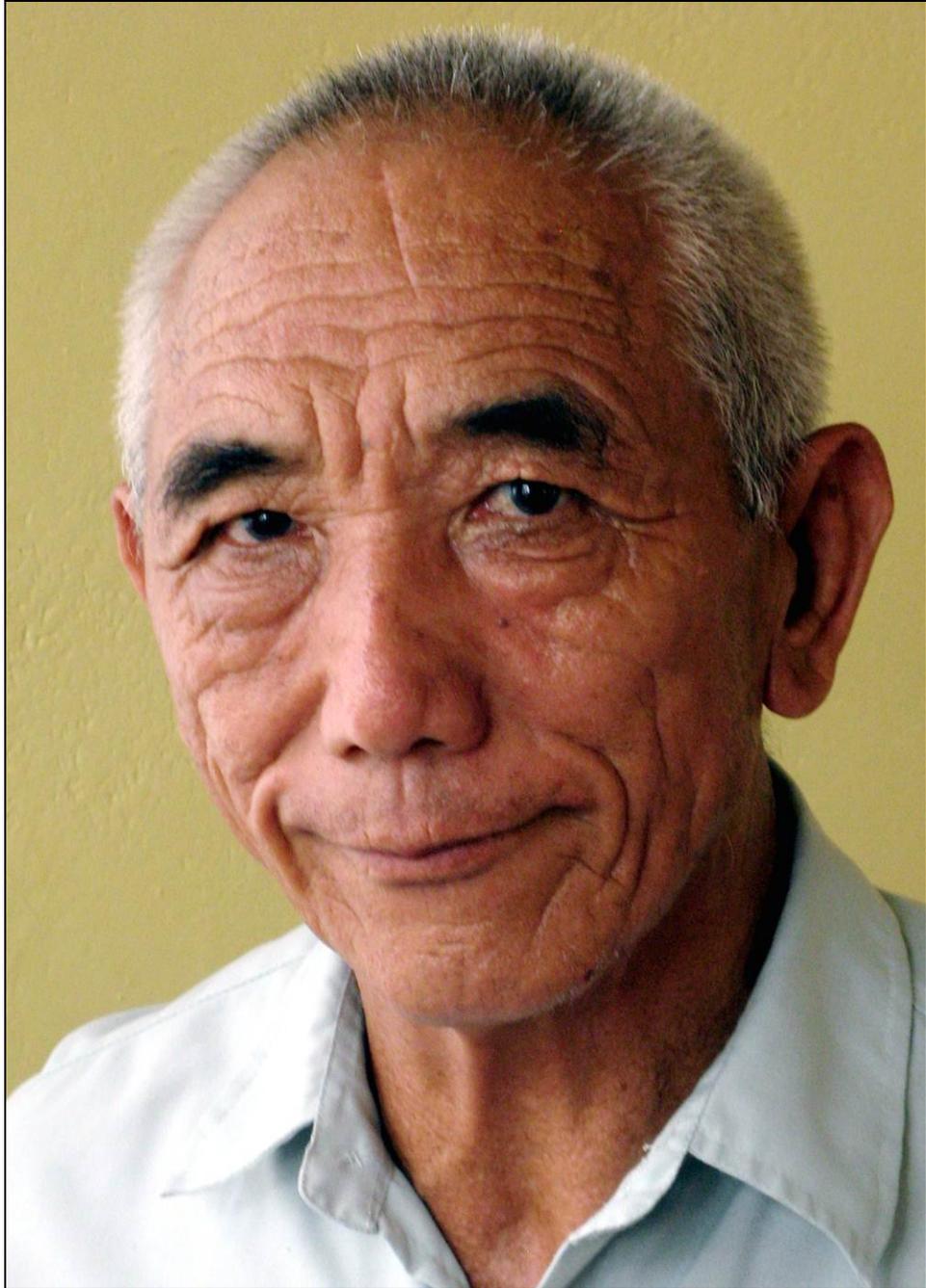
Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #8M – Lobsang Wangdu
April 8, 2010

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #8M
2. Interviewee: Lobsang Wangdu
3. Age: 74
4. Date of Birth: 1936
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Duktsa
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: April 8, 2010
10. Place of Interview: Home for the Aged, Doeguling Settlement, Mundgod, Karwar District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 32 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Pema Tashi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Lobsang Wangdu was born in Duktsa in eastern Tibet. The main livelihood of his village was farming and harvesting of several types of mushrooms. Lobsang Wangdu became a monk at the age of 2 or 3 years old, but lived with his family most of the time rather than at the monastery in order to continue helping his parents. Lobsang Wangdu explains that taxes in his region were paid to the Chinese authorities instead of the Tibetan Government because they lived on the eastern side of the Yangtse River.

When he was older Lobsang Wangdu was admitted to Gaden Monastery near Lhasa. He outlines a typical day in a monk's life as well as how food is arranged for the monks by the *chanzo* 'business manager' and what their daily meals included.

Lobsang Wangdu describes the role of *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] in resisting the Chinese forces and escorting His Holiness the Dalai Lama to India. Lobsang Wangdu left his monastic life to join the *Chushi Gangdrug* and describes his training and battle experiences. He left Tibet immediately after the escape of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1959. His group arrived in Mon Tawang [Arunachal Pradesh, India] with no food or money and had to sell the small number of horses and mules that survived the journey over the mountain pass.

Topics Discussed:

Childhood memories, taxes, monastic life, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas, Dalai Lama's escape, escape experiences.

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Interview #8M

Interviewee: Lobsang Wangdu

Age: 74, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: April 8, 2010

[Note: Interviewee has difficulty hearing questions.]

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:23

Interviewee #8M: My name is Lobsang Wangdu.

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record your experiences, so that we can share your memories with many generations of Tibetans, the Chinese and the rest of the world. Your memories will help us to document the true history, culture and beliefs of the Tibetan people. Do you give your permission for the Tibet Oral History Project to use this interview?

#8M: Yes.

Q: Thank you for offering to share your story with us.

00:01:39

#8M: Okay.

Q: During this interview if you wish to take a break or stop at anytime, please let me know.

#8M: Okay.

Q: If you do not wish to answer a question or talk about something, let me know.

00:02:09

#8M: Yes.

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

#8M: There will be some problem.

Q: Would there be any problem for you?

00:02:43

#8M: There will be some problem.

Q: What I am saying is, today we are doing an interview and do you give us permission to show it? Can we show it?

#8M: Yes, you can.

Q: If we show it, would there be any problem for you?

00:03:00

#8M: There will be no problem for me.

Q: We are honored to record your story and appreciate your participation in this project.

#8M: Okay.

Q: *Gen-la* ‘respectful term for teacher,’ can you tell me how old you are today?

00:03:23

#8M: I am 75 years old.

Q: Where were you born, *gen-la*?

#8M: I was born in Duktsa in Ba. The name of the [local] monastery is Zeze Gonpa.

Q: Can you tell us the size of the village? How many families, for example?

00:04:10

#8M: There were many.

Q: About how many families were there in Duktsa?

#8M: It was good. It was very good.

[Question is repeated.]

00:04:25

#8M: There was no one who helped in the development. Each one of us worked towards progress.

[Question is repeated.]

#8M: There were not many people. There might have been about 1,500 people in all. It was a small village.

Q: That sounds not too small.

00:05:00

#8M: [Nods]

Q: Can you describe your village to me? What did it look like, the surrounding mountains? What did it look like?

#8M: The people's livelihood was farming.

Q: Were there hills or rivers surrounding the village?

00:05:38

#8M: There was *yatsa gunbu* 'summer grass, winter worm' [*cordyceps sinensis*, caterpillar fungus used as medicine]. Then there were *muro* [a type of mushroom] and mushrooms. These were very beneficial to the region. These were what brought about progress in the region. *Yatsa gunbu* and the best quality of mushrooms grew there.

Q: And what was this medicine used for?

#8M: The *yatsa gunbu* was taken to China.

Q: We are talking about the early days. We are talking about long ago when you were a child. We are not talking about the present times. This is about a long time ago when you were a little child and lived in your village.

00:06:48

#8M: [The *yatsa gunbu* was harvested in the] 3rd and 4th months of the Tibetan lunar calendar. The plucking was over by the 5th month. The mushroom season was in the 7th and 8th Tibetan lunar months.

Q: What kind of work did your family do, *gen-la*?

#8M: In those days there were no schools.

[Question is repeated.]

00:07:36

#8M: They did farming, cutting wood and nomadic work. If there were two sons in a family, one became a nomad and the other lived at home.

Q: How many children were in your family, *gen-la*?

#8M: We were altogether eight siblings.

Q: Tell us where were you in that line-up?

00:08:46

#8M: I was among the middle. There were two younger to me and the others were older.

Q: What kind of work was assigned to you in the family as a son?

#8M: We used to eat *ting momo* ‘steamed bread.’

[Question is repeated.]

00:09:20

#8M: The work was cultivating the lands and cutting wood.

Q: As a child, what kind of work did your parents assign to you?

#8M: I worked as a nomad and also went to cut wood. I grazed the goats and sheep. I herded goats, sheep and pigs.

Q: At what age did you start that chore?

00:10:10

#8M: One had to look after them until about autumn.

Q: At what age was a child assigned to look after the pigs?

#8M: At the age of 8.

Q: *Gen-la*, please tell us about what are some of the memories of your childhood when you were 8, 9, 10 years old?

00:10:59

#8M: I wished to go to Tibet. I wished to go to Tibet and study.

Q: Where do you mean by Tibet?

#8M: I mean Lhasa in Tibet.

Q: Why did you want to go to Lhasa?

00:11:34

#8M: I thought if I could reach Lhasa, I would study.

Q: When you were a little boy, what stories had you heard about Lhasa?

#8M: I had heard that His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Panchen Rinpoche lived in Lhasa.

Q: Who told you these stories about Lhasa?

00:12:20

#8M: Those people who came back after visiting Lhasa told the stories. They advised the children that they must go to Lhasa.

Q: How many days journey was it from your village to Lhasa?

#8M: The journey took many days. [It took] two months and 27 days to cross 180 mountain passes and ford 180 rivers excluding the Drichu ‘Yangtse River’ and Dhachu ‘Mekong River.’ There were 180 mountain passes and 180 rivers, excluding the Drichu and Dhachu.

Q: If you went to Lhasa, what were you hoping to study?

00:14:18

#8M: I wanted to study if I could go there.

Q: What did you wish to study?

#8M: I wished to become a monk and study the scriptures, to study the debates.

Q: Did you get a chance to become a monk?

00:14:48

#8M: When I was a little child, my parents made me a monk.

Q: How old were you when you became a monk?

#8: I might have been about 2 years old but I cannot recall. I think I was 2 or 3 years old when I became a monk.

Q: Really? If they made you a monk at 2 or 3 years, did you go to live in the monastery or live at home?

00:15:36

#8M: There was so much work to do at home that I lived at home. Due to the heavy workload at home, I did not get to stay much at the monastery.

Q: So a parent can offer a son but the son does not have to go to the monastery?

#8M: If there were many members in a family, the monk lived at the monastery. However, if there were not many members in the family to do the work, a monk sought leave of absence and stayed home.

Q: Did you ever stay in the monastery for a short time and then come home?

00:17:01

#8M: Yes, I stayed in the monastery for 4-5 days and then came home. When offerings were being made at the monastery, one went there and again when there were great prayer assemblies; one stayed at the monastery for 5-6 days and then came home. In the 9th month, there was the *yarchoe* ‘summer prayer festival’ at the Zeze Gonpa and I stayed there during the *yarchoe*. Then I lived in the monastery during *sakadawa* ‘4th holy month’ and the *monlam* [a prayer festival in the 1st month].

Q: Did you have any preference; did you prefer living in the monastery or living at home and working on the farm?

#8M: As children are immature, I was happier at home since there were rules to follow in the monastery. The rules were strict. One could pass time working at home.

Q: Exactly how far back can you remember being in the monastery? What's the youngest age you can remember?

00:19:29

#8M: I can remember when I was 12 or 13 years old.

Q: Can you give us a typical day in the monastery? What would happen?

#8M: We were taught in the morning at the monastery. We were mostly engaged in attending prayer assemblies.

Q: What time did you get up in the monastery in the morning?

00:20:30

#8M: One had to get up early in the morning at about 5 o'clock and attend prayer assembly.

Q: What kind of prayers were you saying?

#8M: There were many prayers to chant like *kyapdo*, *gaden lhachi* and *tongsha shisha*. There were also many prayers we read [from the texts]. I cannot name all of them.

Q: How did you learn those prayers?

00:21:28

#8M: The teacher taught the prayers when one was young.

Q: Did you memorize the prayers?

#8M: Yes, we memorized them.

Q: What else happened in the monastery after your morning prayers? What happened next?

00:22:10

#8M: After the prayer assembly got over, we had to study. If one had not memorized the prayers, he sat outside and memorized them.

Q: What was the process? How did you memorize? Could you read?

#8M: I know how to read.

Q: I mean when you were a small child.

00:23:03

#8M: Yes, I knew to read when I was small.

Q: I'm trying to understand the whole daily schedule. How long did you sit outside in prayers? And when did you eat?

#8M: Our food was *ting momo* and...

Q: When did you eat that?

00:23:42

#8M: We'd have eaten our breakfast at around 6 o'clock. Our lunch was at 12 noon and dinner was at times at 5 or 6.

Q: Can you tell me what did you eat for breakfast, for lunch and for dinner?

#8M: We had *pa* 'dough made from *tsampa* [flour made from roasted barley] and tea' for breakfast. We drank tea and ate *pa*. Since we got milk from the animals, we had curd and cheese.

Q: And for noon?

00:24:54

#8M: For the noon there was *ting momo* and vegetables—green leafy vegetables.

Q: For the night?

#8M: We ate *thukpa bakthu* 'soup with pieces of dough and meat' for the night.

Q: And what's *ting mo*?

[Interpreter explains to interviewer that it is baked bread.]

Q: What was in the *thukpa*?

00:25:55

#8M: Meat and radish were added in the *thukpa*.

Q: So the monks are allowed to eat meat?

#8M: Yes, they could eat meat. They did not eat a lot of meat. After coming to India, [the monks] were not allowed to eat meat. While in Tibet they were allowed to consume it, which was used in small quantity in the preparation of *thukpa*.

Q: How many monks were in your monastery?

00:26:47

#8M: There were over 500 monks in the monastery.

Q: Where did the monastery get all this food to feed the monks?

#8M: There was a huge vessel in which to cook food for all the monks.

Q: Where did the ingredients to prepare food come from?

00:27:18

#8M: Bread was prepared.

Q: Where did the wheat flour to make the bread come from?

#8M: We had utensils for that.

Q: The monastery had to feed the monks. Where did the monastery obtain the food from?

#8M: There were people responsible for that like the *chanzo* ‘business manager.’

Q: From where did the *chanzo* obtain the food?

00:27:50

#8M: The monastery owned lands in various places. The monastery owned lands. The tenants of the monastery lands remitted a tax to the monastery. They paid taxes to the monastery.

Q: Can you tell me what was the role of the manager? Could he take food from this land or did he give all of the food to the monastery?

#8M: The *chanzo* did not personally cultivate the land. He gave orders for things to be done. He directed and the people performed the work.

Q: I see. Did the people keep any of the food that they raised on the land or did all the food go to the monastery?

00:29:21

#8M: The harvest was divided. The harvest from the land was divided.

Q: *Gen-la*, do you remember what the division was like? Did the people get what they needed or smaller amount or larger?

#8M: The people were given an equal share. They were distributed a similar portion. The people did not have large areas of land. Their holdings were small. They did not have much income. Besides the *yatsa gunbu* and mushroom, they did not have much income.

Q: In addition to the food they got from the monastery land, they had their own land?

00:30:47

#8M: You mean the small children?

Q: No, not the children. Did the people own land themselves?

#8M: Yes, they did.

Q: So they owned land. Did they get paid by the monastery for working on their land?

00:30:59

#8M: No, they were not paid by the monastery. Some received payment from the monastery. Some people received a share from the monastery [lands] while others did not. Some people paid taxes to the government.

In the olden days, we lived under the Chinese and not the Tibetan Government. It was Chinese territory. They were not this [Communist] Chinese, but there was another type of Chinese [government] then.

Q: It wasn't the Communist China, but who was ruling the part of China where you lived if not the Chinese government?

#8M: It was not the present Chinese. The Chinese arrived but I had no knowledge who they were, only that they were Chinese.

Q: You did not know which Chinese they were?

00:32:32

#8M: No, I did not. I had no knowledge. We paid our taxes to the Chinese.

Q: I didn't know that taxes were being paid to the Chinese. So there was the Tibetan Government and there was the Chinese government.

#8M: There was a huge river called the Yangtse River. Those that lived on the other [eastern] side of the Yangtse paid their taxes to the Chinese. And those on this [western] side of the Yangtse remitted their taxes to the Tibetan Government.

Q: What side was your monastery on?

00:33:54

#8M: It was on the Chinese side, including [the regions of] Lithang, Bathang, Gyalthang, Sathang and Yithang.

Q: Did the people think that they were Chinese or did they think that they were a separate country?

#8M: They thought that they were under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The people believed that they were under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama.

Q: Did you ever see Chinese government officials coming to collect taxes?

00:35:14

#8M: They did not come to the monastery. The Chinese did not come during my time. The Chinese did not have any say as the monastery was more powerful.

Q: Have you seen the Chinese come to your region to collect taxes?

#8M: The Chinese did not come to the monastery.

Q: No, not the monastery. Have you seen the Chinese come to collect taxes?

00:35:32

#8M: Yes, I have seen taxes being remitted.

Q: Did they come to collect taxes?

#8M: We had to go to remit the taxes.

Q: Did the Chinese come to collect taxes? Did they come to collect taxes from the people?

00:38:36

#8M: Yes, they did. The people went to remit the taxes.

Q: Did the Chinese come to collect?

#8M: Not many Chinese came. Only the Chinese official came. [The people] had to load them [the taxes collected] on horses and mules and send them there.

Q: What kind of taxes did he collect?

00:36:32

#8M: It was only *di* [?].

Q: What was the tax? What kind of things? Was it money, was it grains, was the tax butter or what was it?

#8M: You mean the taxes we paid? The taxes we paid were grains, butter and everything.

Q: In your village of a thousand people, were there Chinese living there or did they live in other villages?

00:37:24

#8M: There were Chinese living there but not many. Ten to fifteen Chinese lived in the villages.

Q: Were there any Chinese villages in...? What was the closest Chinese village to your village?

#8M: There were not many Chinese living there. There were not many living in my village. The region was a mountainous area.

Q: Was there a Chinese village close by?

00:38:15

#8M: Yes, there was.

Q: How close was your village to the Chinese?

#8M: You mean what the Chinese did?

Q: No. How far was the Chinese village from your village?

00:38:38

#8M: The Chinese lived in China. They also lived in Sathang and Gyalthang. Sathang and Gyalthang were located at a distance of 15 days' journey from my village. They lived in Ba too. Many of them lived in Ba. Then they went towards Dhartsedo.

Q: How many days walk was it from your village to the Yangtse River?

#8M: Where?

Q: To the Yangtse.

00:39:52

#8M: It was close to the Yangtse. It was a day and half's walk.

Q: How would you say the Tibetan people were different from the Chinese people?

#8M: There is a difference in the way of talking. There is a difference in the way of dressing. They are different.

Q: Anything else?

00:41:00

#8M: The way they did things were different. The way the Tibetan did things and the Chinese did were different.

Q: How were they different?

#8M: The food and drink. The Tibetans drank *bhoeja* ‘Tibetan tea’ and ate *tingmo* and vegetables. The Chinese ate rice and vegetables and drank *chinta*. They drank *chinta* and hot water.

Q: If the Tibetans had to pay taxes to the Chinese government in your days, did the Tibetans think that they were under the Chinese government?

00:42:40

#8M: It used to be said that they were under the Chinese. They did not like the Chinese.

Q: Why didn’t they like the Chinese?

#8M: The reason they did not like the Chinese was because whatever work was to be done, they forced the people to do so and oppressed them. They were forceful and set fire to...[not discernible]and forced the servants to beat the people.

Q: Where did they set fire? What did they set afire?

00:43:48

#8M: They beat [the people].

Q: Who?

#8M: The Chinese beat the Tibetans.

Q: Was that when you were growing up or later?

00:44:16

#8M: That was in 1932...I do not know. That was in 1944, 45 or 46.

Q: This might be history that you may or may not know. When did the Tibetans first start paying taxes to the Chinese government?

#8M: The taxes were paid in winter. In comparison to today, it was in the month of...

Q: No, *gen-la*...

00:45:40

#8M: I think it was in the month of October or November.

Q: When did they start paying taxes to the Chinese? Did it start in the early days or later?

#8M: I think it was in the months of October or November.

[Question is repeated.]

00:46:08

#8M: Is that not what I told you now?

[Question is repeated.]

#8M: That was long ago. However, it was not very, very long ago. Earlier, taxes were paid to Ba. Later it was being paid to the Chinese. The Chinese arrived twice or thrice.

Q: It was being paid to Ba?

00:46:41

#8M: Yes, at Ba.

Q: Was there a time in your life when you stopped going to the farm and you always stayed at the monastery?

#8M: I used to stay in the monastery at times.

Q: When did you start staying in the monastery permanently?

00:47:23

#8M: I stayed permanently at the monastery during *yachoe* in September and during *saka dawa* in the 4th Tibetan lunar month.

Q: Was there a time when you did not go home but lived at the monastery?

#8M: There were monks who did not go home.

Q: What about you?

00:47:55

#8M: I did not live that way. I used to go home. I did not stay much at the monastery.

Q: Did you like going home better than staying at the monastery?

#8M: I liked staying at home because I did not have to study. [Laughs]

Q: I think you liked working on the farm better than studying.

00:48:34

#8M: I liked working.

Q: So what happened to your dream as a little boy—you wanted to go to Lhasa and study?

#8M: I thought I would feel happier in Lhasa. I thought there would not be many duties.

Q: You mean if you went as a monk or as a lay person?

00:49:15

#8M: I thought it was better as a monk.

Q: But you would have more fun?

#8M: I thought I would be happy being a monk.

Q: Did you ever go to Lhasa as a monk?

00:49:43

#8M: Yes, I went to Lhasa. I came to Lhasa in 1954.

Q: 1954?

#8M: 1954. I came along with your parents [the interpreter's parents]. I was 18 years old. I came to Lhasa when His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Panchen Rinpoche left for China.

Q: Why did you go to Lhasa?

00:50:26

#8M: The reason I came to Lhasa was to become a monk. I thought I would be happy as a monk.

Q: To one of the great monasteries?

#8M: Yes, to Gaden Monastery. To Gaden Jangtse Datsang [division of Gaden Monastery] and the Gowu Khangtsen [a smaller community within the monastery in which monks from interviewee's area lived.]

Q: And what happened?

00:51:04

#8M: Food was scarce at the great monasteries. The *datsang* distributed two *bo* 'measures' and half a *kyimbu* 'a measurement [?]' of grains. This was not sufficient to last a year. It was very difficult. The highest offering was received during the *monlam*. During the *monlam* each year, [the monks] received four or three *dhotse* 'currency unit.' During a good offering, one received five *dhotse*. It had to be used for purchasing butter and clothes, the monk's robes. Moreover, one needed to buy rice, meat and other such stuff. It was not sufficient. I found it very difficult.

Q: Was it easy to get accepted into Gaden?

#8M: We assembled inside the monastery. In the summer we used to go to the villages for *petsam* 'studying the scriptures in solitude.'

Q: Were new monks easily accepted in the Gaden Monastery?

00:53:13

#8M: Yes, we assembled in the monastery. The Shartse Datsang and Jangtse Datsang [the two divisions of Gaden Monastery] assembled separately.

Q: I did not mean assembly but admission of new students. Were they admitted at once?

#8M: Yes, they were.

Q: Were you able to get admission immediately?

00:53:37

#8M: We went to the villages for *petsam*.

Q: Was a new monk admitted at once into the monastery?

#8M: Yes. There was a particular time. We assembled at one time, disbursed at another time and assembled at one time.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: I'm not able to get that across.

Q: Did you go to Gaden with your teacher or by yourself?

00:54:13

#8M: I was not alone; I was with my teacher. I lived with my teacher.

Q: Okay.

#8M: There were many teachers. The monks had many teachers. There was a teacher who oversaw the food. There was a teacher who taught the scriptures. That's two. Then there was one who controlled the rules and saw that nobody got involved in any fight. There was another teacher to whom you requested permission for leave and he was called Khangtsen *gen*. Then there was a disciplinarian.

Q: How were you disciplined when you got in trouble?

00:55:53

#8M: If one did not obey, he would be expelled. He would not be allowed to attend the assembly. He would be out of the community.

Q: What if you broke just a little law?

#8M: If it was a little disobedience, he would be reprimanded. A grave matter would earn a beating and a more serious one would mean being expelled from the community.

Q: What were the rules that you had to keep?

00:57:37

#8M: There were holy texts and icons in the monastery.

[Question is repeated.]

#8M: The monastery had rules. One cannot drink alcohol, cannot gamble, cannot steal, cannot rob and if one did these things, he would be expelled from the community. Such a monk cannot live in the monastery.

Q: Were there any less serious crimes that you could commit and just be beaten instead?

00:59:13

#8M: The scolding meant that one must obey the rules of the monastery and that one cannot do such and such a thing.

Q: How about the beatings?

#8M: The beatings depended upon the seriousness of the crime; the more serious the crime, the more beatings.

Q: What kind of crimes? What kind of crimes led to beatings?

00:59:49

#8M: If you committed not too serious a crime, you would get a beating. A more serious one meant a more serious beating. A very serious one meant, you would be expelled from the monk community.

Q: *Gen-la*, you were telling us that you were in the monastery for a while. Can you tell us, did you get involved in working with the *Chushi Gangdrug* at any point in your life as a monk?

#8M: I trained as a soldier. I learned to fight and to retreat. I learned how to hide, how to lie down, how to fire as you stood and how to stoop to enter fox holes; how to retreat if there were many [enemy] soldiers and how to fight in the event of fewer opponents; how one should try to fire in a situation, how to destroy bridges and houses, how to destroy vehicles and armored trucks.

Q: Then?

01:02:52

#8M: Then Lhasa was defeated on the 10th of March. His Holiness the Dalai Lama left when Lhasa was defeated. His Holiness was escorted by the [guerrillas of] *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] from one base camp to the next. One team escorted him to the next base camp and the next team to the following base camp and so on. Lots were drawn to select the escorting team from the various divisions [of the *Chushi Gangdrug*]. The escorting team was selected by drawing lots to escort [His Holiness the Dalai Lama] up to Mon Tawang [Arunachal Pradesh, India].

His Holiness gave the *Chushi Gangdrug men jigshay mahe* [a protective amulet]. Lhasa was conquered and His Holiness left for India. Huge numbers of Chinese converged on Lhasa from various places. When such a huge number arrived, they could not be overcome. Earlier [the Tibetan fighters] attacked many of the Chinese houses, killed many Chinese and snatched their arms. Later they could not be vanquished and we fled.

01:05:24

When everyone fled, we journeyed through Mangola [a mountain pass] and on to Mon Tawang. We arrived in Missamari [Assam, India] from Mon Tawang. We did not have anything with us; we did not have any food with us. And neither did we have any money. Since we did not have any money, we sold our horses and mules in Mon Tawang. Most of the animals did not make it through. The horses and mules fell off [the cliff] and we could see their blinking eyes. We'd come walking and driving our animals along the journey. The road was bad and they fell off. A horse fetched 25 *tanka* 'currency unit' only; 30-35 was the best price.

When we arrived at Mon Tawang, the Indians provided us with food rations. They came in airplanes. We received a tin [can] of rice for one week. That was not sufficient. On the journey, we had come without food for two to three days.

01:08:09

The Indians provided us food rations in Mon Tawang. The food ration was a tin [can] of rice. Seven to eight people received a large mug of rice. We made a watery gruel with the rice and drank it because that [rice] was not sufficient. Mon Tawang was a small town and a lot of people had converged in it. There were not many things to purchase. We ate a type of black grapes, which gave us stomachache and constipation.

We stayed for five to six days and then left for Missamari. Unlike Mon Tawang, we received better food rations. There were rice and vegetables, wheat flour and *tsampa*. The wheat flour was teeming with red worms. We were so hungry that we ate it without sifting. The rice and everything was worm infested; they were very old.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: I wonder if we can go back a little bit. I'll just tell you what I'd like and maybe you can figure out how you can put it together. I'd like to know how many people joined from Gaden with him. And I would like to know where they were trained and who gave them the equipment.

Q: *Gen-la*, when you joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* from Gaden, how many monks were there with you?

#8M: There might have been over 200 monks. I did not recognize all the monks, but I thought they were monks of Gaden.

Q: Who gave you warfare training?

01:11:34

#8M: The others were trained, but I was experienced in firing a gun since my younger days in my village.

Q: You told us earlier that you trained in destroying Chinese vehicles and such. Who gave you that training?

#8M: Every individual soldier had to experience that himself and learn from the older ones who taught you.

Q: Who provided the equipments?

01:12:24

#8M: The Americans [air] dropped *tashi kharing* [a type of gun]. They also dropped grenades. They did not drop a large number of *tashi kharing* but most of them were automatic guns. Monks who had money paid 25, 30 or 40 *dhotse* and purchased guns. Those that did not have money, voluntarily joined the force and were provided with guns, but they were not good ones. The Americans dropped quite a number of guns. They dropped guns, grenades and bullets. Some people bought bullets at the rate of 25, 30 or 35 *ngusang* ‘currency unit’. In that way, the people took on the Chinese.

Q: Were the monks—was anybody allowed to join or was there a limit and was there any kind of ceremony because could you still be a monk and join the *Chushi Gangdrug*? If not, what happened to your monk’s robes? So, was there any kind of departure?

#8M: Our monks’ robes were taken by the other monks of our *khangtsen*. We bought pants and shirts, including shoes and wore them to join the army.

Q: Was there any kind of a ceremony in leaving his teacher and going on to be a lay person and a fighter?

01:15:41

#8M: They took them away. We offered them.

Q: You were a monk and monks are not supposed to fight in a war. How did you give back your vows?

#8M: If one was from Gaden Monastery, he gave them back to his individual *khangtsen* and *mitsen* ‘a small unit in a monastery’ in Gaden. The *datsang* did not say anything but it was given back to the *khangtsen* and *mitsen*.

Q: What did you give back? Your vows?

01:16:13

#8M: Vows? We gave back our vows to senior *geshe* ‘a monk with a degree in philosophy’ We requested them to take back our vows.

Q: You gave back your vows?

#8M: Yes, I did. I too gave back my vows.

Q: Who did you give it back to?

01:16:29

#8M: I gave it back to someone called Gen Nyima who belonged to Gowow [Khangtsen] of Gaden Monastery.

01:16:47

[Interviewer to interpreter]: I would like him to describe and to continue the description of when he went for training and then what did he see with his own eyes when he engaged in battle? Can he describe us...I guess I want to know three things: how long was he in the *Chushi Gangdrug*? What did he see? Can he describe the battles that...what happened to him in the fighting?

Q: When you joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* you engaged in battle against the Chinese. What did you see with your eyes during the battle against the Chinese?

#8M: I saw a huge number of Chinese with guns—carrying weapons on their backs and approaching us. We were fewer numbers of soldiers while the Chinese troops were large in number. During a battle, the Chinese soldiers were not allowed to retreat. If anyone retreated, he was shot dead by the Chinese [officers?]. The Tibetans were lesser in number and if anyone had to flee, he could. A Chinese [soldier] could not escape.

Q: Can you tell us what your experiences were in the *Chushi Gangdrug*? What kind of fighting did you do yourself or what did you see?

01:18:53

#8M: I fought at Tsethang Gonpori and at Tsethang proper. I also fought at Gongka. Gongka is beyond Lhasa and near Chushul. I could not go to Dhuwazong, where there was another *Chushi Gangdrug* camp. Actually all the camps belonged to the same [organization].

Q: How did you fight?

#8M: You mean how many times I fought? I fought six times.

[Question is repeated.]

01:19:41

#8M: [Laughs] Fighting involved firing the gun and flinging bombs. One must lie down on the ground immediately after throwing a bomb. The bombs did not reach higher than here [indicates height off camera. Interpreter describes as “it will hit you above the knee and not below”]. So if one lay low on the ground, he was not affected. Otherwise, splinters could hit you. This was the limit of its height, so the bomb did not reach higher than this. If one lay down, he was not hit.

Q: Do you mean guns?

#8M: No, hand grenades and shells.

Q: *Gen-la*, when you were firing, did you see the people you were firing at or was it too far away? I want to know, were you able to shoot anybody? With your own eyes, did you see or not?

01:21:51

#8M: We could see the Chinese, but not many because they were in the foxholes. We could see them when they approached us on the plains, not when they were underground. We fought some battles at night. We fired at each other in the night.

Q: And then what happened?

#8M: What battle?

Q: You fought in the night?

01:22:42

#8M: We fought in the night and during the day. More battles took place at night.

Q: Then?

#8M: During the day, we had to go to various points to keep watch. We guarded the regions. They had to be watched at night too and everyone took turns. One or two men from a team of ten would be sent [as sentry] and then another team would send two or three men. In this way everybody took turns. Each group kept watch for two hours. After the two hours was up, they woke the next group and they kept watch for two hours.

Q: Was the fighting in mountains and did you see Tibetans killed or did you see any Chinese killed? Did Tibetans have grenades? Did you see grenades flung by the Tibetans, *gen-la* or only by the Chinese?

01:24:34

#8M: There were grenades which could be tied at the waist. The bullets of the guns were also tied [at the waist]. We carried bombs over our sides [indicates across shoulders]. One carried food provision for oneself on the back.

Q: Did you battle on the mountains or where?

#8M: What?

Q: Did you battle on the mountains or in the plains?

01:25:15

#8M: The *Chushi Gangdrug* fought in the north where there was a camp led by Andrug Jindha [Andrug Gonpo Tashi, founder of *Chushi Gangdrug*]. There was another at Mende in Lhoka. Then there were [camps] at Tsethang and Dhuwazong.

Q: *Gen-la*, did you see anybody shot or killed with a grenade or bullet?

#8M: Yes, I could see people being killed. I saw a few but not many. There was a lot of dust [moves hands about]. There was dust and smoke.

Q: *Gen-la*, do you think you were able to hit any of the Chinese yourself?

01:26:42

#8M: I killed three Chinese, whom I saw. I do not know how many I killed unseen. I aimed [makes gesture of shooting with gun], but I do not know if anyone got killed or not.

Q: *Gen-la*, how did you feel about that?

#8M: In my heart, I only thought of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I had the *jigshay mahe* to protect me from being hit by gunfire. I did not get hit. Many people were killed and injured, but I did not get hit. My clothes were hit and they tore. There were 13 people in my group and three were killed.

Q: You said you engaged in six encounters with the Chinese. Can you tell us over what period of time was that, in a week or a month?

01:28:34

#8M: Some of the battles were fought at night and some during the day.

Q: How long were you in the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

#8M: The time? We would be told that the fight would take place at such and such a time of the day.

[Question is repeated.]

01:29:34

#8M: I did not stay very long. I stayed for only one year.

Q: In the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

#8M: Yes, one year. The resistance took place for two years and I was there for only one year.

Q: In the end, what happens to your group of...team of *Chushi Gangdrug*? How do you become overcome? When do you leave the battle?

01:30:19

#8M: I left on the 10th of March when Lhasa was defeated. We escaped around the end of March after escorting His Holiness and when we could no longer put up resistance.

Q: Can you just tell us how you made your escape and where you went?

#8M: We escaped thorough Mangola. From Mangola we reached Mon Tawang. Then we came to Missamari from Mon Tawang.

Q: Thank you for your story, *gen-la*.

#8M: Okay.

Q: You covered many things, so I'm wondering if...I want to ask you again. If this interview were shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

01:32:09

#8M: There will be no problem.

Q: Can we use your real name for the project or do you want an alias?

#8M: Yes [you can use the real name].

Q: Thank you for sharing your story with us.

#8M: Okay.

END OF INTEVIEW