

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #23 – Pasang Dolkar
June 28, 2007

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TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #23
2. Interviewee: Pasang Dolkar
3. Age: 71
4. Date of Birth: 1936
5. Sex: Female
6. Birthplace: Phari
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: June 28, 2007
10. Place of Interview: Temple of Old Camp No. 1, Lugsung Samdupling Settlement, Bylakuppe, Mysore District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 10 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Jeff Loda
15. Transcriber: Tenzin Yangchen



Biographical Information:

“There is a saying that goes, ‘In summer you may want to purchase Phari, while in winter you may want to sell it off,’ ” says Pasang Dolkar about her beloved birth place. She describes her beautiful town in summer and names the variety of flowers that covered the fields. Phari is also a cosmopolitan center where people traveled to trade goods from all over Tibet, as well as from Nepal, India, Bhutan and China. She tells of her childhood chores and describes her home.

Pasang Dolkar has fond memories of the annual horse-racing festival. She also explains the Tibetan practice of sky burial of the dead and the significance of this unusual ritual. She recounts the local myth of a romance between the mountain gods and the legend surrounding the story. She also describes the hot springs of Khambu, where people went to be cured of every kind of ailment.

When the Chinese came to Phari, they arrested the four wealthiest families. Pasang Dolkar’s father-in-law worked for the Tibetan government so the Chinese army considered her husband’s family to be “rebels” and was going to arrested them. She and her husband abruptly left their cherished homeland and all their possession in order to flee to Bhutan.

Topics Discussed:

Childhood memories, religious festivals, trade, life under Chinese rule, Chinese oppression, escape experiences, life as a refugee in India.

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Interview # 23

Interviewee: Pasang Dolkar

Age: 71, Sex: Female

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview date: June 28, 2007

Question: Please tell us your name.

Interviewee #23: Pasang Dolkar.

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

#23: Of course, you can use it.

Q: Pasang Dolkar, can you tell me where were you born?

#23: I was born in Phari.

Q: What kind of work did your parents do in Phari?

#23: They engaged in trading and various other kinds of work.

Q: How many people were in your family when you were a little girl?

#23: There were four members in the family.

Q: How many children?

#23: My mother had four children.

Q: And your parents were there?

#23: Yes, my father and mother. They are now dead.

Q: We are asking about when you were a young child in Tibet.

#23: I do not remember much about those times. My father and mother were working.

Q: How many family members were there?

#23: There were four members, two sons and two daughters.

Q: And which daughter were you?

#23: My sister Migmar Dolma was older. I was the younger daughter.

Q: Can you paint me a picture of what Phari looked like? Describe what the village looked like.

#23: Phari is located on the plains and surrounded by mountains.

Q: What else does it look like? What do you see when you look around?

#23: When you looked around from Phari, you didn't see much but the mountains. There were three snow-covered mountains called Chomo, Jowo Mingdhue and Chungdhue. Except for the snow-capped mountains and some nomads, there were no other villages around Phari.

Q: What are some of your favorite memories when you were a child?

#23: I remember the games we played, but not much. We played some games, but children in Tibet had to work. If you didn't work, you could not eat.

Q: What kind of games did you play?

#23: We played with small stones, skipping and also made clothes for the dolls.

Q: You said even children had to work, what kind of chores did you have to do?

#23: Certainly you had to work. Children of the rich families went to school. If the children from the lower families did not work, we had to earn a livelihood. We were never idle like in India. We had to keep working. Girls from the age of nine had to spin wool and weave woolen cloth, from which clothes and aprons were made. All our *chupa* 'Tibetan traditional dress' were made from woolen cloth. From the age around nine, girls spun and brushed the wool. Most of us had that skill.

Q: A good skill.

#23: That was our skill. We knitted sweaters and socks.

Q: Was it very cold in the winter?

#23: It was extremely cold in winter. One of the highest mountains in the world is found there. Phari is one of the highest places in the world.

Q: Were there any crops around Phari?

#23: In the olden days there were no crops but *jangpa* was grown for the horses. When they were this high—like we have fairs here, Phari was like a fair everyday—they were sold to feed the horses and mules. *Jangpa* was cultivated extensively.

Q: What do you mean like a fair everyday?

#23: Trade was there everyday irrespective of the seasons.

Q: What kind of things did they trade in Phari?

#23: There were things like *tsampa* ‘flour made from roasted barley,’ grains, butter, meat and different kinds of vegetables just like we have here, which came from Shasima. Then the southerners brought rice, roasted rice; everything was there. There was nothing that you would not find in Phari. People came from all directions.

Q: Was it a nice place to live?

#23: The best time is the present season because all the pastures were full of flowers. There were no forests. The pastures were full of flowers and you could smell them.

Q: Do you remember the names of the flowers?

#23: The names of the flowers were *Tokla*, *Shoton*, *Ghoechen*, *Sumen* and *Bhalue*. The *Bhalue* flower was used as incense. The flowers were bright and pretty. In the center was the town. All the pastures were full of flowers. There was *Kayol* and many other flowers. There was *Pekar* and in the fields, the *Kayol* flower. There is a saying that goes, “In summer you may want to purchase Phari while in winter you may want to sell it off.”

Q: Can you describe the house that you and your family lived at in Phari? What was your home like?

#23: It was extremely cold in Phari. Later, the Chinese used stones. In Phari we cut out squares of sod and these were beaten and plastered with mud. Then the roof was made and doors and windows just like we do here. It was warm.

Q: What season did you cut the squares of mud? When did you do that?

#23: The cutting was done in summer. In the winter it couldn't be done because it was too cold. All the cutting was done in summer.

Q: How many rooms were there in the house?

#23: There was a kitchen, a prayer room, a room for the family and one for storage of firewood. There were four rooms.

Q: Where did you sleep? Where did the family sleep?

#23: We slept in the bedroom. Each one had their own beds. In Tibet, unlike here everyone slept in one room. If there was a married couple, they would have a separate room. The children slept in one room and the couple in another.

Q: When you said you had a prayer room, when did you go to the prayer room?

#23: We did prayers in the morning, which was the Tibetan tradition. In the morning you made the water offerings, burned incense, lit butter lamps and did the prostrations.

Q: Did you bring flowers to the prayer room?

#23: We offered flowers. We filled a cup with water and put in it a bouquet of flowers, made with the *Shoton* on the sides and the *Ghoechen* in the center. Flowers were also kept on the sides. Small flowers were put in the water bowl offerings.

Q: What else was in the prayer room? What was hanging on the walls?

#23: We had the Yapsay Sum and the picture of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We also had the icons of Jetsun Dolma and Lord Buddha.

Q: Was it a very beautiful room?

#23: It depended on the economic status of the family. If you were rich, it was beautiful. If you were not rich, it was not beautiful.

Q: What level of wealth was your family considered?

#23: My family was neither very rich nor very poor. When the Chinese called us for meetings, we were considered among the middle class.

Q: Was your house near other houses or by itself?

#23: They were joined and if my room was here, there was someone else in the next room and so on.

Q: When you had festivals, what were some of the exciting festivals you remember?

#23: It is now the fifth lunar month. On the 15th day of the fifth lunar month, we had a horse race. Today is the 13th, tomorrow the 14th and the day after was very exciting. On His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday in Tibet, we used to have a horse race. Now that has been changed. The birthday was on the 15th day of the fifth month and we had the horse race, participated by all the big taxpayers. There was a horse race for one day.

Q: What do we mean by horse race?

#23: The horses were decorated with ornaments. Then at a distance, say from house number 100 to the central school [half a mile], the horses raced. The racers had arrows with them. If they hit the targets, then they received a *khata* ‘ceremonial scarf.’ There were two targets and the racers did not hold the reins, they shot the arrows.

Q: Was that your favorite festival?

#23: That was one of the enjoyable festivals. Then we had another one in the seventh month and one in the sixth month.

Q: A horse festival?

#23: All horse racing. The women wore their ornaments and offered prayers for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. There was a holy place called *Jomo Kudhe* where the women in their ornaments went to offer their prayers. The men went elsewhere.

Q: When was that?

#23: It was in this month [fifth lunar month]. During the sixth month, there were no women. The men went to Norburi for horse racing.

Q: It sounds like it was a lot of fun for young people, for teenagers. Was it?

#23: When you were young, there was no other place more enjoyable than Phari. Phari is a very happy place.

Q: What do you think made it so happy for young people?

#23: We had every type of food. The work was not very hard. The women did the wool work. Very young children went to school and the elders performed all types of work. In Tibet nobody sat idle. It was never the custom to sit idle, like in India.

Q: Besides weaving what kind of work were you doing?

#23: We knitted sweaters and sold them. We knitted socks and sold them. We knitted caps and sold them. Our hands were never idle. The men did the *yokpa* ‘spinning of thread from yak hair.’

Q: So you did a lot of trading?

#23: Yes, we traded. We knitted them and sold them.

Q: Where would people come from when they came to Phari?

#23: People came from Lhasa, Shigatse, Gyantse, from villages; the Khampa from Dhotoe and Dhomay, Lhopa, Domo, Nepalese and Indians. There were none who were not there.

Chinese, the Chinese of the olden days. When the [Communist] Chinese were about to arrive, there was a Chinese called Wang Shentse, another named Tsering and another called Tsering Secretary, who were all called back. There were three Chinese.

Q: You mean the Communist Chinese?

#23: When the Communist Chinese arrived, these good Chinese, who were living in Phari, were told to return to Lhasa. They left all their household belongings and left.

Q: Was there anything in Phari that was special that you couldn't buy anywhere else that made people want to come there?

#23: Except for horses' horns [unicorns] and a piece of the sky, you found everything else in Phari. You did not find a slab of turquoise, which was there in Bhutan. Other than that everything could be found in Phari.

In a museum in Pato, Bhutan, there was a turquoise slab, a coral tree, a pearl tree, a piece of the sky and a horse's horn. I saw these. The coral tree looked like this [makes shape with hands], the pearl tree looked like an ear of corn, the piece of sky looked like a piece of stone, the horse's horn was about this size, all these were in the museum. There was a *dzi* 'special bead made from agate stone' of this size [gestures]. The turquoise slab was extremely large. The name of the *dzi* was *Longomik*. They were in the museum. In Phari you found everything. If one was a poor person, there was no fear of starvation. You could find something to eat from the pastureland. From the waters, you could eat *chusha*. On the meadows, you found *pangsho* 'mushrooms.'

Q: Sounds like a happy place to live.

#23: It was a happy place. If you went there in summer, you would not want to return. In winter, you may commit suicide and die. [Laughter]

Q: I understand around Phari there is Lake Chomo, Chomo Lana? Can you tell me about that?

#23: There are two lakes, one is bigger and one is smaller. In the bigger lake you could see images if you prayed to the Gods and threw in a *khata* 'ceremonial scarf.' In it you would see where you would reach in the future and whether you would die. If you were to reach another country, you could view it in the lake.

Q: And what was your experience there?

#23: I told you earlier about my experience. There was a crooked road, a lot of prayer flags flapping and many tents. Then I reached here.

Q: What did that mean to you?

#23: I thought I would reach another country, but I never thought that there would be such a change.

Q: What kind of condition do you mean?

#23: I thought I might reach another country, but I never imagined that I would escape on account of the Chinese.

Q: Can you remember anything about the Chinese invasion?

#23: I do not remember very much. We fled soon after His Holiness the Dalai Lama did so. The upper-class families were all imprisoned. They were the four *Sindhi*, the wealthiest families, who were all arrested.

Q: Do you know what happened to them?

#23: The four *Sindhi* were wealthy and they were imprisoned on so-called political grounds. There were Apo Lo Tsering and the others.

Q: Where were the four *Sindhi* taken after they were arrested?

#23: They were taken to Kungo Somdha, the place where His Holiness the Dalai Lama stayed on his way to Domo. There was a storage house and they were imprisoned in it. They were each given a book. There were four men and a Khampa, who was with the *Chushi Gangdrug* Volunteer Force. One was Apo Lo Tsering. They were all imprisoned. They were put in a stable.

Q: Whose stable was it?

#23: It belonged to a wealthy family. It was the office of the Administrator of Phari District to whom we applied for permits when we had to travel outside. The stable of this office was where they were imprisoned.

Q: Did you worry about what would happen to them?

#23: We heard that they were subjecting people to *thamzin* ‘struggle sessions’ and carrying our “Liberation Process” in the Kham area. Everyone became very scared and so people escaped.

Q: Before we follow that story, I want to understand a little more about Phari. You said that there were different classes in Phari. Do you remember anything about sky burials in Phari?

#23: I remember that.

Q: Can you tell us what you remember?

#23: Yes. In Kalay if a person died, the corpse could be taken to two places. One was called the Gyatso Cemetery; let's not talk about that. The dead body was taken to Kalay, where there was a monastery that performed the ritual. When the people came there, the *choe* 'cutting-off' rites [severing the root of cyclic existence] were performed. After the *gyakyim* ritual was done, the vultures started to hover. Each vulture had a name and they used to be called by their names. Until the *gyakyim* was done, none of the vultures came. They had very good discipline. When the vultures were called by the names, each one swooped down. After the leader of the group started to eat, then the rest joined in. Corpses were not cremated, but cut into pieces.

Q: Do you know what the names of the vultures were?

#23: No, I don't know the names. I wouldn't know the names; only the involved people knew it.

Q: Did you ever go and see a sky burial?

#23: If you didn't go, there was a penalty. We had community groups and if we didn't go, we would have to pay a penalty. So we had to go to take the body there.

Q: Did everybody have a sky burial?

#23: Whoever died had a sky burial. There was no custom of cremating a body or throwing it in the waters. If there was a very poor person who died right in the town, his body was picked up and thrown in the river by certain people whose job it was. The fish would eat these unclaimed bodies.

Q: Which waters?

#23: There was the water called Chudha Sampa.

Q: Is that a river?

#23: Yes, it was a river. It was a very big river.

Q: What do you understand was the meaning of a sky burial—the reason for letting someone that died be buried that way or be sent that way?

#23: I do not have much to explain, but it was said that you would be reborn in a higher birth. Though even if a body was thrown into the water, he would be reborn but with [sky burial], one would have rebirth in a higher form.

However, not a piece of bone was to be left. The brain was removed and also the intestines. They were mixed together and fed to the vultures. The hair was burned. If even a tiny piece of bone was left, it was said that the next rebirth would have some form of deformity. No pieces of flesh were left. Everything was fed to the vultures.

Q: What do you mean by a higher family in the next life?

#23: It was said that one would be born in a higher family, but how do we know whether one would be born in such a family or not? By a higher family I meant a rich family or one not of a low caste. If one were born to such a family, one would be happy.

Q: If you don't have a sky burial, like we don't have them here in Bylakuppe, what's going to happen?

#23: Who knows what's going to happen in the next life now? It is one's karma from the previous life. If you are kind and compassionate in this life, your next life will be good and you will not go to hell. If you are not good in this life, there is nothing but to go to hell in the next life.

Q: You said that when the Chinese came that the four rich families were taken, who were these four *Sindhi* of Phari?

#23: The richest in the region, the highest tax-payer and the owner of the most extensive land was the Gapshi. The others were Sipon, Siwa and Tsesang.

Q: And did people work for them?

#23: There was not much work to do for them. They called the people to cut the *jangpa* 'barley used for fodder' for one day and another day to take out the dung manure. On both these days they provided the food.

Q: If one had leased land from them?

#23: If one had leased land from them, you had to pay the amount.

Q: Why did the people then go to work for them?

#23: If we worked for them, the house rent was deducted. People rented houses from them.

Q: Were there caste hierarchies after this life or only in this life?

#23: Oh yes, of course the caste hierarchy was a big consideration.

Q: In this life?

[Interpreter to Interviewer]: Yes, in Phari.

Q: Does that apply to the next life, too?

#23: There will be caste hierarchies. How can there be no cast hierarchies? If one has good education then one can even sit on the Gaden Throne [the supreme seat of the Gelugpa Sect of Tibetan Buddhism].

Q: What kind of education?

#23: If one studies, one has knowledge. If one is educated, one earns a good salary.

Q: If one has good education but is from a lower caste?

#23: One should know one's position. If he [a person from a lower caste] was highly educated, that's his loss. People from the same caste would marry each other. No one would marry someone from the lower caste. They married among themselves.

Q: When you married, what happened? Who did you marry?

#23: I did not have a proper marriage. I looked at him and he looked at me and we fell in love and lived together.

Q: Where did you meet your husband?

#23: I met him in Phari.

Q: And what did he do for a living?

#23: His livelihood was trading.

Q: What prevented you from having a proper wedding?

#23: One was free to do what one liked, just like here. If one wanted to have one [proper marriage], one did and if one didn't want to, then one didn't. It was like that.

Q: How old were you when you began to live with your husband?

#23: I was 19 years old.

Q: Is he with you now, here in Bylakuppe?

#23: Yes.

Q: What age was he when you married him?

#23: There is a difference of 9 years between us. So how old was he?

Q: He was 9 years older?

#23: Yes, he was older.

Q: Why did you like him?

#23: That is one's destiny. [Laughs] If fate has knotted, you cannot do anything. Even if one was chained, you could not separate from the other.

Q: And how many children did destiny send you?

#23: We had eight children.

Q: All of them are here now?

#23: All eight are living, none died.

Q: Where they all born in Phari?

#23: Two were born in Phari.

Q: And the rest were born where?

#23: All the rest were born here [Bylakuppe].

Q: What happened to your brothers and sisters?

#23: My older sister lives in Dimapur [India]. Two of my brothers were left in Phari.

Q: Before we get to your leaving, I wanted to know about the romance between the mountain gods. Is there some story about that?

#23: [Laughs] There were three snow-capped mountains. Khyungdhue Dhakong was there [gestures], Jowo Mingyur here and Chomo here. The Chomo went to see Jowo Mingyur, so Jowo Khyungdhue shot an arrow. That was on the hill and the arrow hit the *Baa* in which she carried *chang* 'home-brewed beer' on her back. That spilled into the waters there and so on special days the water was sweet.

Q: Which is the female mountain?

#23: The female was the Chomo. Chomo, we say is the manifestation of Goddess Tara. Jowo Mingur was here and Jowo Khyungdhue towards our west.

Q: They were having a romance?

#23: When they were having a romance, Jowo Khyungdhue shot an arrow.

Q: Was it on account of jealousy?

#23: Yes, as we would say, he was jealous. That is the story.

Q: Who was carrying the *chang*?

#23: Chomo was carrying the *chang* to Jowo Mingyur.

Q: What was the *baa*?

#23: That was the *chang* container in Tibet. It was a pot with a handle and a mouth. A rope was tied and it was carried on the back. She [Chomo] was on her way to take the *chang* to him [Jowo Mingyur]. As she was going with the *chang*, out of jealousy an arrow was shot [by Jowo Khyungdhue] which broke the *baa*. The hill's shape was just like a *baa* and where the *chang* spilled, there formed a water spring. If you drank the water on holy days of the month like the 8th, 10th, 15th and 25th, the water was very sweet. That was natural water out from the ground. They were the manifestations of the Buddha that was why it happened.

Q: And did you do that [taste the water]?

#23: Of course I have drunk the water. I used to go there in search of dung fuel.

Q: Did it taste sweet?

#23: It was sweet. The water was very sweet. It was naturally formed in the shape of a *baa*. The water gushed day and night from the spring. When we were thirsty, we drank the water and there was no other water that tasted better.

Q: Are there any other memories or stories about Phari that you would want your children and your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren to know that we should make sure that we record?

#23: I do not have any other stories to relate. I have already told you the stories about Phari. A very happy time in Phari was when all the families, whether rich or poor went to the hot springs. We went once in spring when the apricot trees bloomed. That was to cure any diseases you had. In autumn we went there again to lull the diseases to sleep. During this time, people stayed there for two or three weeks. The hot springs were in Khambu, a mountain pass away from Phari.

Q: What kinds of ailments did it help?

#23: There were fourteen hot springs. The first spring was called Lhamo Tsering in which you washed away your defilement. You could not enter the other springs unless you went to Lhamo Tsering first. Prayers were offered and you bathed there. Then you went to the particular hot spring for your particular illness.

Q: Were the hot springs like water or a waterfall or what were they?

#23: If the pool was here [gestures], there was a house close by in which was a fireplace. You placed a bed here and then went into the water and stayed in it for an hour or two. Then you came out and rested on the bed. Nobody took any medicines. Even for broken bones, you went to the hot springs. If you had a headache, you went to the hot spring. If you suffered from tuberculosis, you went to the hot spring. If you suffered from arthritis of the knees like me, going to the hot spring would cure it completely. If you had sores, you went to the hot spring.

Q: Did you go yourself?

#23: Oh, many times.

Q: What kind of illnesses did you go for?

#23: I suffered from back pain and pain in my legs. Now it's been so long and I am once again suffering from back and knee pains and there are no hot springs here.

Q: You had many children and I wonder when you had your babies in Phari, your first two children, who helped you in the delivery process?

#23: Except for my husband, there was no one to help me. I have never been to a hospital. [Laughs]

Q: Your husband must be a very good doctor by now.

#23: [Laughs] I have never been to hospital.

Q: Were all of your deliveries easy?

#23: I had no problems with all of my deliveries.

Q: You are a very strong healthy woman.

#23: Except for my arthritis of the knees, I am fine.

Q: When you think back to your childhood, were there spiritual practices that you did in Phari that you don't do anymore or you can't do anymore?

#23: We do the same religious practices. Everything is the same. In fact, instead of less, we do better here now.

Q: Did you do Milarepa pilgrimages or anything?

#23: I have been on a pilgrimage to Bhutan, and also the pilgrimage sites in India. However, in Tibet, I haven't been on a pilgrimage. I didn't travel far, to places like Thoe. These were distant places. In India I have been to Dorjiden [Bodh Gaya in Bihar], Varanasi [in Uttar Pradesh], Tso Pema [Lake Rewalsar in Himachal Pradesh] and Dharamsala.

Q: Can you tell me what made you decide to leave Phari?

#23: We were forced to leave. My husband's father used to work for the government, and so we were termed among the rebels. A relative of mine sent us word that if we didn't flee immediately, we were to be arrested; so we escaped without even taking a cup.

Q: What work did your husband do?

#23: My husband's father was in the service of the Tibetan government. They said that he was working for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's rebel group. The Chinese were not giving us work.

Q: Can you describe that day or that night?

#23: We escaped in two groups. My husband Kalsang Norbu and a neighbor left around dusk on the pretext that they were going to the hospital. He carried one child and left. Later, I attended a meeting called by the Chinese and after that I escaped taking my son Kalsang Damdul with me.

Q: Did you meet your husband to get out of Tibet?

#23: We lived very close to the border. It took hardly an hour. If you walked fast, you could reach it in a half-hour. The Bhutanese border was very close and the road was good.

Q: What was the Chinese meeting that you were attending?

#23: In the meeting they said that we were to subject the four *Sindhi* to *thamzin*. We were to say that they did things that they did not do. They forced this on us. I thought how could we beat them when there was no reason? I immediately escaped after that.

Q: That was the major reason for leaving right away?

#23: That was one reason and the other one was that my husband was to be arrested. We escaped without even our cups. We were able to bring our children.

Q: Do you know what happened to the four people the next day?

#23: I heard that they were subjected to severe *thamzin*. Some died in prison and some starved to death. Some were pulled by their mouth, pulled by their scalps and brutally

beaten. Except for one or two, all of them died due to the heavy beatings. They were all imprisoned and killed. I heard none was there; they were all killed.

Q: Were they the only people you know personally who were tortured or killed?

#23: I heard that in Phari, the monks were subjected to *thamzin*. I didn't know it at that time. How could we subject the *Rinpoche* 'reincarnated lamas' of the monastery to *thamzin*? There were some people who did that.

Q: How long were the Chinese in Phari before you left?

#23: It must have been about five years since they were in Phari. They started the arrests after His Holiness the Dalai Lama had left. Until then the Chinese just lived at the Pondhatsang estate and cultivated radishes, potatoes and turnips. They didn't cause much harm to the general public. When His Holiness the Dalai Lama left, they started with the arrests, beatings and killings.

Q: So you had no trouble from the Chinese before?

#23: They did not give us any trouble. They did their own work and did not give us any trouble. Once His Holiness left, they started the arrests. When the king was gone, they made the arrests.

Q: When you escaped that night, did other people from Phari leave around the same time?

#23: Of course. Later people started escaping in the night. Almost all of Phari escaped in the night. People left through various routes like Temolago—which we took—Phusung, Tara and Lachen Lachung. Not many people stayed back. It was only the poor who stayed back. The well-off were arrested and the middle class gradually escaped, one after the other.

Q: When you went to Bhutan, did you stay in Bhutan or move after that?

#23: They wouldn't let us stay in Bhutan. They let us stay for about a week, giving us small quantities of sustenance. Then we were sent to Missamari

Q: And then what happened after Missamari?

#23: From Missamari we were sent to Chamba, near Dalhousie.

Q: So you had two children and your husband and what did you bring with you to survive?

#23: We had nothing with us. At Missamari, the Indian government provided us with sustenance. We couldn't bring our things because if we carried things, we could not carry our children. We didn't have anything except the clothes on our back. We had with us a little quantity of *tsampa* and a little pat of butter for the children.

Q: How did you get more food?

#23: The Bhutanese gave us food. The Indians provided us with food rations, due to the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Q: Then did you come from Missamari to Bylakuppe or did you go see His Holiness?

#23: We were able to see His Holiness at Chamba. Both my children were accepted into school in Dharamsala.

Q: What was it like for you to see His Holiness?

#23: I started crying. There was nothing else to do.

Q: What do you think about the Chinese now?

#23: What do I think about the Chinese? I think, among the Chinese it was their leaders. Some of the Chinese [in Phari] were crying, saying that they had left behind their wives, parents and children. Some said such things, while the others were the leaders. It was the leaders and not the common [Chinese] public. They said this to us. It was the leaders and not the common public.

Poor things, the soldiers were crying. The soldiers cried secretly before us saying that they left behind their wives, children and parents, and that they could not go back. It was the bad leaders while they [the soldiers] had to take orders to either go or stay. The soldiers were helpless.

Q: What advice or message would you like to give the next generation of Tibetan children?

#23: The advice I would give would be that they should not lose the Tibetan culture; do not lose the Tibetan religion and remain united. Do not ever lose our culture. We will certainly regain our independence during the life time of His Holiness the Dalai Lam. Do not lose our culture, you must follow what we [older generation] are doing. That is my advice. We will die here. You should preserve our culture.

Q: What do you think are the most important parts of the tradition that the children should practice and preserve?

#23: The children should sing the songs of Tibet, which has sad and romantic words. If we wore the traditional costumes, we would not lose our culture. If one followed the Western or Indian styles, gradually our tradition will be lost. If one wore the proper costumes, that is preserving [our] culture. I am in complete Tibetan attire.

[Tape change]

Q: Could you sing a song?

#23: I cannot sing. I said that as an example. In ancient stories, it is said that there were certain people who could see the deities. There is a certain ritual that is performed to “open” the eyes. Once that is done, he or she can see the supernatural whether they are ghosts, deities or spirits. If one has the particular eye for it that can be done. Just like the local medium we have here.

Q: Could you sing for us or say the words?

#23: For example, the words of a song go like this:

**"In summer you might wish to purchase Phari.
In winter you might wish to sell it."**

A verse for Domo goes like this:

**"Domo maybe covered with forests
But there is a scarcity of fruits."**

Domo is full of forests, but there were no fruits to be eaten. The Chinese cut down all the trees and have taken them away. The hills of Domo were covered with trees. If one rode on a horse, one could go to Domo and back in one day.

Another verse:

**"Phari may have a multitude of different people
But parents and relatives are rare."**

**"On the pasturelands of Phari
There's nothing that does not grow
But if you put everything in your mouth
You may come across poison."**

Q: Is there any special food or customs that you also can think of that only happened in Phari or that you want your children to practice?

#23: In summer everything was available. A type of flower called *Phukhang* grew in the hills. It was this thick [shows wrist of hand] with a flat flower in the center. The stalk called *chukar* was skinned and fried with meat and eaten. The plant was very tall. You didn't have to buy it as it grew on the hills. It was tasty and sold too. There were people who bought it or sold it. People ate it. The mushrooms grew in the sixth Lunar month. In the waters, a black type of mushrooms grew. All other things were brought from Bhutan.

Q: Would you like your children to go back to Phari?

#23: Of course, it would be a great joy for the children to go back to our country. All children say that they want to go back to Tibet, even though they are small. There is no one who would not miss his country. Of course, they should go back.

Q: What are your children doing now?

#23: Some of my children are doing business in Dimapur. In winter they sell sweaters and in summer they cultivate the lands.

Q: Here?

#23: Yes, here in Bylakuppe.

Q: So you are keeping up the family tradition of diverse work.

#23: Yes. [Laughter]

Q: Thank you very much for this interview.

#23: [Nods]

[Interpreter explains to the interviewee about signing the release form and about giving her permission for the Tibet Oral History Project to use this interview. Interviewee says that she would be grateful if the story was shown all over the world.]

END OF INTERVIEW