

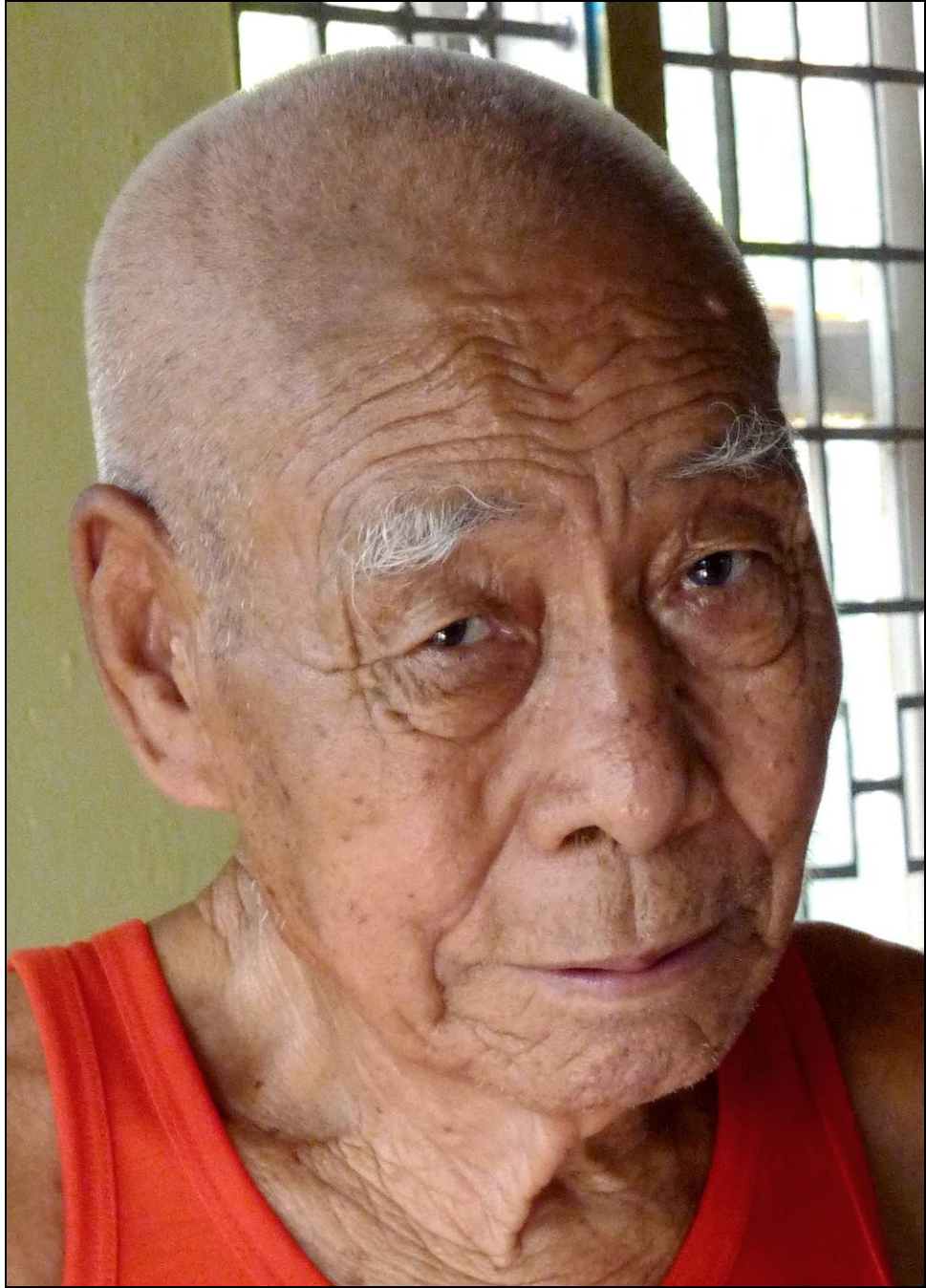
Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #10M – Anzi
April 6, 2010

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #10M
2. Interviewee: Anzi
3. Age: 83
4. Date of Birth: 1927
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Motho
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: April 6, 2010
10. Place of Interview: Home for the Aged, Doeguling Settlement, Mundgod, Karwar District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 55 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Pema Tashi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

As a child, Anzi led a happy life playing with his friends and occasionally helping his family in herding their animals. In his teens he made the decision to become a monk as did many of the village boys. At the age of 18, he left for Lhasa to join Gaden Monastery near Lhasa. He talks about his long journey from his village to Lhasa to the monastery.

Anzi explains how people from far away regions who came to join the three great monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Gaden were specifically assigned to one of the monastery's *khangtsen* 'houses' based on their place of birth. He describes the holder of the throne of Gaden, the highest position in the Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Anzi gives a detailed account of his life as a grain collector for his monastery. The grains were loaned to people of the villages and collected along with an interest at the time of harvest.

After the Chinese invasion, Anzi voluntarily joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] to fight against the Chinese forces. Anzi gave up his monks' vows in order to join the Force because he believed strongly in defending the Dalai Lama and his country. He and many other monks from Gaden collected guns from the Potala Palace and witnessed the turmoil in Lhasa at that time, including a protest by the Tibetan Women's Association.

Topics Discussed:

Childhood memories, monastic life, oppression under Chinese, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas, Dalai Lama's escape, March 10th Uprising, life as a refugee in India.

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Interview #10M

Interviewee: Anzi

Age: 83, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: April 6, 2010

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:23

Interviewee #10M: Anzi.

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?

#10M: Yes. Thank you.

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

00:01:37

#10M: Okay.

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

#10M: Okay.

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

00:02:02

#10M: Okay.

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

#10M: There will be no problem.

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

00:02:30

#10M: Okay.

[To interpreter] Please say that I said thank you for interviewing me and that I am very happy to speak about Tibet.

Q: *Gen-la* ‘respectful term for teacher,’ we are going to talk about your story. What are some of the main points you want us to be sure to talk about?

#10M: I do not have much to say. [Laughs] I would like to say that I am extremely happy from the depth of my heart for your taking the responsibility of working for the cause of Tibet.

Q: We are honored to be a part of this.

#10M: Okay.

Q: *Gen-la*, when you were a little boy, how many people were in your family?

00:04:06

#10M: There were my parents, two sisters and three sons, including me. The brother who was younger to me passed away. There were eight people and one passed away.

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

#10M: They were farmers and also raised cattle. Other than that, there was no special work as such.

Q: Can you tell us a little description of your village? For example, how many houses were in your village? How many families?

00:05:27

#10M: There were about 17 families. In the neighborhood were about 17 families. It was not very large.

Q: Could you paint me a picture of your village? What would I see if I looked at your village from afar?

#10M: The location was sort of cramped. Except in the east, where you could see some houses, the rest were surrounded by mountains.

Q: Can you describe some of your experiences in your childhood? What did you do as a little boy during the days? How did you spend your days?

00:06:48

#10M: When I was a little child, there were many others like me and we used to play. There was no work at home. Our parents and siblings worked, while the little children played. We did not have any particular work to do.

Q: Did you have any education as a little boy, any schooling?

#10M: There were no schools, the reason being that schools were never started there. If one wished to learn some prayers, there were monks whom you approached to teach you. Other than that, there were no special teachers as such.

Q: From where did the monks come and did they stay with you and your family? What happened?

00:08:16

#10M: They belonged to the small monastery in our region. One had to go there to study, as they did not come [to the village]. One could go there at times, since they [did not teach] all the time.

Q: Are there any memories you can tell us about your childhood that stand out in your mind?

#10M: I remember the times when I was a child of about 12-13, when I used to go to herd the goats, sheep and cows far away in winter. I remember that very much. I miss my home very much these days.

Q: Can you say what you miss about your village life? What do you long for?

00:09:47

#10M: I cannot recall much, but I miss my parents a lot. My relatives were already ruined by the Chinese. I cannot recall much because I left when I was 17.

Q: Why did you leave your village?

#10M: I was a monk and the monks had to join [one of] the great monasteries [Sera, Drepung and Gaden Monasteries in Lhasa]. I was sent to the monastery by my parents.

Q: Which was the monastery?

00:10:40

#10M: It was Gaden.

Q: When did you become a monk?

#10M: I became a monk at the age of 18.

Q: Can you tell us about how you became a monk? Who made that decision?

#10M: I made the decision. My parents did not have much say in it. I told them that I wished to become a monk.

Q: You made the decision yourself?

00:11:25

#10M: Yes, I decided myself.

Q: It would be interesting for us to know what led you to that decision.

#10M: I wished to become a monk because there were many monks in my village. When one [boy] became a monk, then another one became a monk and so we jointly became monks. Religion was held in high esteem in my region.

Q: What was the reason when so many boys wanted to become monks?

00:12:31

#10M: The boys had to study and if they could, they must pass the *Geshe* 'Buddhist philosophy' degree. After passing the *geshe*, if he was capable and excelled in the scriptures, he could ascend the throne of Gaden. People in Tibet were very devotional.

Q: What is the throne of Gaden?

#10M: A Gaden throne holder was one who has excelled in the Five Great Treatises of Mahayana Buddhist Philosophy, who concentrated on the scriptures and was deeply spiritual. Such a person gradually rose to the Throne of Gaden. If he could not ascend the throne, he passed away.

Q: What roles did the Gaden throne holder play?

00:13:29

#10M: The Gaden throne holder did not have to do anything. The throne holder, selected from [one of the great monasteries] changed every six years. He was selected on the basis of his meritorious studies.

Q: Was he from [one of] the three great monasteries?

#10M: Yes, a Gaden throne holder was selected from the three great monasteries. The Gaden throne holder was from the three great monasteries: Drepung, Sera and Gaden.

Q: Did the other boys that went with you, did they also have the same dream to go to the throne of Gaden?

00:14:39

#10M: [Speaks before interpretation is complete] There was no aim because some of them might not want to remain as monks, in which case you were free to leave monkhood.

Q: Yes?

#10M: One had the freedom to remain a monk or leave monkhood and live in the village.

Q: What were some of the other aims?

00:15:17

#10M: In the beginning, one must study the alphabet like you do in the schools. Then one must study the scriptures and take part in debate sessions in all the three great monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Gaden. Not everyone could become a Gaden Throne holder.

Q: And how did your mother and father react to your wish to be a monk?

#10M: They said that was okay. They did not deter me. There was never the custom in my region to stop someone from becoming a monk.

Q: You said you were 18 when you became a monk. Where did you go to become a monk?

00:16:44

#10M: It was Gaden.

Q: Where was Gaden?

#10M: There was a *khangtsen* a smaller community within a monastery, in which monks of one geographical area live] called Phara Khangtsen in Gaden. Jangtse Datsang [one of the two divisions of Gaden Monastery] has 11 *khangtsen*, like Phara and some of which were named after the regions.

[Question is repeated.]

00:17:06

#10M: It was Phara.

Q: Where was Gaden Monastery located?

#10M: Gaden Monastery was near Lhasa. It was not very far [from Lhasa], about a day's journey; it was somewhat near. One had to walk.

Q: To go to Gaden from your home, how long did it take you, that travel?

00:18:02

#10M: The journey took about two months and ten days. People carried *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley' and also begged as they walked along. If one could carry [a huge load] he would but some, who could not carry much, exhausted their stock of *tsampa* on the way and went begging from the villages along the route.

Q: When you got to Gaden, besides your wish to become a monk, were there any other gifts that you had to give to the monastery to cover the cost of your entry?

#10M: There was nothing you had to pay. Each one had his own assigned [*khangtsen*]. For example, if one was from Ba, everyone from Ba could go to Gaden or to one of the three great monasteries; he could join Drepung, he could join Gaden and he could join Sera. They could join any of them. In Drepung it was Phara [Khangtsen] or Gowo [Khangtsen]

that the people of Ba joined—Phara [Khangtsen in Gaden Monastery] while in Sera, it was the La Khangtsen.

Q: Can you tell us about—is the section the same as these 11 different houses?

00:20:08

#10M: Yes.

Q: Please explain what did the 11 different houses represent?

#10M: There were 11 [*khangtsen*] and if you were from Amdo, you went to your assigned [*khangtsen*]; if you were from Gyalrong, you joined your [*khangtsen*]. Likewise, if you belonged to Tiwu, you joined the *khangtsen* assigned to your region. Each region was assigned its own *khangtsen* to live in. You were not allowed to join anywhere as you wish. Each [region] had its assigned [*khangtsen* in a monastery].

Q: When you were still a young boy, *gen-la* in your home, how did you know about Gaden? Did you have monks who had taught there or lived there and who came to your village to tell you about it?

00:21:44

#10M: There were many from our village that went there and returned. One was not allowed to join any other [*khangtsen*] except through that way. You joined the *khangtsen* you belonged to and were not allowed to join another.

Q: Did you hear it from other monks?

#10M: There were [monks] from my monastery and when we gathered for prayer assembly, I used to hear about it. That's how I heard.

Q: Did you attend prayer assemblies when you lived in your village?

00:22:16

#10M: Yes, we used to have prayer assemblies in Ba.

Q: Were you a monk then?

#10M: Yes, I was a monk.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Which also means that *gen-la* was a monk when he lived in the village.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So he was already a monk.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes, because *gen-la* was saying that he heard about Gaden Monastery when they had monk prayer assemblies.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: We have to ask him.

Q: *Gen-la*, when you lived in your village before you traveled to Gaden, were you a part of a monastery in your village?

00:23:16

#10M: I was living at home. We lived at home and when there were prayer assemblies, we went to the monastery to attend it.

Q: How many years did you visit those prayer assemblies, *gen-la*?

#10M: I became a monk at the age of 17. I left for Tibet [Lhasa] when I was 18.

Q: So it was just one year?

00:23:04

#10M: Yes. I would be provided with *tsampa* and everything else if I lived in the monastery. They would send it for me. When one lived at the great monasteries, the teacher provided *tsampa* and tea.

Q: *Gen-la*, you used to live at home and attend prayer assemblies, how long did that go on? Was it one year?

#10M: That went on for about three years.

Q: This means at around the age of 15

00:24:39

#10M: I might have become a monk at around the age of 13.

Q: *Gen-la*, was there any thought that going to Gaden had something to do with an experience of—I want to say reincarnation—of having lived there in another lifetime?

#10M: One would think like that. If one wants to join Gaden, he will think about going to Gaden and if it was Drepung, you think of going to Drepung. One could not join Gaden, Drepung or Sera without lots being drawn. Lots must be drawn. In order to join Gaden, Drepung and Sera, lots must be drawn.

Q: Were you pleased the lots were drawn for Gaden?

00:26:33

#10M: It's was good. Three of us monks were drawn for Gaden and six for Drepung. We did not have to go to Sera at that time.

Q: *Gen-la*, when you left your village, it was a small place and in two months you go to Lhasa and it's huge, what was your feeling and experience when you saw the Potala Palace and the monastery?

#10M: I felt it was extremely good because for one, His Holiness the Dalai Lama...and then the Jowo of Lhasa [a statue of Buddha Sakyamuni] are very holy pilgrim points. I felt very happy that I could see those.

Q: Did you visit Lhasa a little bit—look around the town before you went to live in the monastery?

00:28:19

#10M: We could not go to the town much because Gaden is located on a hill and we could only go to fetch water. We could not go on a leisure walk. It was very strict for the monks.

Q: Before you tell us about Gaden, I would like to know about the journey of two months. What was it like?

[Sound of gong outside]

#10M: Relatives came to see us off at Dowachukha, carrying our *tsampa* and other things. We were many people in the group; some had donkeys and others horses and mules. I and my companion had a donkey to load our *tsampa* on. We carried the wheat flour, tea and butter on our backs.

Q: Were there any scary parts to climb over mountains or cross rivers in your journey?

00:30:40

#10M: There were very scary [dangerous] mountains and thieves on the way. However, we did not possess much to be robbed. We were monks and just drove along the donkeys. We joined with transporters, so we were not targeted. However, there were rivers to ford and bridges to cross and the roads were extremely bad. Except for driving our donkeys, we did not possess much.

Q: How did you ford those rivers?

#10M: There were bridges across the huge rivers. We drove the donkeys, horses and mules into the smaller rivers and people walked in twos, armed with a pole [shows immersing a pole in water to assess the depth of the water]. The waters came up until this height [gesture not caught on camera. Interpreter translates it as 'up until our waists'].

Q: When you ran out of food and you had to beg, were people supportive of your journey?

00:32:33

#10M: They gave us a little. They gave little quantities of *tsampa*, cheese, butter and tea. About three people would go in a group to beg. It was better to go together. They went in a group and then one went this side and one that side. That was how we begged and we received small quantities. We received enough to last for two to three days.

Q: Tell us what it was like when you arrived at Gaden? What was the reception like and what happened?

#10M: The respective Khangtsen received us. If it was Phara Khangtsen, there were the *khangtsen gen* [official] and store manager, who upon receiving the news of the arrival of new monks, immediately accepted us and provided us with *tsampa* and prepared tea. The older monks held a meeting and if there were three new monks, it was discussed as to who would keep them. If none [came forward], a lot would be drawn among the older monks and he would take charge [of the newcomer]. The teacher would have to provide him with food, clothes and everything. It was enough if one could come there to seek admission.

Q: When you saw Gaden for the first time high on the hill, what was your reaction?

00:34:59

#10M: That's the place where I will live...His Holiness the Dalai Lama...There was something called the Yiga Choegyal, which one could see. Only a person of virtuous karma could view this above Gaden in the sky. If one did not possess virtuous karma, he could not see it. I thought myself lucky to have been assigned for Gaden. This was where Je Rinpoche first stayed. One could see the place where he lived there. I thought myself fortunate. If one could without intent climb up a [particular] flight of steps, it used to be said that he would reach the Throne of Gaden, but we did not know where it was.

Q: Where was the flight of steps located?

#10M: The flight of steps was located outside the boundary. It was outside and close to a rock.

Q: Tell us about what is the history of Gaden? Why was it such a special place?

00:36:49

#10M: The monastery and the living areas were pyramidal, sharper than this [points off camera] and there was not much walking space. Except for the path, it [the hill] was covered with houses.

Q: You mean Gaden?

#10M: Yes, that's what I said. The monastery had small pathways. There were separate halls for the *datsang* 'division of monastery' and *khangtsen* to hold prayer assemblies.

Q: The Gaden Monastery was not wide?

00:37:25

#10M: It was not very wide. It was located atop a hill. One could view Gaden when one arrived down there. It was not very large.

Q: About how many monks were at Gaden when you first went?

#10M: The average figure was 3,300. But it was more than that. There might have been 4,000 or 5,000 monks.

Q: That sounds like a large monastery.

00:38:41

#10M: The monastery was large. It's said that there were 7,700 [monks] at Drepung. It's said that there were 5,500 monks at Sera. But there were more monks than that. That was the average.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Did we determine who was the founder of Gaden?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Je Rinpoche.

Q: Could you tell us something about Je Rinpoche?

#10M: Je Rinpoche was originally an Amdo [region of Tibet]. He came on a pilgrimage. He was an accomplished practitioner. Outside the boundary of Gaden, there is a hillock, where a small cave was built and he lived in it.

Q: Is that the stair that you could go up, a certain set of stairs, and almost be able to see Gaden in the sky?

[Interpreter explains to interviewer that if a person was fortunate, if he looked up from the ground to Gaden, he would be able to view as if Gaden was located in the sky.]

Q: Can you tell us how did your studies begin at Gaden? What was a typical day like?

00:40:47

#10M: One must start by studying the debates. One learned both the debates and *ngag* 'tantra' at Gaden. In Drepung and Sera, they studied the *dho* 'sutra' and not *ngag*.

As soon as you woke up in the morning, there was the *mangja* 'tea assembly' where the monks drink [tea]. When the huge gong, which was about quarter the size of this house, was rung, all the monks attended the *mangja*. Tea and...were given during this session. When the assembly disbursed, one had to go to one's particular *datsang* for the next gathering.

Q: And what's the *datsang* assembly?

#10M: After the *mangja* was over, it was time for the *datsang* assembly. During this time the *gekoe* 'disciplinarian' does something called a *thikay*. He shouts "*thee ho*."

Q: Does he shout?

00:42:30

#10M: Yes, he shouts. The *gekoe* has to shout it three times. When that is said, all the monks must go to the assembly. Then all the prayers must be recited during this session. After the assembly gets over, one must attend the debate session. You were taught the scriptures and must practice the debate.

Q: When we said the early prayer, what time of the morning would that be, the earliest prayer?

#10M: That would be about 5 o'clock in the morning.

Q: Tell us a little bit about the debate and how you learn how to do debating and how you practiced it?

00:44:01

#10M: [Monks] practiced the debates. I have to be honest and say that I did not learn the debates. I memorized the prayers and that was about it. [Laughs]

Q: What was difficult about it?

#10M: It was not difficult. We were happy. The place was pleasant.

Q: No, I did not mean that. Was it difficult to learn the debates?

00:44:27

#10M: It was very difficult to learn the debates. One must read all the scriptures and memorize them. Then you go the assembly and debate on whatever your teacher has taught you. You must give the answers to your colleague. It is extremely difficult to practice the debates.

Q: So some of the monks who weren't able to do that, did they still have to go to debate or were they allowed to do something else?

#10M: In certain *khangtsen*, if you did not study debates, you were not suppose to remain but nobody said anything much. You could study and work in the *khangtsen* or *mitsen* 'a group of monks from a particular region' as cooks or store keepers. It was enough if you worked in these capacities.

Q: What kind of work did you find yourself doing?

00:46:14

#10M: I memorized the prayers that used to be recited during the prayer assemblies and that was enough.

Q: Did you have any other responsibilities for the upkeep of the monastery?

#10M: I have worked in many capacities for the monastery. I went to collect grains in the villages and made *tsampa*. I had to hire villagers to make help make *tsampa*. Then it was distributed to the various *khangtsen* of the monastery. Wheat flour had to be made also.

Q: How did life in the monastery suit you? Did you like it, *gen-la*? Did you appreciate the monastic life?

00:47:45

#10M: I felt happy. It was a very happy life. When there was no work, I stayed in my room memorizing the prayers and making tea. I was free.

Q: Did the monastery keep growing or building or expanding during these years because you are 18 years old when you joined and you were there quite long, until you left in 1959? So you were there from the time you were 18 until you left in '59?

#10M: The monk population increased. The number of monks rose and did not decrease. The number of monks increased. Later when the fighting against the Chinese occurred, many of the monks left to join the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force].

Q: When did you, as an individual, *gen-la*, first know that the Chinese had come into Tibet?

00:49:40

#10M: I have to be honest and say that I do not remember the exact dates. I was not aware of it. I was in the village when one night many vehicles arrived. There was a road constructed nearby by the Chinese and many vehicles appeared on it. I am not able to pinpoint exactly what it was. There used to be a lot of rumors that the Chinese were coming. Monks from the three great monasteries had gone as *sermak*, but the *sermak* could not do much and returned.

Q: What does *sermak* mean?

#10M: They were monks that were sent as soldiers.

Q: Before we continue to hear about what the monks did around the Chinese arrival, could you please tell us, when you went to the village to collect grain from the villagers, what was their response?

00:51:30

#10M: Some of the villagers had earlier availed grains on loan and only the loaned quantity of grains and its interest was recovered. There was no collection of extra grain through force.

Q: What was the interest and what was the principle?

#10M: They were grains. Grains were loaned and grains were recovered. If it was money that was loaned, it was recovered in the form of money.

Q: Was money also loaned?

00:52:33

#10M: Yes. One could not interchange grains and money. They availed of loans at the time of sowing in spring and repaid the loan during autumn. I had to go to collect those.

Q: What was the relationship between the monasteries collecting these taxes, interest and principle, and the attitude of the villagers? How did they feel about this kind of exchange?

#10M: The relationship had been in existence since generations. There was no new relationship as such. The relationship was there since long and it was continued.

Q: The reason I'm asking is because there has been a lot of questions about whether the people wanted to support the monasteries or did not want to support the monasteries. Did they have a choice?

00:54:46

#10M: There was nothing other than giving back what they had taken. There was no dishonesty [on the part of the monastery].

Q: This was not a tax?

#10M: No, this was not a tax. They returned the grains that they had taken [on loan], along with an interest. It is similar to the money you deposit in the bank.

Q: After the Chinese invasion, the Chinese stated that the monasteries were taking advantage of the people and using them as serfs. What can you say about that kind of accusation?

00:56:12

#10M: They were the ones who were deceiving the people by giving them gifts and money. They were deceiving them and trying to take what they could. They were the ones who did it, while the monks only received grains if they had loaned grains. That was not making them servants. Surely, they must return something that they had taken as loan.

Q: How did the people support the monastery? The monastery gave loans to the people, but did the people in any way support the monasteries?

#10M: [The people] did not support the monastery in any way. [The monastery] collected the grains and kept it there. A storehouse was rented, for which the rental amount was paid. The grains were stored there and if they [the villagers] required grains in the spring, they could avail of it. The monks also made *tsampa* from it. However, they were not forced to work. They were paid.

Q: We are going to go back to the time when you said some of the monks had left the monastery to join the *Chushi Gangdrug*. What happened? Who ordered that to happen?

00:58:26

#10M: Earlier the *Chushi Gangdrug* offered a golden throne to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. After the golden throne was offered, the colonels [of the Tibetan Army] and mainly the late Lithang Andrug [Gonpo Tashi, founder of *Chushi Gangdrug*] of *Chushi Gangdrug* said that it was best to move out as the Chinese were becoming worse and worse, year by year. So the Force moved out towards the north.

Q: Did the head of the monastery select certain monks to join? Who was chosen and who made the decision?

#10M: [The monks] volunteered and left to join the *Chushi Gangdrug*. There was no one who ordered them to do so. They volunteered because the Chinese were becoming worse and worse and their grip over the people became tighter and tighter as time went by. They gave money to the poor and the people in high office. Perhaps it should not be said but the high officials took a lot of money. That was how the Chinese gradually started the oppression.

Q: What was your personal reaction when you heard that the Chinese were in your country and were trying to take over?

01:01:01

#10M: I was not there in my village at that time.

Q: I meant your country, Tibet.

#10M: I was arrested many times. Those of us who were engaged in preparing *tsampa* and collecting grains for the monastery were arrested in the night and jailed for sometime. They questioned us if we knew anybody. When we replied that we knew people in the village, they told us to bring those we knew. Unless those people came and spoke on our behalf, we would not be released.

Q: Were you arrested?

01:01:46

#10M: I was arrested by the Chinese. I was captured three times.

Q: I didn't mean fight. Did the Chinese arrest you? [Interpreter had confused the Tibetan words *zing* 'fight' and *zim* 'arrest'.]

#10M: Yes, I was arrested.

Q: Where were you arrested?

01:01:58

#10M: I was captured at the place called Tsamthok near Gaden.

Q: At the flour mill?

#10M: No, not at the flour mill. We had been to collect grains. In order to make *tsampa* for the monastery, we had to collect the grains from very long distances. Then we had to send people to grind it. We stayed overnight at Tsamthok. I told you [the interpreter] once before [during pre-interview] that when making the *tsampa*, we had four mules. The Chinese had a mule, which came over to where our mules were grazing. They caught us and accused us of having kept their mule with ours. We were four people.

Q: And what happened next?

01:03:21

#10M: They took us to the place where they were staying and said that there had been a *mazan* on their mule, which we had taken.

Q: What is *mazan*?

#10M: That is a type of fur blanket. Their mule had dropped the *mazan* on the way. It is a type of fur blanket, which one wears at night.

Q: And what happened next?

01:04:15

#10M: We had not taken the blanket. It was dropped in the fields. Then they released us and our mules when they found the blanket. That was the kind of liars they were.

Q: What was your reaction when you were released?

#10M: I did not feel anything. Earlier when we were captured, I told my colleagues who were two older monks, "We have a knife. Let's kill these two Chinese. Let's take their guns and go across the river." We spoke in Tibetan while they spoke Chinese. I told them that we should kill them and flee across the river. But the older monk said, "No, do not do that. Do not be hasty." They [the Chinese] asked us who we knew in the village. I told them that we knew everyone in the village. They told us to bring those that we knew and when they were brought, they spoke [on our behalf] and we were released.

Q: What did they want to know about the village?

01:06:16

#10M: There were people who were being paid by them and they wanted to know about us from them. There were [people] being paid by the Chinese. They asked us who we knew and they spoke to the estate manager whom they trusted. They knew each other. So they [the Chinese] asked them.

Q: Do monks usually carry a knife with them when they go on a grain mission?

#10M: Yes, they carried a knife. If they met a bandit or a thief, they struck at them. If you killed a man, you could not stay at the monastery. You had to leave.

Q: And yet, you were thinking of killing these Chinese and that would have meant you couldn't return to Gaden.

01:07:46

#10M: I would go to deliver the grains and go away. I would not be able to live there.

Q: Why were you willing to do such an act and lose your whole chance to study?

#10M: I would offer my prayers that I was doing it for the cause of the monk congregation. I would bear that in my mind and strike. That would be for the cause of the monastery. I believed that.

Q: The cause of the monastery was more important than your individual vocation.

01:08:53

#10M: Yes.

Q: The monks that chose to go and fight with the *Chushi Gangdrug*, if they had killed soldiers, did that mean that they could not come back to the monastery and be monks?

#10M: They could not come. They will not come.

Q: What year are we talking about? Do you have any idea?

01:09:42

#10M: Nineteen hundred...was that the sixteen hundreds or nineteen hundreds when we escaped?

Q: It was 1959.

#10M: Yes, yes, we fled in 1959. I made a mistake.

Q: What is the year that you are talking about?

01:09:56

#10M: I joined the monastery when I was 18 and lived there until I turned 32. I cannot say with certainty.

Q: The Chinese had not yet attacked Lhasa. That was 1959. So this is before.

#10M: That was before.

Q: Can you remember how many years earlier it was?

01:10:50

#10M: Throughout the time I lived in the monastery from the age of 18 until 1959, I continued to do that job.

Q: The incident where you almost killed the Chinese, how many years earlier to 1959 did that happen?

#10M: That happened a year earlier [to 1959]. That was one year [earlier]. It was during autumn.

Q: In the monastery, was there a difference of opinion among the different groups of monks about how to respond to the Chinese? Some wanted to join *Chushi Gangdrug*—were there other people who said, “Don't join the resistance”?

01:12:00

#10M: There might be [some who said the latter] as there were different kinds of people. One must speak honestly.

Q: Go on with your story. What happens after you get released from the Chinese? What happens that year and the following year?

#10M: Then the attack happened in '59. It was just a year later. I was in the monastery when the attack happened. I told you [to the interpreter] last time that I went to the Potala Palace from Gaden. We took guns from the Potala Palace. His Holiness the Dalai Lama left on the night of the 8th day [of the 2nd Tibetan lunar month]. We fled on the 12th day. The attack occurred on the 12th day. They attacked at 12 o'clock in the night. They fired artilleries from six different points. We did not have anything to fire at them. The Chinese were nowhere to be seen.

Q: So to back up a little bit, you were sent to the Potala Palace to get weapons—you or other people with you? How large was your group and where did you find the weapons?

01:14:19

#10M: We were 100 monks from Gaden.

Q: Where did you find the weapons?

#10M: We brought the weapons from the Potala Palace. We brought the weapons at about 1 o'clock. There were only 100 bullets. Once the 100 bullets were exhausted, it [the gun] was just a piece of stick. There was nothing it could do. Even though you possessed a gun, it was useless. It was like carrying a piece of stick.

Q: First of all, how long of a distance is it from Gaden to the Potala Palace? And how did you get there?

01:15:27

#10M: It was a day's journey.

Q: How did you go there?

#10M: We left in the night. It was around midnight or 1 o'clock that we left Potala Palace taking the road through Sera.

Q: *Gen-la*, first you went from Gaden to the Potala Palace. When was that?

01:15:50

#10M: We went walking.

Q: Was that during the day or at night?

#10M: We went during the day. We did not have guns to carry then. We were empty handed.

Q: Were there any Chinese on the roads at that time?

01:16:16

#10M: There were Chinese. The Chinese looked furtively at us. The Tibetan Women's Association was agitated at that time. The women carried knives and axes and pulled down the electric poles of the Chinese. They were screaming as we went by.

Q: Did the Chinese stop you when they saw a hundred monks walking down the road?

#10M: They did not stop us. That was because the hundred of us were not together. We split ourselves into groups of six or seven and left. We did not leave together when we went to the Potala Palace. However, all 100 people met up at the Potala Palace at the appointed time.

Q: On the way when you saw the women pulling down the poles, tell us why they were doing that?

01:17:57

#10M: They were cutting their [the Chinese] loudspeakers' cables.

Q: What kinds of statements were coming out of the loudspeakers in those days?

#10M: [Speaks before question is interpreted] They [the women] were shouting, "Tibet is independent, Chinese go back at once."

Q: And was it mostly women who were doing that?

01:18:48

#10M: They were women. There were only women. There were more than 500-600 women, shouting and moving about. The men were guarding the Potala Palace and the Norbulingka.

Q: Were the Chinese, in any way trying to stop the women from doing that?

#10M: The Chinese were not stopping them. They were not doing anything. They just watched them, holding their guns in their hands. They were not doing anything. They did not do anything to us as we walked by. They held their guns and sort of aimed their guns but they did not fire.

Q: Just so we understand that day, what kind of a day was it? What was the weather like? Were there many people on the streets? What was the climate, the atmosphere?

01:20:05

#10M: The weather was good. It was very good.

Q: The weather was good?

#10M: Yes, it was good. We started early in the morning when we left for the Potala Palace. We rested at a village and the next day, left at 9 o'clock for the Potala Palace to get the guns.

Q: Did you spent one night in the city of Lhasa?

01:20:31

#10M: Yes, we spent one night.

Q: Was this in the month of March?

#10M: Yes, it was in the month of March. His Holiness was to be escorted out on the 1st of March.

Q: Do you mean the month in western calendar or Tibetan calendar?

01:21:04

#10M: It was in the 2nd month of the Tibetan lunar calendar.

Q: Was it in the 2nd month when you went to fetch guns from the Potala Palace?

#10M: Yes, it was in the 2nd month. It was at the time His Holiness was escorted out.

Q: Had His Holiness the Dalai Lama left?

01:21:16

#10M: Yes, he'd left. His Holiness left on the 8th day [of the 2nd lunar month].

Q: Was it the 12th day when you went to the Potala Palace?

#10M: It was on the 10th day. Is that it?

Q: When the 100 monks were selected from Gaden to get guns, who made the selection and how did you become part of the selection?

01:22:09

#10M: The monastery had many officials. All the officials of the *lachi* 'administration of the monastery,' and *datsang* had a meeting and they informed us that monks must go to get guns.

Q: Who selected you?

#10M: I volunteered to go from my *khangtsen*. We were five people.

Q: Why did you volunteer?

01:22:59

#10M: I volunteered because I thought I would fight the Chinese even at the cost of my life. I thought that it mattered not if I died. It would be a disaster if His Holiness the Dalai Lama was taken away and that was why I volunteered.

Q: Were there any kind of other feelings you had about taking this action on? In addition to wanting His Holiness to be safe, were there other kinds of thoughts or feeling in your mind?

#10M: I did not have any other thoughts. Except for thinking about His Holiness, I did not have any other thoughts. I am always like that.

Q: Is it easy? How do you get into the Potala Palace and where do you find the guns?

01:24:22

#10M: There are only two roads that lead into the Potala. It was good if these routes could be blocked.

Q: When you went into the Potala, could you go in easily?

#10M: We could go in easily. There was no one who did anything to us. At that time, there was no one who did anything because the Chinese had not yet attacked. The actual fight took place during the night of the 10th day [of the 2nd lunar month].

Q: Where did you find the guns?

01:24:50

#10M: The guns were there at the Potala. They were stored in the basement of the Potala.

Q: Did you have to climb up to the Potala?

#10M: Yes, we had to.

Q: And then you went down inside?

01:24:58

#10M: You did not have to go down. You took the staircase and all the guns were kept there at the top. The guns were not of good quality.

Q: Where were they?

#10M: There was a red house and the weapons were kept in it.

Q: Red color?

01:25:30

#10M: Yes, a red house in which they were stored. They were stacked in it. They were taken from there and distributed to us. The hundred people received a hundred guns.

Q: Were there only a hundred guns or were there many more?

#10M: No, we were the only ones.

Q: Were there many guns?

01:26:13

#10M: It [the red house] was packed with guns. There were guns of many lengths. I think there were artilleries too. I think there were different kinds. They were not distributed early enough.

Q: Were these old guns or new guns or from many years back?

#10M: They provided us with old guns. They did not give us new ones.

Q: And how many bullets?

01:27:00

#10M: A hundred bullets each.

Q: A gun and hundred bullets each?

#10M: Yes. I told you earlier that after the bullets were exhausted, it [the gun] became a stick. [Laughs] When the hundred bullets got over, it was like a stick. We did not have anyone who came to bring us more, like the Chinese did.

Q: Why did the monks want to fight the Chinese?

01:27:42

#10M: They fought for the cause of the three great monasteries and His Holiness the Dalai Lama and at the same time because Tibet might be lost. Whatever we have is Tibet. We

feared we would lose our country. Whether we were capable or not, we gave a fight. We did not own airplanes or vehicles, and people fought with swords and killed many Chinese earlier.

Q: What had the Chinese done that the monks were aware of?

#10M: They knew it always. We saw their actions. They were particularly very unkind towards monks.

Q: What were they doing to the monks?

01:29:13

#10M: The monks being single people did not mind dying and they resisted the Chinese. They were single people, though they did have parents and relatives, but they did not think about them. They feared that Tibet would be lost and hoped that His Holiness the Dalai Lama would not come to harm.

Q: Had the Chinese done anything to harm the monks up until this point?

#10M: The Chinese did whatever harm they could to the monks because the monks were resisting them. That was the reason. The monks were not armed with guns but they had knives and they struck at the moment.

Q: And where did the monks stand up to the Chinese before this point—you're just getting the guns now—so when did the monks stand up to the Chinese before this time?

01:31:02

#10M: Monks who had already joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* were fighting. When the monks received the guns, they fought. Many monks had left to join the *Chushi Gangdrug*. The *Chushi Gangdrug* was helping them and doing a good job and they were fighting. They carried knives and guns and when close, they chased them [the Chinese] and killed them with the knives. In one day they killed two vehicles [of Chinese] with their knives.

Q: Had the Chinese ever destroyed or damaged any monasteries before the monks joined the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

#10M: They had not destroyed at that time. Later they destroyed Gaden. I do not know if I should be saying this, but it was said that Mao Zedong gave the order from China and Drepung and Sera were not destroyed. Gaden was destroyed. Gaden was destroyed because [its monks had] joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* and were fighting. Due to this, the whole of Gaden was destroyed.

[Gaden Monastery had] a good relationship with the *Chushi Gangdrug*. *Chushi Gangdrug* and Gaden were located on either side of a mountain pass.

Q: Tell us what happens next to your story. You have your gun and a hundred bullets. Tell us what happens to you next.

01:33:21

#10M: We were not among them [the fighters]. We got the guns later from the Potala.

Q: Yes, you got the gun and a hundred bullets.

#10M: We had one encounter, which I told you earlier [during the pre-interview]. I got the chance to fight once at Chundhagya and no more. However much I fired, it did not hit the Chinese. I suppose the gun could not reach the distance. The Chinese in turn fired innumerable shells. The encounter began at 9 in the morning and lasted until night fell. I told you [the interpreter] about it the last time.

Q: After you got the gun and the bullets, where did you go?

01:33:58

#10M: Then we reached Lhoka and the *Chushi Gangdrug*.

Q: Did you go to Lhoka?

#10M: We reached Lhoka and the Chinese had driven all the people away. Then [we] reached Mon Tawang. His Holiness the Dalai Lama had left by then. They [the Chinese] had occupied Tibet.

Q: Were any of the monks shot or killed [during the Chundhagya encounter]?

01:34:57

#10M: Except for a horse, no one got killed. Nobody was killed.

Q: What was it like to go from being a peaceful monk in a monastery to carrying a gun and trying to shoot the enemy?

#10M: Just before we left, we gave back our vows to our lama. We gave back our vows, determined to [carry out the mission] whether we died or lived and then we left. We did not mind dying because we were ready to die, since [we knew] we would not be able to defeat them [the Chinese].

Q: So after that encounter, what happens the next day or after that?

01:36:27

#10M: We did not have to fight anymore. Then we went there and the Indians did not allow us to fight. We were in Indian territory.

Q: Before you reached Indian territory, when you had had the encounter at Chundhagya...

#10M: Yes, Chundhagya. Now we were fleeing from Chundhagya.

Q: And then you escaped?

01:36:46

#10M: Now we had to flee. There was nothing to fight for.

Q: Where did you escape?

#10M: We escaped to Mon Tawang. There were Indian soldiers at the border at Mon Tawang. We were inside [Indian territory] and the Chinese did not pursue us.

Q: How long did it take to get to the Indian border?

01:37:39

#10M: It took three days.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So if I follow, after that encounter no one was hurt. They were shooting and then they began to flee to the border?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: That's right.

Q: Were there many people in your group?

#10M: We were in many clusters of eight or nine, which were spread about. There was no [large] group of people on our escape journey. In my cluster were eight people and we were together. Other than that there was not many. However, people were moving like goats and sheep.

Q: Were people in shock or were they upset or what was their emotional status as they were walking away from Lhasa?

01:39:05

#10M: Now we were in a foreign land and we had to survive. There was nothing to do and I wondered about what would happen at the moment. Those were my thoughts. There was nothing decisive then.

Q: Yes?

#10M: There was nothing decisive. I thought, let's just flee and something will come about. You did not think, "I need this or I need that."

Q: Before you left to go to India, did you ever work or serve in any position at the Potala Palace?

01:40:11

#10M: No, I have not worked there.

Q: You did not serve as a security guard?

#10M: I did not stay there [at the Potala]. It was the Norbulingka where His Holiness the Dalai Lama lived. The Potala Palace contained the holy items and nothing else. There were the relics of the previous Dalai Lamas in it.

Q: *Gen-la*, did you stay as a security guard at the Norbulingka?

01:40:43

#10M: I was not at the Norbulingka. I was there for only one day at the Potala Palace.

Q: Was that the time when you went to get the guns?

#10M: Yes.

Q: Did you go to the Norbulingka?

01:40:55

#10M: I did not go to the Norbulingka. People [monks] had already been sent to the Norbulingka. Monks had already been sent to the Norbulingka on the 1st or 2nd day [month not specified]. They had volunteered and left.

Q: So *gen-la*, you never went to the Norbulingka Palace?

#10M: I did not go there. My colleagues went there but I did not.

Q: When you started to leave after the shelling and you started to go to India, were you pursued or was it a peaceful journey?

01:42:12

#10M: We were not pursued. There was an Indian sentry post at the border between Tibet and India.

Q: What happened when you got to the border?

#10M: When we reached the Indian border, the Indians allowed us to enter. When we reached Mon Tawang, we saw that those who had arrived earlier had been provided with food rations. Rice and wheat flour had been dropped from airplanes.

Q: What happens next? Where do you go before you come to Mundgod? What is your journey like?

01:43:34

#10M: Then I went to Missamari [Assam, India]. It was very hot there. I stayed there for less than a month. Then the older people were sent to Old Age Homes and the younger ones to construct roads. The very young ones were sent to schools.

Q: And where were you sent?

#10M: I was sent to Dalhousie [Himachal Pradesh, India]. There was a very old monk who needed a helper. He was sick, so I was sent.

Q: When did you get to Mundgod?

01:45:18

#10M: I came here in '72.

Q: To the Home for the Aged?

#10M: Yes, to the Home for the Aged. I was not a member of the Home for the Aged. My teacher was a member and I came as his helper. I was not accepted as a member since I had come privately [without reference from the authorities]. My *khangtsen* was also here. Later I served as the caretaker of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Palace [in Mundgod]. I served there for four years.

Q: *Gen-la*, did you join the monastery again or stay as a lay monk?

01:46:29

#10M: I did not re-join the monastery. The co-operative started a factory in Dalhousie and I was employed as a teacher there.

Q: What type of factory?

#10M: Carpet factory.

Q: Your story of a young man wanting to go to Gaden and reach very high levels development was changed because of historical events. How has that been for you that you could not pursue your studies at Gaden?

01:47:33

#10M: I do not have any thoughts on that. I felt that when everyone is able to survive, so will I. I worked and continued to live that way. My teacher passed away at the age of 82. The Representative [of His Holiness the Dalai Lama] admitted me into the Home for the Aged. He said, "You can no longer work. You should live at the Home for the Aged. Until now you have served the government. Thank you. You should live at the Home for the Aged." He was the Representative [in the Mundgod Settlement].

Q: Now that you are away from Tibet, what thoughts do you have about the Chinese and the fact that they invaded Tibet?

#10M: The Chinese are huge in number and I feel that independence for Tibet is going to be difficult. If we are to fight them, we do not have many people. If we had good weapons, it is not impossible to fight them, just as we fought earlier when at times the Chinese were beaten and at times the Tibetans. I feel it is not impossible to beat them. However, we are fewer in number and the Chinese are more in number, which make it difficult.

Q: What could have been done to save Tibet from the Chinese?

01:50:24

#10M: I cannot say much about how we could have tried.

Q: What do you think about His Holiness' teachings of the Middle Way?

#10M: His Holiness the Dalai Lama advocates the Middle Way, keeping in view the welfare of the Chinese as well as us. [I] do not know if the Chinese will accept it.

Q: *Gen-la*, what was it like for you to tell your story here today?

01:51:58

#10M: [Laughs] I do not know whether it is our karma from our past life that such things happened which we have to relate. That's what I think. It is almost like a dream and I am not able to say much.

Q: Do you have any advice for the next generation of Tibetans?

#10M: One should advise the young generation. However, these days the advice of the older people and the young generation clash like this [holds back of both palms against each other]. I am speaking to you like “an inside person” [friend]. If you tell them one word, they will retort and say something about “old brains.” So there's nothing to talk about.

When I was engaged at the factory, there were girls who worked there and I used to advise them to work hard, earn a livelihood and strive for the independence of Tibet. However, in order to advise, I am not highly educated. So, I advise that way.

Q: *Gen-la*, if this interview were shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

01:54:42

#10M: There will be no problem at all. What problem will there be? There will be no problem.

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

#10M: There's no need to change my name. There will be no problem. Nobody will come to kill me and if they do kill me, that's fine. It matters not in the death of one man. I would be happy if I was killed for the cause of the Tibetan people. I am left like this and have nowhere to go. I fought the Chinese before I left [Tibet] and hoped to be killed but I was not.

Q: Thank you for sharing your story.

#10M: Okay and thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW