

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #9 – Tsering Kyipa
July 1, 2007

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TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #9
2. Interviewee: Tsering Kyipa
3. Age: 72
4. Date of Birth: 1935
5. Sex: Female
6. Birthplace: Tsatoo
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: July 1, 2007
10. Place of Interview: Home for the Aged and Disabled, Lugsung Samdupling Settlement, Bylakuppe, Mysore District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 39 min
12. Interviewer: Rebecca Novick
13. Interpreter: Tsering Dorjee
14. Videographer: Ronny Novick
15. Transcriber: Tenzin Yangchen



Biographical Information:

When Tsering Kyipa was a child, her parents gave her to a family in a place called Sha-Sima as an adopted daughter. Her adopted parents treated her very poorly and once she was accused of stealing the cash box. Unable to bear this difficult life, she ran away to her parents, but her mother once again gave her to a new family. Later, her parents forced her to marry. Tsering Kyipa and her husband worked on a road crew for the Chinese and later became farmers.

Though Tsering Kyipa personally was not subjected to *thamzin* ‘struggle sessions’ because she belonged to the class the Chinese wanted to use for labor, she saw many others undergo *thamzin*. She fainted the first time she witnessed it and was able to warn several families to escape before they were taken for *thamzin*. Tsering Kyipa also witnessed the destruction of local monasteries.

Tsering Kyipa’s parents left for India after being informed they would be subjected to *thamzin*. She was unable to go with them because her husband was away. Later the Chinese allowed her to visit her parents in India so she is one of very few Tibetans with official travel documents. She returned to Tibet once before moving to India permanently.

Topics Discussed:

Childhood memories, life under Chinese rule, destruction of monasteries, Chinese oppression, brutality, *thamzin*, forced labor.

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Age: 72, Sex: Female

Interviewer: Rebecca Novick

Interview Date: July 1, 2007

[Questions are asked by either interviewer or interpreter. In Interview #9, the interviewer directs questions to the interpreter, who then asks the questions of the interviewee.]

Question: First of all, could you just say to *Ama-la* thank you so much for coming and agreeing to share her experiences about life in Tibet with us.

Interviewee #9: *Tashi Delek* ‘Greetings.’

Q: Tell her that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is interested in gathering these stories and experiences of older Tibetans to share with the young generation of Tibetans who have never seen Tibet and don't understand anything about what life was like in Tibet before the Chinese came. So whatever you can remember will be very interesting to us about your life in Tibet.

#9: Okay.

Q: And tell *Ama-la* if she wants to stop to go to the bathroom anytime or stop for any reason, let us know.

#9: Okay.

Q: If there is anything she doesn't want to talk about, that's fine; she doesn't need to.

#9: Okay.

Q: So first of all, I'd like to ask her about her childhood growing up in Tibet before the Chinese came. Can she tell us anything about her family life? First of all, maybe like how many people she lived with in her house?

#9: I escaped from Tibet with *Ama Tenpala*. In *Phari* I have a son, his wife and his two children. I escaped here and I don't have any family.

Q: How many family members did she have in Tibet?

#9: I have my son, his wife and two children and no one else. Long ago my father and mother escaped, but at that time I was working on the Chinese road construction. I was on the Chinese road crew.

Q: Her son had two children? She's talking about when she was older. Does she have any memories about her childhood before she had children; about her childhood in Tibet growing up?

#9: When I was a child, my mother and father sent me as a servant for someone, as an adopted daughter. There was a place called Sha Sima where I was given as an adopted daughter.

Q: You worked as a servant where you were given as an adopted daughter?

#9: Yes. Where I was given as an adopted daughter; the husband [adopted father] was a stonemason. The mother's [adopted mother] name was Momo Tsamchoe. This was where I was given as an adopted daughter.

Q: What happened to her parents?

#9: My mother gave me away as an adopted daughter. I have three brothers, one died. There were four brothers; I am the only sister in my house.

Q: She worked as a servant, at the place where she was given as adopted daughter?

#9: Yes. I worked as a servant.

Q: How old was she?

#9: I might have been around 10.

Q: What kind of work did she have to do for this family?

#9: When the visitors came; when the transporters came, I had to provide food and sell *tsampa* 'roasted barley flour.' I had to sift the *tsampa*, or else it would spill on the hands.

Q: What did you have to do with the *tsampa*?

#9: I had to sell *tsampa*. I had to sift it and then measure it in the *bo* [square-shaped wooden container with a capacity of approximately 20kg of *tsampa*].

Q: Did they treat her well at this place?

#9: They were not kind to me. They treated me badly. They treated me terribly.

Q: What kind of things did they do?

#9: When I was selling the *tsampa* they scolded me. However hard I worked, they always complained that I didn't.

Q: Did she get any time off?

#9: There were transporters who went from Sha Sima. So the family was running a guest house.

Q: Where did she sleep?

#9: I had to sleep in a corner.

Q: Where?

#9: I did not have blankets.

Q: How often did she get to see her family?

#9: I didn't get to see my mother. My father was a transporter for Kungo Kutsab. The cashbox was taken away by a guest and I was blamed for that. I was taken to the *Dutsekhang*.

Q: Where was she taken?

#9: They took me to the *Dutsekhang* saying that I had stolen the cash box.

Q: What's a *Dutsekhang*?

#9: The *Domo Dutsekhang*. At the *Dutsekhang* were troops from Gyangtse. There were soldiers.

Q: You never saw your mother since you were given away as adopted daughter?

#9: I was taken to the *Dutsekhang* where there were Gyangtse soldiers and a commander. The Mo took me there saying that I had stolen the cash box. She herself received the blame. They said, how could I steal it; I was so short in stature. She was penalized.

Q: How did she feel when they were punished?

#9: When we came to the *Dutsekhang* they said how could I steal and she was penalized.

Q: How did he feel?

#9: I had not stolen it but I received the blame. At the *Dutsekhang* the commander gave me food. The Mo, the guest and I were questioned. Finally the Mo was penalized. Then I didn't stay with them. I returned to Phari.

Q: When she was still working for them, did they ever used to hit her?

#9: No, they didn't hit me, she was penalized.

Q: Did the Mo hit her?

#9: The Mo?

Q: Did the Mo hit her saying that she stole the cash box?

#9: She took me to the *Dutsekhang*.

Q: Before this incident, make sure she understands I am talking about before the incident about the box; just in general, before that, had they ever hit her?

#9: I used to do a lot of work. They didn't hit me. They scolded me when I was not able to cover their blankets correctly. The Mo used to sleep near the cash box. She was called Sha Sima Mo Tsamchoe.

Q: What did she get to eat?

#9: I was given the left over food of the guests and nothing else.

Q: The left over food in the plates?

#9: Yes.

Q: How long did she work for them before she left their service?

#9: I was there for less than two years. Then I left. I was given to them at age 10. So I stayed there until I was 12 and then returned. I stayed for two years.

Q: When she left, after the incident with the money box, did her parents come to get her? How did she leave? Did she run away or what happened?

#9: My father was working for the Kungo Kutsab as a transporter. He came to Sha Sima and told me that he would take me home the next time he passed. Early in the morning I had to search for firewood. I brought home one bundle and went out again to search for firewood. I had with me a gunny sack, a rope and a basket. I threw these into a river and ran away to Phari.

Q: She was alone?

#9: Yes.

Q: Her father didn't come to fetch her?

#9: No.

Q: By herself? She ran away.

[Interpreter to interviewer] She ran away from that place.

Q: How often had she seen her parents and family in the two years?

#9: It was difficult work during the two years that I stayed there. I had to search for firewood.

Q: How many times did she see her parents?

#9: I didn't see my mother.

Q: In the two years?

#9: No, I didn't.

Q: She didn't see her father?

#9: I saw my father. I saw my father after two years when he was going to Domo. He was a transporter for Kungo Kutsab.

Q: During the time she was at the work place, she never saw her mother?

#9: I didn't meet my mother. I saw my father.

Q: When she ran away, then she saw her mother?

#9: When I ran away from the place, I pursued my father. He had halted that night at a place called Norbu Choekyi. I shouted for him. I had fled in the night.

Q: We are talking about her work place. While she was living at this place, did she meet her parents?

#9: No, I hadn't met them.

Q: She hadn't seen them in two years?

#9: I saw my father as he was a transporter for Kungo Kutsab.

Q: Was she allowed to go back to her house or did her father come there?

#9: My father was the transporter for Kungo Kutsab and used to go to Gangtok with the mules. My father came to see me. My father came through Domo.

Q: When she ran away and went back to her house, were her parents happy to receive her back into the family?

#9: My mother wanted to send me back, but my father told her not to send me back and that I was poorly treated at the house. My father told her, "If you don't want to keep her, I want to."

Q: So she was back with her family. She must have felt very happy to be back with her family? Can she talk about that?

#9: My mother never let me be happy. She always made me a servant for others. The next place where I was given as an adopted daughter was very nice. I was happy.

Q: Adopted daughter?

#9: I was sent as a babysitter.

Q: She was happy here? She was a baby sitter?

#9: Yes. I was happy here.

Q: She liked baby sitting with one or the other families?

#9: I was happy working in that family.

Q: Did she talk about her brothers and sisters at all?

#9: There were no sisters. I had brothers. One of the brothers died. I have one living in camp number one called Norbu.

Q: How many brothers?

#9: Four brothers. I was the only daughter.

Q: Did her brothers also have to grow up and do work at a young age?

#9: My brothers were able to work.

Q: Did they have to work as servants?

#9: Yes, my brothers also used to go. Two brothers were monks and so they practiced dharma.

Q: What does she remember doing for fun when she was a kid? What kind of games does she remember playing? What did she do for fun?

#9: We used to play skipping and *thapo*. Skipping and *thapo*.

Q: What?

#9: *Thapo*.

Q: What is *thapo*?

#9: [Response not discernable]

Q: With bones?

#9: Yes, bones and also skipping with ropes.

Q: Was she good at those games?

#9: At that time I could play.

Q: Did she ever go on a pilgrimage?

#9: When I was in Tibet I never went on a pilgrimage. I have often been to the Domo Dhonkar Gonpa.

Q: What would she do at the Domo Monastery? First, can she describe it a little bit? What it looked like?

#9: [Response not discernable]

Q: What?

#9: There was the *gutor*. At Dhonkar Gonpa, they used to perform the *gutor*. We could see the *monlam* festival.

Q: They performed the *gutor cham*?

#9: Yes, they performed the *cham* ‘religious performance by monks.’

Q: Who was the senior lama there in that region?

[Interviewee tries to remember.]

Q: It's fine if you can't remember. Did she ever remember any other festivals or gatherings in her village, different celebrations?

#9: We used to have picnics.

Q: She had picnics?

#9: Yes, we used to sing and dance at Phari. That was before the Chinese came. After the Chinese came, there were none.

Q: The picnics?

#9: There were many places we could go to.

Q: Was she a good dancer?

#9: Yes, at that time. I used to line up along with the men!

Q: What?

#9: I knew how to dance at that time.

Q: How old was she when she got married?

#9: I was 19.

Q: And at that time, had she noticed the Chinese at all in her area?

#9: The Chinese had arrived.

Q: Have she seen them?

#9: At that time I was a babysitter in Phari.

Q: What?

#9: At Phari.

Q: When she married, she was in Phari?

#9: Yes.

Q: Were there Chinese in Phari?

#9: The Chinese had arrived.

Q: She hadn't seen them?

#9: A few, not many. Later many arrived.

Q: Does she remember her wedding day? Can she tell us anything about that?

#9: There was no celebration.

Q: No celebration?

#9: [Response not discernable]

Q: What?

#9: It was by force.

Q: By force?

#9: It was in the old days. It was by force.

Q: By force and then you lived together?

#9: Yes.

Q: You lived as a married couple?

#9: Yes.

Q: First it was by force and then you married?

#9: Yes.

Q: What was he like?

#9: He was three years older than me.

Q: Was he good?

#9: He was so-so.

Q: What?

#9: He was quite quarrelsome.

Q: With other people?

#9: Yes.

Q: He was quarrelsome with other people?

#9: Yes.

Q: Did he drink *chang*?

#9: Yes, he drank *chang* 'home-brewed beer.'

Q: What was she doing at this time? Was she working or was she looking after the home?

#9: After that we were engaged in the road construction. We were making roads for the Chinese, making roads.

Q: Working for the Chinese?

#9: Yes.

Q: Oh really! She's working on a road crew. So can she talk about that kind of work; what it was like?

#9: We had to dig the ground and throw it away. We made roads. We were road builders.

Q: She pulled out grass?

#9: Yes. We dug the earth and made roads.

Q: She dug the earth?

#9: We had to widen the roads.

Q: How were they recruited into that job?

#9: I went with my husband to do road construction, to make roads.

Q: How did she get that job? Did the Chinese force her?

#9: At that time they used to give a lot of *dhayen* 'silver coins,' that's why we went. They gave a lot of silver coins.

Q: So they were paid quite well for this work? They were paid quite well.

#9: Yes, they paid us. We went because of the silver coins.

Q: Did she like the Chinese at that time? Did she have friendly feelings towards them?

#9: No, I did not like them. Even at that time, they were not treating us well. I did not like them. However, my husband...as he used to drink.

Q: Did her husband like the Chinese?

#9: Yes.

Q: So what changes did she start to notice in her village and the life around her after a while? What changes did she start to notice from the Chinese?

#9: There were not too many changes. All the monasteries were destroyed. They destroyed the district administrator office and everything.

Q: Did she see that?

#9: Yes, at that time I was in Phari.

Q: She was in Phari?

#9: Yes.

Q: Did she see the monasteries being destroyed?

#9: Yes. They destroyed the upper and lower monasteries, including Sando Choeying. They weren't able to destroy [rest of response not discernable]. They couldn't destroy...because they had put pigs in there. They couldn't destroy it and it still stands. Everything else was destroyed. They destroyed the monasteries on the top and the lower levels.

Q: She saw the monasteries being destroyed?

#9: Yes.

Q: Does she know what year it was?

#9: I do not know what year it was.

Q: Does she know how old she was when this happened?

#9: Quite a number of years have passed.

Q: What?

#9: Lots have passed.

Q: She was married when she was nineteen. How many years after that?

#9: I do not know what year it was. They destroyed the monasteries on the top and the lower levels.

Q: How old was she at that time?

#9: If I may be impolite and say so, I am of the same age as His Holiness the Dalai Lama. How old am I now?

Q: How old were you when the monasteries were destroyed?

#9: I may have been 26?

Q: Did she see the monasteries being destroyed? Did she see herself?

#9: Yes. Not just the monasteries, they even destroyed the icons that were upstairs.

Q: What was there upstairs?

#9: Those that were marked at that time. They destroyed the monasteries. There were some people who did that. Later they suffered like they were fettered thieves. They fell sick and died.

Q: Who?

#9: Those that destroyed the monasteries in Phari.

Q: She heard that? She heard they got sick and they died?

#9: Yes, they died.

Q: Did she hear that or see it?

#9: What?

Q: Was that something she heard or saw?

#9: I saw it. We were living in Phari at that time.

Q: What kind of sickness did they have?

#9: They became blind and their legs became like they were fettered with irons. Their legs were as though fettered. Like thieves whose legs were fettered and they died.

Q: Does she believe that was because of the negative karma caused by destroying the monasteries?

#9: Yes, because they destroyed the monasteries. They were liars. Who would destroy monasteries?

Q: Why did she think they got sick?

#9: Because they destroyed all the icons of the gods and the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. They destroyed the monasteries and it was their fault. That was why they died, otherwise why would they die? They destroyed the icons of the gods and they stamped on them. That was why.

Q: Because of all that. She said they destroyed the monasteries. What did they use to destroy them with? What instruments?

#9: They had knives and they pulled them down.

Q: How? With what instruments?

#9: They had *pawu*.

Q: What?

#9: *Pawu*. When they destroyed the monasteries, they had *pawu* [a tool?] with them. When the monasteries' temples were being destroyed, they pulled them down—the portraits and everything.

Q: How did they destroy the monasteries?

#9: What?

Q: How did they destroy the monasteries? With artillery shells or with what?

#9: No, they dragged them [religious icons] out, when they destroyed the monasteries. Those people dragged them. Some of them are still living in Phari, like thieves; the monks.

Q: How did they destroy the monasteries? They dragged the monasteries? Were they that simple so as to be dragged? By ropes?

#9: Yes, they dragged with ropes and pulled them down, the portraits and all the icons that were in the temples.

Q: They dragged all of those? Did they destroy the monasteries? The monasteries were built with mud.

#9: Yes.

Q: Did they destroy all those?

#9: Yes.

Q: They didn't use tools?

#9: In Phari some of them built homes out of those stones.

Q: With the stones?

#9: Yes. They took the stones and built homes.

Q: Did she remember if they used explosions?

#9: No, there were no shells, no explosions. There was none like that in Phari.

Q: When they destroyed the monasteries, they had to have some tools.

#9: There were the portraits and icons that were pulled down, stamped on and broken. They took away all the stones.

Q: Were they doing this in front of the villagers on purpose?

#9: Yes, they did it in front of the people. The people couldn't do much. The Chinese had come and they were very powerful, as were the people who did the work. At that time the Chinese had come. They were so powerful.

Q: What changes happened in her life from that point?

#9: I remained very quiet, not telling anything to anyone when the Chinese arrived. Even when the Chinese came, I never said anything. I never said anything. Then one day, a *thamzin* 'struggle session' took place after the Chinese arrived in Phari. At the struggle session, I just fainted without any reason. I fainted without any reason and then they said, "Tsering Kyipa, don't come here. Tsering Kyipa, you do not come. Your heart is like an insect's." Since then when meetings took place, they never asked me to attend.

When it came to my knowledge what was said during the meetings, I secretly informed eight families that they should flee or they would be arrested by the Chinese. I informed three families on one day, three the next day and two on another day. In this way I informed eight families. I informed them.

Q: Who did the Chinese arrest for *thamzin*?

#9: What?

Q: Who was arrested?

#9: Those that were rich among us, they were arrested to be subjected to *thamzin*.

Q: When those families fled, did she flee with them? When those seven or eight families fled, did she go with them?

#9: What?

Q: Did she escape with them?

#9: Which one?

Q: She went to inform them that they would be arrested by the Chinese.

#9: They are in Dharamsala now.

Q: When they escaped, did she go with them?

#9: I told them to escape, but I stayed in Phari.

Q: She was there?

#9: Yes, I was in Phari.

Q: Why did she stay and not leave with the other families?

#9: What?

Q: When the seven or eight families escaped; she was the one who informed them.

#9: They went because they were going to be subjected to *thamzin*, because they were going to be imprisoned.

Q: Those seven or eight families were going to be imprisoned and so they fled but she stayed back.

#9: I was okay, but if they were arrested and subjected to *thamzin*, they would undergo intense *thamzin*. They would be beaten. That was why. His Holiness the Dalai Lama said that I thought well to inform the other families.

Q: She went to inform them but how did she know that they were to be arrested? How did she know they were to be arrested?

#9: What?

Q: How did she know they were to be arrested?

#9: When I fainted there—when I fainted once, I fainted when the *thamzin* was going on, so they said that I was an insect and should not attend. At that time my late husband was a *U-yon* ‘leader chosen by the Chinese’ and he told me to go and inform them that they would be arrested.

Q: Did she fall down on the ground?

[Interpreter to interviewer] Yes.

Q: Why did she fall down on the ground? Did she faint?

#9: I just fell on my side.

Q: Why?

#9: I don't know if I fainted. I fell at that time. The *thamzin* were going on and it could be because of that or because of the tension.

Q: She was seeing *thamzin* going on with the people. What happened after that? She fell down on the ground and then what happened?

#9: Then they told me not to come. They said that my heart was like an insect's. They told me that speaking in the Chinese tongue.

Q: What insects?

#9: They said I was *shi shi la la* ‘bad’ and that my heart was not good. I was told not to attend.

Q: The Chinese said that?

#9: Yes. I was told not to attend the struggle sessions. I was wondering what was happening and then I fainted.

Q: And then what happened?

#9: Then they told me not to attend. My husband was like an *U-yon* and he told me to inform the families—the eight families that I told you about. I informed three families at one time, three at another time and two families lastly. My husband told me to inform them that they were going to be arrested.

Q: What is the *U-yon*?

#9: *U-yon* was like someone who did the work. They were the ones who did the *thamzin*, but my husband did not do the *thamzin* ever.

Q: Those were the poor people who were made to do the *thamzin*?

#9: Yes.

Q: When the Chinese asked her to stay back, what happened after that? After she fell down, they asked her to stay back; then what happened?

[Interpreter to interviewee] Then her husband told her that some of the families in their village were going to be arrested soon.

Q: That's what happened when they asked her to stay back. That's what happened. So can she continue the story? She can continue to tell us what happened to her?

#9: As I had fallen during the *thamzin* session, I was told not to come.

Q: Please continue to say. Do you have anything to say, about your experiences?

#9: No, I don't have much to say. I have only to say about the eight families. To those I informed that they should escape. I have nothing more to say.

Q: So after she informed the people, and they left Tibet what's the next thing she remembers happening?

#9: After that we went on the road construction. On the day before *Losar* 'Tibetan New Year,' my mother invited us to Phari for a party. So we went to Phari.

Q: Can she describe what happens in a *thamzin* session? What happens?

#9: Oh, they are hit on the cheeks [shows this action] until blood drips. That was when I fainted, during the earlier *thamzin* session. Then I didn't attend after I fainted.

Q: During the *thamzin* they were beaten?

#9: Of course, they were beaten so much. They were our people. It was not them, they were our people. The ones who beat were the... [not discernable].

Q: What were they trying to get them to say or do?

#9: They were beaten and during the *thamzin* they said that they should live under them. That was why they underwent *thamzin*, they had to live under the Chinese.

Q: Who said that? Those that did the *thamzin* said that they must live under the Chinese?

#9: Yes.

Q: That's what they said?

#9: Yes. I didn't need to undergo *thamzin* nor did I carry out *thamzin* on others. Why should I do that on others when my ability was so limited?

Q: When the *thamzin* was happening, it was the Tibetans who carried it out and those who underwent *thamzin* were also Tibetans. The Chinese were just watching?

#9: Yes, the Chinese were just watching.

Q: What were they saying; that they had to live under the Chinese?

#9: Yes, that they must live under the Chinese. They like the Chinese more. There were two kingpins who are living in Phari. If we could manage to go there, we should *thamzin* them. There were two liar kingpins there.

Q: How did the people respond to watching? How was the response of the crowd?

#9: The other Tibetans did not say much. There were some who couldn't keep their mouths shut. It was those from the lower caste or beggars who were worse, the ones that did the beatings.

Q: Did they ever try to get her to participate in a *thamzin* session by the Chinese or the other Tibetans? Did they ever get her to participate? Did anyone ever get her to participate?

#9: What?

Q: Was she told to do *thamzin*?

#9: I did not want to participate in *thamzin*. Why should I?

Q: Did the Chinese tell her that she had to *thamzin* this person?

#9: When they told me, I replied that I did not know how to do *thamzin*.

Q: Did they tell her that she had to do *thamzin*?

#9: Yes, they did and I told them that I did not know how.

Q: Who told her that, the Chinese?

#9: They were Tibetans.

Q: She said she wouldn't. And was that difficult to resist that? Was there a lot of pressure to participate?

#9: I said I didn't know how to, that I didn't know anything. I told them that I was the one to faint and how could I do the *thamzin*?

Q: Did she ever try to talk to her husband? Did she ever try to convince him not to work with the Chinese?

#9: Yes.

Q: She told him?

#9: I told him. After that he didn't work for the Chinese. He didn't work much for the Chinese. There were Tibetans who used to remark that my husband was a good man and that he didn't participate in the beatings.

Q: Was there less freedom in their way of life at this point? What restrictions did the Chinese put on them?

#9: Then one day my husband and I—we didn't want to go at night—we each carried bags and we fled in the day.

Q: At that time the Chinese had arrived there.

#9: We fled to Phari. Then they said that we should come back and that we needn't escape. We didn't want to flee at night and did so in the daytime. I said I wouldn't go at night.

[Interviewer to Interpreter] You can let her finish whatever she says, even, whatever, it doesn't matter.

Q: You decided to flee at night?

#9: No, I said we would go during the daytime and not at night. Thieves...during the day. We each carried a bag and fled. They told us to come back.

Q: Called her back?

[Interpreter to interviewer] **Because they [the Chinese] told them that they need not worry about this.**

Q: Don't need to worry about the *thamzin* because they were poor.

[Interpreter to interviewer] **Yes.**

Q: So they called them back. They did return then?

#9: They took us back to our home in Phari. They took us home.

Q: Who took them?

#9: They were Tibetans.

Q: Then they took them to their house?

#9: Yes and we emptied our *tsampa* bags completely. We did not leave even a morsel and said we could not survive hungry. We wanted to escape because we could not survive hungry. We did like that.

Q: Who emptied the *tsampa*?

#9: We emptied the *tsampa* bags. We packed the *tsampa* to be taken away and left the *tsampa* bags completely empty. We said that we escaped because we were desperate. There was no *tsampa* to eat.

Q: Why didn't they have anything to eat? What had changed, before they had enough to eat? Why didn't they have anything to eat now?

#9: We had *tsampa*, but we gave the reason for our fleeing as that we could not remain hungry; that they [foreigners] might give us enough to eat if we went abroad. So we told them that both of us wished to go.

Q: When she was talking about the destruction of the monasteries, what happened to the monks? If you could remind her, want to go back to the destruction of the monasteries, what happened to the monks at the monasteries?

#9: The monks had escaped. There were no monks. My father helped monks of the lower monastery to escape to India; my late father.

Q: Your father escorted several monks?

#9: My father escorted all the monks of...and... [not discernable]. My father pretended he was going to Phari and had transported all their belongings.

Q: The belongings of the monks?

#9: Yes, the monks' belongings were transported by my late father.

Q: Did she ever see any monks go through *thamzin*?

#9: They were not able to subject the monks to *thamzin* because my late father had already escorted them out. Monks were not subjected to *thamzin*.

Q: How often did the *thamzin* happen? Was it everyday or was it every week, was it three times a day? Like how often was it happening?

#9: *Thamzin* happened everyday. The Rinpoche ‘reincarnated lama of the upper monastery’ underwent *thamzin*. The woman is here at Camp Number 2—she rode over the Rinpoche and spit on him. He was the Rinpoche of the upper monastery. Then there was an old man.

Q: Which monastery?

#9: The upper monastery.

Q: The Rinpoche of the upper monastery was subjected to *thamzin*?

#9: Yes, by some people of Phari. There was an old man called Po Nyepala. He put his *chupa* ‘Tibetan coat’ on the Rinpoche. He had a white *chupa*, which he put on him. The woman subjected him to *thamzin*. These days she is in Camp Number 2. She is the daughter of Dhondhue; the one who did the *thamzin*. She was on the road construction and escaped from there. She fled the night of the *thamzin*.

Q: The one who *thamzin* the Rinpoche was a woman?

#9: Yes.

Q: He wasn't a monk but he was a Rinpoche?

#9: Except for the Rinpoche, most of the monks had gradually escaped earlier. There were not many people left in the monastery.

Q: He was actually put under...did she see him undergo *thamzin*?

#9: We were not there at that time, why should I lie? At that time we were at the road construction site. We were building roads, why should I lie? The woman who did the *thamzin* was Shopta Dhopang. Her name was Dhondhue Yangdonla. She is here now at the Camp Number 2—the one who did the *thamzin* on Rinpoche.

Q: Has she seen her? Had they talked?

#9: I told you we were at the road construction site then, building roads. The *thamzin* happened in Phari and I heard that she bent the head of the Rinpoche. She was a *Dhopang*; she was what was called a *Shopta Dhopang*.

Q: What's a *Shopta Dhopang*?

#9: One who works for the Chinese; a road builder.

Q: Have Ama-*la* and she spoken here?

#9: No, I never talk to her.

Q: How does she feel towards that woman?

#9: I heard these days she is about to die. Such things will come about. That is the results of her evil deeds come back to her. Who would ever *thamzin* a Rinpoche?

Q: Apart from the *thamzin* sessions, did the Chinese make any other changes in the life of the people in the village?

#9: I was totally engaged in building roads and I do not know anything. Why should I lie? Those days they were giving a lot of silver coins and we were making roads.

Q: When did she stop working as a road crew and how did she stop working, like what happened?

#9: The reason why we stopped working as road crews was that my parents called us back home to Phari the day before the New Year. Then they escaped. My husband had gone to Sha Sima and had not come with me. My father and mother fled on the third day of the Tibetan New Year to India.

Q: They told you to leave work and come back to them?

#9: Yes.

Q: Who?

[Interpreter to interviewer] Her parents.

Q: They fled from Phari?

[Interpreter to interviewer] At that time her husband was at some other place.

Q: So her parents fled.

[Interpreter to interviewer] Yes.

Q: But she didn't?

[Interpreter to interviewer] Yes.

Q: She stayed there. Did she think of trying to run away again? She tried once, did she think of trying to escape Tibet again?

[Interpreter to interviewer] At that moment?

Q: Yeah. With her knowing her parents were leaving, did she think that she would also try to escape?

#9: Yes, I wanted to escape. But my husband was no there, so I was left behind.

Q: So she wanted to wait until he was with her. Had her parents been subjected to *thamzin*?

#9: It was said that my father would be subjected to *thamzin*, which was why I suggested that they escape and not remain. He was working for the monastery. I told my father that he should escape, so they fled. They escaped on the third day of the New Year.

Q: Had her brothers and sisters been subjected to *thamzin*?

#9: No, they were not subjected to *thamzin*. One of my brothers, Penpa is in Camp Number 1.

Q: Were they subjected to *thamzin*?

#9: All my family members had escaped. No one was there undergo *thamzin*. My mother had escaped, and my father had escaped by that time.

Q: Your brothers?

#9: All my brothers managed to come here. No one was there.

Q: When did she stop working on the road crew and how did she stop working? Why did she stop working?

#9: I was left behind because my husband was not there with me. When my mother and father escaped, my husband was not there. One of my brothers is Norbu and his wife Methok. My other brother Dawa passed away. One brother lives in Kollegal and another works in Bangalore.

Q: Who?

#9: My brothers. One lives in Kollegal.

Q: The question put was 'how did she stop work?'

#9: My work as a road crew?

Q: Yes.

#9: I left the road construction work and then I started working in the fields in Phari, doing field work.

Q: Was she able to leave voluntarily, the job as a road crew?

#9: Yes, we could leave if we wished. I left the road crew job and started doing field work. We owned about six to seven acres of land which we cultivated. We tilled our own land.

[The videographer is concerned about the interviewee and asks her if she is tired or if she is okay to keep going on. She replies she is not tired.]

Q: Can she tell us how long she worked on the farm and what happened during that time? Can she tell us?

#9: It must have been seven or eight years. We cultivated the fields and could utilize all that we grew.

Q: Did she have total freedom during this time to do whatever she did? Did the Chinese tell her what to do or did she have the freedom to grow whatever she wanted and do whatever she wanted to do?

#9: No, it was up to us what we wanted to do. We used the seeds of the upper Khambu region but not the lower Khambu.

Q: Khambu?

#9: The upper Khambu seeds grew in Phari and not the lower Khambu's seeds.

Q: The Chinese didn't tell you what to grow and what not to grow?

#9: No, they didn't.

Q: Is Khambu something you ate?

#9: No, that is the name of a place, Khambu.

Q: Khambu?

#9: Yes, Khambu.

Q: How was the relationship between the Chinese and the Tibetans during that time?

#9: At that time, the Chinese had done *thamzin* a lot; Yung Lo Xiaoping, Deng Xioping, [not clear] and Changji Zamon. When we were cultivating the fields, these four people were subjected to *thamzin*.

Q: For all this period of six to seven years? What happened—why did she stop working on the family farm?

#9: I have a son in Phari who is still working on the farm.

Q: Why did she stop working?

#9: I worked for hardly a year or two on the farm. It was my son who was doing the work.

Q: Is he your son?

#9: Yes. He is married and has two children.

Q: This was after she already left or this was while she was still there?

#9: I was still there.

Q: When did she leave Tibet?

#9: I didn't escape. Why should I lie? I had proper travel documents. I came once earlier from Tibet when my late mother was alive. I came to see my mother. I had travel documents and at that time I wanted to go to Bodh Gaya to receive the initiation. However, I was not allowed to go there from Nepal. They told me to go to Dharamsala. I was not allowed at that time. I had travel documents.

Q: She was actually trying to go back. So did she leave just to go for that; to meet her parents and to go for the *pooja* 'rituals of worship'? Was that just the purpose of her leaving? She wasn't trying to leave for good? She was trying to leave to meet her parents and go to the *pooja* and come back? Was that the intention?

[Interpreter to interviewer] She came to meet her parents and then went to this Dorjiden where the *pooja* was performed.

Q: But that was the intention, she never intended to stay, right? Could you ask her?

#9: I did not return to Tibet. I came to see my mother.

Q: After meeting your mother, since you had Chinese documents, did you intend to go back?

#9: I went back once. I had the travel documents and went back once.

Q: Did you come twice to meet your mother?

#9: The next time I did not meet my mother because she'd passed away.

Q: But you came to see your mother?

#9: Yes.

Q: When she left Tibet, was the *thamzin* still going on?

#9: At that time there was no *thamzin*. There was no *thamzin*; we just worked in our fields.

Q: So no idea when she came? What year? 1960s, '70s? Does she remember how old she was?

#9: I was 25 when I came the second time.

Q: At that time you were 25 years old?

#9: I was 25 when I came the next time.

Q: How old was her son when she came to India?

#9: My son was married and had children. He had two children, a daughter and a son.

Q: Around how old was her son?

#9: What?

Q: Around how old was her son at that time? When she left for India from Tibet, how old was her son?

#9: He married when he was around 19.

Q: When she came to India, how old was her son?

#9: He married when he was 19.

[Videographer voices concern about interviewee's health; her breathing is getting worse and asks to speed up the interview.]

Q: When she came to India and she went to the *pooja* at Bodh Gaya by His Holiness, can she just describe what that was like for her?

#9: I didn't get to go to Dorjiden [Bodh Gaya].

Q: What?

#9: I went to Dharamsala and didn't get to go to Dorjiden at that time. I was not allowed to. In Nepal, they told me to go to Dharamsala. The Representative there sent me to Dharamsala.

Q: So she never actually attended the *pooja*. Did she get an audience with His Holiness in Dharamsala?

#9: Yes, I did.

Q: Did you get a private audience?

#9: Yes. His Holiness told me, "You have a good heart. Recite the *mani*. Everything will be alright. You will be fine."

Q: It was a private audience?

#9: Yes. I even got his blessings [shows action of hand on head].

Q: That was in the private chambers at the palace of His Holiness?

#9: Yes, at the palace and I received his blessings.

Q: Can she say what that like was for her?

#9: I had with me three or four white *tanka* and two silver coins, which I laid in front of His Holiness.

Q: What did you have with you?

#9: Two silver coins and four white *tanka*.

Q: *Tanka*?

#9: The white *tanka* is the coin of Tibet. Along with a *khata* 'ceremonial scarf,' I laid them in front. His Holiness remarked, "You should remain happy. You will be fine."

Q: Ask her if she...the purpose of this interview is to let younger Tibetans know what Tibet was like, does she have any advice? Can she give some advice to the young Tibetans coming up now in exile?

#9: As for advice, it is the blessings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Do you think the children in India would listen to us? However my brothers' children are obedient as of now, my brother Norbu's children. Otherwise, do you think the children in India would listen? They are no good. You tell them something and they will talk back.

Q: In case they would listen to her, what would be her advice?

#9: I would say don't be like this. Listen to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and work hard. Work hard in your studies and pray that we will get to go back to Tibet.

Q: Does she think about Tibet much these days?

#9: Of course I do. Whenever I eat my food, I make an offering to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and pray that Tibet should regain her independence, that the dharma should flourish, that days of happiness should dawn on us, that there be happiness, that Tibet gain independence and that we should be able to annihilate the enemies. That's what I pray about.

Q: Can you ask her does she think she will ever see Tibet again?

#9: I always think that I will see Tibet. I always think that I will be back in Tibet and in my village. Due to the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama I think that I will get back.

Q: Please thank her very, very much for sharing her story. It was really, really interesting and please thank her for spending such a long time with us.

#9: Okay.

Q: Could she say her full name?

#9: Tsering Kyipa.

Q: Tsering Kyipa, do we have your permission to use your story for the Tibet Oral History Project?

#9: What?

Q: Can they use the interview?

#9: Yes, you can use it. For what did you say?

Q: The interview which we did, can they use it?

#9: Yes, they can.

Q: And if this was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for her?

#9: There would be no problems. Those people...

Q: Who?

#9: The yellow enemy.

Q: Would it be a problem for her if it were shown in China or Tibet? Would it be a problem for her family members?

#9: No, they will face no problems.

Q: Ask her how she feels? Is she okay?

#9: There is no problem.

Q: Is there anything else that she would like to say?

#9: I do not have anything more to say.

Q: No part of the story we left out that she wants to add?

#9: No.

Q: Thank you.

#9: *Tashi Delek.*

END OF INTERVIEW