

# **Tibet Oral History Project**

**Interview #12N – Ngawang Kunga (alias)  
April 21, 2015**

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# TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #12N
2. Interviewee: Ngawang Kunga (alias)
3. Age: 80
4. Date of Birth: 1935
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Chathathi, Markham
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: April 21, 2015
10. Place of Interview: Hotel Norbu Sangpo, Boudha, Kathmandu, Nepal
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 32 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Palden Tsering
14. Videographer: Dhiraj Kafle
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

### **Biographical Information:**

Ngawang Kunga was born in Markham in Kham Province. His father was a merchant who took goods from Tibet and China to sell in India and brought Indian goods in return. Both of his parents died early in his life and also a sibling. He was taken care of by his maternal aunt and was given the responsibility of grazing his family's animals.

Ngawang Kunga became a monk at the age of 10 at Khempalung Monastery. He had to memorize many Buddhist texts, but realized as he became older the importance of studying well. Later he traveled to Lhasa to join the Gyuto Monastery. He ran away from home to reach this monastery not realizing how far it was, but he was pursued and brought back by his maternal aunt. Then the following year she gave him permission to join the monastery in Lhasa.

Ngawang Kunga describes the changes that took place after the Chinese appeared in Lhasa. They restricted people's movements and had guns positioned in the Bakor Square. He says that the reaction of the people was to join the *Chushi Gangdrug* Defend Tibet Volunteer Force and that he did too. He left Lhasa with other monks and experienced various encounters with Chinese troops. Ngawang Kunga recounts how ultimately unable to put up any challenge due to lack of arms, ammunition and man power. The men escaped to India through Mon Tawang. He then talks about his life in Mustang, Nepal and the continued operations of the *Chushi Gangdrug*.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Kham, monastic life, Buddhist beliefs, invasion by Chinese army, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas, escape experiences, guerrillas in Mustang.

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**Interview #12N**

**Interviewee: Ngawang Kunga [alias]**

**Age: 80, Sex: Male**

**Interviewer: Marcella Adamski**

**Interview Date: April 21, 2015**

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:09

**Interviewee #12N: Ngawang Kunga.**

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record your experiences, so 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?

**#12N: Yes.**

Q: Thank you for offering to share your story with us. During this interview if you wish to take a break or stop at anytime, please let me know. If you do not wish to answer a question or talk about something, let me know.

**#12N: Okay.**

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

**#12N: Since [my] face is not being shown, there will be no problems.**

Q: We will not show your face.

**#12N: Okay.**

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

**#12N: Okay, and thank you.**

Q: *Pa-la* 'respectful term for father,' can you please tell me how old you are?

00:02:32

**#12N: Eighty.**

Q: Where were you born in Tibet?

**#12N: Markham.**

Q: And what province is that?

**#12N: It is Dhotoe [Kham].**

Q: When you were born, *pa-la*, how many people were in your family? Mother, father, how many?

**#12N: At that time in my family...before the parents passed away, there were the parents, an older sibling and I. We were four members in the family.**

Q: An older sibling?

**#12N: There was an older sibling.**

Q: And then you?

**#12N: Yes, then I.**

Q: And the parents?

**#12N: Yes.**

Q: That's four, right?

**#12N: Yes. The older one later passed away.**

Q: What kind of livelihood did your parents have?

00:04:01

**#12N: Father engaged in business. Father used to go to India to do trade.**

Q: [Father] used to go to India to trade.

**#12N: Yes.**

Q: And mother?

**#12N: Mother stayed home.**

Q: What kind of business did your father engage in?

**#12N: [Father] had business colleagues. They were four merchants of our monastery, of the *ladang* 'grand lama's residence.' My father was the trader of the family. What the four men traded in was bring Indian goods into Tibet and take goods from Tibet and China to India. That is what was said but I did not see it.**

Q: *Ladang's* business meaning the monastery's?

**#12N: There was the *ladang's* business that belonged to the monastery. [Father's colleagues] were its traders while my father was our family's trader. These two [the *ladang* and our family] pooled in finance and ran the business.**

Q: Did you ever help with this business or have any work to do in the family?

00:06:13

**#12N: I have never helped. I was small then and knew nothing.**

Q: You didn't know anything.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes.

Q: So tell us as you grow up, *pa-la*, what happens? When you are a little boy, anything special or in your memories?

**#12N: My experience in earning a livelihood...later father passed away and then mother passed away. Then [I] went to live in the home of my relative. Then the relative put me in the monastery. [I] became a monk in the monastery and the relative looked after me. That was it.**

Q: *Pa-la*, did you ever have any understanding of why your parents died so young?

**#12N: From what I heard Father fell sick from fever during a business travel in India. [I] was told [Father] passed away from fever. When mother came to the cold hometown [she] fell ill from influenza, a bad case of influenza and since there was not anyone to take care with the children being small and with no one to make a living, [she] passed away.**

Q: Do you have any memories of the place where you went to stay afterwards with these relatives? What was that like for you?

00:08:55

**#12N: The relative was my maternal aunt. [I] lived in the home of maternal aunt. Maternal aunt had a mother, who was old. In the past when we lived in our home there had been many animals that the relatives had given us. Later when the parents passed away, the animals were kept at maternal aunt's house and I was to herd the animals. I had two younger siblings that were taken away by a relative, taken to the relative's home.**

Q: Did the other brothers get some of the animals as well, *pa-la*?

**#12N: Later they got to keep all the animals. They kept the animals. By they, I mean aunt and the two younger siblings kept [the animals]. I became a monk at a young age and then at the age of 18...16...left for Lhasa when I was 17.**

Q: At what age...first of all, how old were you when your mother died, *pa-la*, and your father died?

**#12N: I was around 9 then, 9 or 10...perhaps 10...**

Q: ...when the parents died, and how old when you went to the monastery?

**#12N: [I] was around 8 or perhaps 9 when [I] became a monk.**

Q: Eight or 9. So your parents enrolled you in the monastery before they died?

00:11:49

**#12N: It was not before [the parents] died. It was not before [the parents] died. I was sent to become a monk at the monastery by maternal aunt, maternal aunt.**

Q: Maternal aunt sent [you].

**#12N: Father had passed away long ago and mother expired later. Maternal aunt sent [me] to the monastery after mother passed away.**

Q: You were 10 years old then.

**#12N: Around 10 years.**

Q: I see. *Pa-la*, how did you like the monastery? How was that for you?

**#12N: There was no worry about livelihood in the monastery for the monastery took care of that.**

Q: Did you go back home to help with the animals or stay all the time in the monastery?

**#12N: When there were prayer assemblies [I] went to the monastery and when there were no prayer assemblies and it was a holiday, [I] came home to *sumo* 'maternal aunt.'**

Q: What monastery did you go to, *pa-la*? What's the name of it?

00:13:45

**#12N: Khempalung.**

Q: Khempalung?

**#12N: Yes.**

Q: And where is that? What's the big, nearest town?

**#12N: It is in a county in Markham.**

Q: What kind of a student were you as a monk, *pa-la*?

**#12N: One must learn a lot of the scriptures. [Laughs]**

Q: And why is that funny, *pa-la*? You are laughing.

[Interpreter interprets: What kind of a student were you as a monk? Were you naughty or a good student?]

**#12N: I seem to have studied well. If not, the teacher would beat. [I] seem to have studied because of the fear of being beaten.**

Q: And then how...what happens next, *pa-la* in your monastic life? Were there any other changes or do you do anything?

**#12N: The change was that [I] became thoughtful.**

Q: Yes?

00:15:38

**#12N: [I] studied the scriptures. "The parents are no more and if [I] do not study the scriptures, there is nothing else to do," [I] thought. [I] learned the scriptures and later passed the tests well. The teachers conducted tests. After passing the tests well, I left for Lhasa. I joined the Lama Gyupa Monastery in Lhasa.**

Q: Lama?

**#12N: Lama Gyupa.**

Q: Gyupa. Is that the name of a monastery or...?

**#12N: Yes.**

Q: Is that the name of a monastery?

**#12N: Yes, Lama Gyupa or Gyuto Monastery.**

Q: *Pa-la*, could you explain some of your thinking? If your parents were no longer in this world, why was it important for you to study? Why would that be so important as a part of your...you know, like a part of your life goal?

00:17:24

**#12N: Being a child at that time [I] could not think deeply, did not have any other thought. Of course, I felt that one's life would be better by becoming a monk.**

Q: To go to Lhasa, do you have to get permission from your teachers or can you just go automatically? And who pays for that?



**#12N: [I] took permission.**

Q: And the expenses...?

**#12N: Initially when I sought permission, they did not give it. The relatives and everyone said that [I] should remain for a year or two and then could go. So [I] could not go. So certain that they would not permit, I ran away. [Laughs]**

Q: The second time...?

**#12N: The first time, I ran away the first time. At a distance of a day's journey maternal aunt came in pursuit. Maternal aunt came in pursuit and took [me] back and promised to send [me] the following year. She agreed to send [me] to Lhasa. After [she] agreed to send me to Lhasa I came back home. Then they bought a donkey that would carry supplies [for me] like *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley,' personal belongings and blankets.**

Q: Donkey.

**#12N: The donkey...there were merchants leaving for Lhasa who helped [me] during the journey.**

Q: ...and reached Lhasa?

**#12N: Yes. The journey took around two months.**

Q: Oh, very interesting story, *pa-la*. You were a determined young man.

00:21:06

**#12N: [Laughs]**

Q: I'm curious. How far did you get before they caught you?

**#12N: [I] had covered a day's distance.**

Q: A day's distance?

**#12N: It was a day's distance on foot. In the evening just before sunset, round about 4 o'clock here...I had been to herd animals, animals that belonged to us...maternal aunt's animals. [I] had gone to herd animals. [I] drove back the animals. In our village are mountains with grasslands and forests where [I] left the animals. Then [I] came home when maternal aunt and the others were not there. [I] came home, took some *tsampa* and things and packed them in a *khuga*, which is made of wood and used in our hometown. [I] carried it and started out.**

**From my hometown [I] reached Gathok in Markham when it was late evening. I had a sibling at a monastery there, a younger sibling who [I] wanted to take along but he could not be found. [I] asked many monks there but he could not be seen. [I] felt helpless as it was**

getting late. Then I left and night fell shortly. There was a village and dogs rushed out. I carried a slingshot. [I] used the slingshot at the dogs. They did not bite me and went away.

00:23:00

Then [I] trekked through forests and along the banks of a river. There were nomads that owned dogs. Thinking the dogs might bite; I climbed up a mountain away from the nomads. On the mountain was a cave in which [I] slept. [I] lay in the cave but could not sleep properly that night. When daylight broke, I carried the bag and set out once again. After covering some distance [I] came upon a large number of nomads. The many nomads were shepherds among which was an old man. The old man asked, “Son, where are you going?” “I am going to Chamdo,” [I] replied. “Why are you going to Chamdo?” “I am going to Chamdo to become a *gelong* ‘fully-ordained monk,’” I replied. [Laughs]

Q: To become a *gelong*?

#12N: [I] was a monk and on the way to take the vows of a *gelong*. “Okay. You cannot go to become a *gelong*. Earlier today many people went that way that said there were thieves. You should stay in my home for a short while. There will be many going tomorrow or the day after and you can go with them,” said [the old man]. Then I went to the home of the old man who happened to be my relative. He had recognized me but I did not know him. [I] stayed in his house.

They would not let [me] go and there were dogs tied up outside the *ba* ‘tent made from yak hair.’ At around midday, [I] heard maternal aunt shouting. Maternal aunt had come riding a horse. She was shouting to ask if I had arrived. Then the old man said, “Come here. There is a person here who cannot be recognized.” [Laughs] Then maternal aunt came into the house and cried.

Q: [You] were found then?

#12N: Yes.

[Interpreter to interviewee]: I will translate this.

Q: *Pa-la*, how did your aunt know to go look for you there? How did he get word to her? There were no telephones.

00:27:52

#12N: There were not. [Maternal aunt] might have thought I would have taken this route and came by making enquiries along the way, “Did anyone go this way?” It might have been said, “A child did.” There were many herders and farmers working in the fields along the way. They had seen me go and may have said so [to my maternal aunt].

Q: It wasn’t the nomad that told [your maternal aunt]?

#12N: No. [I] was in the nomad’s home and maternal aunt came thinking [I] could be there. She knew our relative. I did not know the relatives and was in their home.

Q: *Pa-la*, the first time that you wanted to go, they would not let you go. What was the reason for that? Why would they say no?

**#12N: [They] believed [I] would not be able to take care of myself on the way to Lhasa. They were worried which was why [I] was not allowed.**

Q: Because you were going to go to Lhasa all by yourself and not with other monks?

00:29:54

**#12N: Yes, I was alone.**

Q: Why such a long trip all by yourself? Why would you do that?

**#12N: I did not know it was a long distance and believed Lhasa was nearby.**

Q: You didn't have a complete understanding of the geography.

**#12N: [I] did not.**

Q: Okay. So then a year later they decided that you could go, *pa-la*, and they gave you donkeys? Donkeys and blankets and money, is that correct? And then what happened?

**#12N: Then [I] joined the monastery, lived in the monastery and studied the scriptures. I continued to study the scriptures and then the Chinese appeared in Lhasa; the Chinese appeared. After the Chinese arrived, they enforced restrictions and new laws for everyone in Lhasa. The Chinese brought restrictions upon the ways of making a living and in every other way. When such things were being done [people] believed nothing good was going to come about and then one day, Lhasa was in turmoil. The reason for the turmoil in Lhasa was that [the Chinese] wanted to escort His Holiness the Dalai Lama to China. The Chinese said so. Then [the people] of Lhasa arose.**

Q: In which year was this?

**#12N: Who?**

Q: When was it said that His Holiness was going to be taken to China?

**#12N: [His Holiness'] age then?**

Q: Which year was it?

**#12N: It was in '57...in the year '57...'58. Was the country lost in '58?**

Q: It was in '59.

**#12N: If the country was lost in '59, then that was in '58.**

Q: What happened after it was decided to escort His Holiness the Dalai Lama in '58?

00:33:20

**#12N: Then there was an uprising of the people of Lhasa that refused to let [His Holiness] go and revolted. When the revolt took place, there was chaos in Lhasa. Then the Chinese shelled the Potala many times, shelled the Potala and killed many people passing by.**

Q: Before we go into the revolution, *pa-la*, can you remember...you're in the monastery and you're about 18 years old when you joined. So what kind of restrictions started to happen by the Chinese on the monasteries? You said "our way of life." What did they start to do inside the monastery?

**#12N: Monastery in the sense, the restrictions was enforced for every individual. [The Chinese] said His Holiness the Dalai Lama would be escorted to China and the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] surfaced. The *Chushi Gangdrug* arose and an armed unit was established at Diguthang in Lhoka. Then His Holiness was escorted to India by the *Chushi Gangdrug*.**

Q: Did the Chinese put any particular restrictions on the monasteries?

**#12N: Not then. It was done later. Later the monastery was shelled; many monks of the monastery captured, imprisoned and such things were done.**

Q: *Pa-la*, because it's very important to understand history through the eyes of an individual who was there, can you tell me what did you see happening in your monastery with your own eyes? Not the historical report but what did you see? Did the Chinese come into your room and to the monastery? Did they hurt the monks? Tell us what you saw.

00:36:40

**#12N: [I] witnessed the uprising in Lhasa that took place when [the Chinese] said that His Holiness would be escorted to China.**

Q: The uprising in Lhasa?

**#12N: Yes. I heard about other things that the Chinese did but did not see it personally. The Bakor in Lhasa filled with [Chinese] soldiers and [they] created spots to position guns. [The Chinese] did such things. Every day there were announcements over the loudspeaker saying this and this and this must be done. It became difficult for people to move about. Such things were done.**

Q: What about inside the monastery when you were a monk? What changes happened that you had to experience before the actual...before you left?

**#12N: While in the monastery...that was about it. [I] did not see anything else. As I mentioned earlier the Bakor filled with soldiers and they seized spots to position guns in the Bakor. People's movements were restricted. It was not free like it usually was. Such things were done.**

Q: What did you do, *pa-la*?

00:39:18

**#12N: Yes?**

Q: What did you do, *pa-la*?

**#12N: There was nothing for me to do. Then all the people were joining the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force]. [I] wondered what would happen if [I] stayed back? [I] would not be allowed to go if [I] asked the relative. What was going to happen? There were two other monks with me. The three of us held a discussion and decided to seek a divination from a lama, “Is it better to remain in Lhasa or go and join the *Chushi Gangdrug*?” The outcome of the divination was, “It is better to go.”**

Q: To the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

**#12N: Yes. Then we left.**

Q: And did you ever go to your aunt and ask permission as well?

**#12N: [She] was not informed.**

Q: How did she find out?

**#12N: [She] came to know after [I] joined. [Laughs]**

Q: Did she follow you?

**#12N: [Laughs] No.**

Q: *Pa-la*, how long have you been in the monastery before you had to flee because of the oppression? How many years?

00:41:47

**#12N: Where?**

Q: How many years in the monastery as a monk?

**#12N: In the monastery? [I] was 4-5 years in the monastery.**

Q: Four or five years and then that’s when...do you remember what year it was that you left? Was it like 1959 when Lhasa was attacked?

**#12N: I was 25 years old at that time.**

Q: You were 25. Which year was it?

**#12N: It was 1958...59.**

Q: Around '58?

**#12N: It must be '58. The country was lost in '59.**

Q: Yes, lost the country. It must be '58.

**#12N: It was '58.**

Q: So what happened?

**#12N: What?**

Q: What happened after joining the *Chushi Gangdrug* force?

**#12N: Then the *Chushi Gangdrug* troops could not defend the country and came to India. His Holiness the Dalai Lama had already left for India and we followed him into India and reached Mon Tawang [Arunachal Pradesh] through Panjipur.**

Q: Through Panjipur to Mon Tawang?

**#12N: Yes.**

Q: *Pa-la*, you have been a monk for a lot many years. What was it like to...did you ask permission to take off your robes? Did you have any ceremony or did you just leave and did more people go with you?

00:44:22

**#12N: There were many monks. There were monks of Sera, Drepung [and Gaden Monasteries] and monks from Lama Gyupa. The majority of the [*Chushi Gangdrug*] army consisted of monks. There was no seeking permission as such. You had to hold a gun in hand and kill people.**

Q: Wearing monk's robes?

**#12N: Not in monk's robes. One was wearing layman's *chupa* 'traditional coats,' wearing layman's clothing. The robes were given away to monks in the monastery.**

Q: In general the *Chushi Gangdrug* consisted of monks and merchants, right?

**#12N: They were all monks and merchants.**

00:45:15

**There were a few soldiers of the Tibetan Government Army too.**

Q: But for you personally, *pa-la*, was it scary or exciting? How did you feel to becoming like a soldier after being a monk?

**#12N: There was no thought as such. The Chinese sort of turned the land upside down. When this happened one's mind was numb and in turmoil. There was no thought. How to express it...[I] sort of became numb.**

Q: When you actually left the monastery, where did you go?

**#12N: What?**

Q: When you left the monastery, did you join the army or what happened?

00:47:18

**#12N: There was your particular group in the army, which [I] joined. There were those from the same region [that formed] a group like Markham group, Bapa group, Lithang group, Gapa group and Tsawarong group. There were many groups. I joined my group.**

Q: Did you know many of the men in the Markham group?

**#12N: There were many [I knew].**

Q: Tell me more about when you got together. What was it like?

**#12N: One felt happy. You felt stronger.**

Q: What did you do when...let me get...how far did you go from the monastery in Lhasa? Did you get on horses or walk? Where did you go to join them? What city or what place?

**#12N: There was a place called Chushul on the way to join the army from Lhasa to Lhoka. There was an army unit at Chushul. [I] went there which took around two days on foot. It took around two days.**

Q: Were there many people on the road going to this place or was it you and a few monks?

00:50:01

**#12N: [We] did not meet anybody on the road, did not meet anybody on the road. There is a river where they rowed boats, boats made of hide and wood. A few monks of our monastery that we knew were guarding the boats there. They had left [the monastery] earlier, left before us. They were guarding the boats at this place. They felt happy to see us. [They] rowed the boat. [We] continued and then reached the army base.**

Q: Was the river very big or wide and dangerous? Were you afraid or was it easy crossing?

**#12N: It was a river.**

Q: Was the river big?

**#12N: It was a big river. It was big.**

Q: Big river. Were you scared?

**#12N: [Laughs] No.**

Q: Can you swim?

**#12N: [I] cannot swim.**

Q: Did you have a protective amulet?

**#12N: [I] was wearing a protective amulet.**

Q: That's why you made it.

**#12N: [I] was wearing a protective amulet.**

Q: *Pa-la*, I'm afraid...did I forget which monastery are you coming from in Lhasa, which one?

00:52:09

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Lama Gyupa Monastery.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Lama Gyupa?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Gyupa.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: What is it? Is that under Drepung or...?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: No, it's separate. Drepung, Sera and Gaden are three universities, top government universities. Lama Gyupa is a small monastery.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Lama Gyupa.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Lama Gyupa. G-U-Y-P-A.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: G-U-Y-P-A. Lama Gyupa Monastery.

Q: How many monks were in Lama Gyupa Monastery?

00:52:42

**#12N: There was a standard number of monks, which was 500.**

Q: Five hundred. Why did you pick that monastery to study?

**#12N: You have your assigned [monastery].**



Q: Assigned?

**#12N: Your assigned [monastery]. When one arrived [in Lhasa] from the hometown, a lot was drawn [as to which of the monasteries of] Sera, Drepung or Gaden [one should join]. In order to study the debates one joined Sera, Drepung or Gaden and if one wanted to study tantric scriptures one must join the Lama Gyupa. I wished to study tantric scriptures and so relatives in Lhasa admitted [me] in the Lama Gyupa.**

Q: *Pa-la*, for people who don't know a whole lot about tantric, can you just give us a few explanation of what you mean by tantric tradition?

**#12N: All the chants and prayer rituals are connected to tantric tradition in Lama Gyupa.**

Q: I didn't follow; what's it about the tantra?

**#12N: There are the two traditions of *dho* 'sutra' and *ngag* 'tantra.' *Dho* is studying the debate scriptures. *Ngag* is studied at the two monasteries of Lama Gyupa called Gyu Toepa and Gyu Maypa. These two are the [centers for learning] tantra.**

Q: *Pa-la*, when you joined....so back with the *Chushi Gangdrug*. What happens? You see some of your friends from Markham and what happens next? What do you do?

00:55:58

**#12N: Later each of the groups was assigned to a different region. The different groups had to block the routes of the oncoming Chinese. We went there.**

Q: And where was there?

**#12N: We went to Ralung and to Namgangtse.**

Q: Ralung?

**#12N: Namgangtse, Ralung and...**

Q: These two places?

**#12N: Yes.**

Q: What happened when you got there?

**#12N: [We] guarded the place, guarded the place. [We] had to move from place to place but could not do so during daytime because they [the Chinese] were on guard everywhere. So one had to travel at night. In the night [we] took the route from Namgangtse to Talung: Namgangtse, Talung and Ralung. There were three [places]. [We] traveled from Namgangtse to Ralung.**

**On our way to Ralung, there was a hill with two routes. They [Chinese] were on the same route that we had taken. It was in the night. The Chinese and we were trudging along at the same time. Near the mountain was a pass. When [we] reached there it was nearing dawn. At dawn they flashed lights. They had become suspicious when we trekked during the night. [The Chinese] flashed lights; white, yellow and red lights followed by gunshots *rat, tat, tat, tat.***

00:58:16

**Then we could find nowhere to run and climbed up the mountain. They pursued and trapped us upon the mountain. We were atop the mountain and they were below having trapped [us]. [We] could not stay there forever...[not discernible]. They had taken over all the regions around...[not discernible]. Then there was a huge exchange of fire. Gunshots rained, fell like rain. Due to the benevolence of the lamas and my prayers, none of the gunshots hit [me]. [I] was wearing the protective amulet and was not hit. [Laughs] They killed one or two of our men. Then the horses...**

Q: Tibetans?

**#12N: Yes. [The Chinese] fired shells where the horses were tethered killing all of them.**

Q: What did you do? Now you have no horses and the Chinese are very nearby. What happened now?

01:01:27

**#12N: All the colleagues had run away. I had many colleagues in the group all of whom had gone where [I] have no idea. Now there were two colleagues left with me that hailed from Chating. There were two men and [we] spent the night atop the mountain. I got up before dawn the next morning—[we] had been sleeping among juniper trees—got up in the morning and found the two colleagues missing. Now I was alone. I was alone and wondered what to do. [I] had no idea where to go except the way to Ralung. So [I] went towards Ralung hoping the colleagues may have taken this route. I trekked alone.**

**From atop the mountain pass of Ralung came a man driving a yak. [I] was hungry but there was nothing to eat and nothing to drink. Instead of taking the road [I] walked along the banks of a river fearing an encounter with the Chinese. [I] continued and met the man driving a yak along the way. [I] asked him, “Did my colleagues pass this way?” “[I] do not know if [they] are your colleagues or not but there are some people up the road who said, ‘We are expecting someone. If [he] is on the way, please say that [we] are atop the pass,’” [he] said. [I] asked, “Do you have some *tsampa*?” “[I] have a little quantity of *tsampa*.” [He] was carrying a little amount of *tsampa* in a pouch made of leather. He gave me half of the *tsampa*. I went to the river, mixed some water with the *tsampa* and drank it. [I] felt stronger. Then [I] continued and found my colleagues sitting in a pit near a slope. [I] met the colleagues.**

Q: Why do you think they left in the middle of the night without telling you?

01:05:38

**#12N: They had fled when there was a lot of firing [knowing we] could not put up any challenge.**

Q: I see. When you found them in a hole, was that like a cave or a hole in the ground?

**#12N: It was a hole. There are certain places where there are hollows.**

Q: And then what happened, *pa-la*?

**#12N: We spent the night together in that place. Then the next morning—there was a leader among us who said, “It would be good if you [interviewee], the man who is sick and two others who do not have horses go beyond Yamdrok Yumtso, a large lake to Diguthang and then to India. We will cross the pass of Ralung.” Crossing that pass would lead them to Bhutan.**

Q: Bhutan?

01:07:26

**#12N: Yes. [The leader] said they were going in that direction. Then in the morning they left for Ralung and we towards...**

Q: Diguthang?

**#12N: ...towards Yamdrok, in the direction of Yamdrok.**

Q: Would one reach Diguthang from Yamdrok?

**#12N: From Yamdrok...from Yamdrok we reached Diguthang.**

Q: Diguthang?

**#12N: Yes. There are many places in between but [I] have forgotten.**

Q: Were the Chinese following you or did the gun firing stop at that point?

01:09:05

**#12N: [The Chinese] were coming.**

Q: Had the firing stopped?

**#12N: How would [they] stop? They would shoot on seeing [us], and capture, capture and kill.**

Q: How were your weapons and supplies at that point? Did you have any new horses or any ammunition and guns?

**#12N: One was carrying the gun received at the time of joining the army. Ammunition was scarce in order to fire many rounds. There were not many bullets, maybe over a hundred per person. Firing many rounds would mean running out of ammunition. There were hardly 20-odd bullets left.**

Q: How many were travelling with you at this point?

**#12N: We were...after meeting escapees along the way; there were around seven people.**

Q: What was the spirit of the group? Were people feeling very sad that they were losing their fight against the Chinese? How did they feel?

01:11:39

**#12N: What they felt was that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had already left for India and there was no point staying back because eventually one would fall into Chinese hands. One felt dispirited. There was not anyone lending support and nobody coming forth with weapons. There were only a small number of weapons procured by the merchants that consisted of different kinds of guns; some that were good and some bad. There were good ones and different kinds. There was no end to the Chinese supply of ammunition. [They] had good guns. So [we] could not put up any challenge. Then we thought, "The Dalai Lama has left for India and there is no point remaining behind." So [we] came to India.**

Q: How long did you stay there, *pa-la* at the Indian border?

**#12N: At the Indian border...[we] arrived in Missamari, reached Missamari through Mon Tawang, reached Missamari through Mon Tawang. At Missamari the younger ones attended school. The older ones were unable to work in the heat and survived on the food rations provided by the Indian Government.**

**[We] stayed in this situation for 2-3 months. After 2-3 months, [I] went as a coolie to Gangtok to construct roads, worked as a coolie. [I] continued to work as a coolie for around two years in Gangtok. After working as a coolie for two years [I] arrived at...I'll narrate the whole story.**

01:14:38

**[I] arrived in Nepal and then went to Mustang. The Mustang armed force was established under the leadership of Andrug Jindha [Andrug Gonpo Tashi] and there was a senior leader called Gen Yeshe, Bapa Yeshe. [Andrug] Jindha held discussions with the United States and established the force. There was great problem in Mustang for around a year or two on account of food supplies not reaching there. Due to lack of food many soldiers died of starvation in the snow. Some died.**

**The *Chushi Gangdrug* Force was established in Mustang and led by Gen Yeshe. The men belonged to the three provinces of Tibet. There were around a thousand men, nearly a thousand. The benefactor dropped weapons in Tibetan Territory that had to be collected at night; [we] journeyed back and forth in the night carrying [the weapons]. The force was establish at Mustang and continued for 13 years. After the passage of 13 years, there was a**

**misunderstanding, a misunderstanding among the Khampa people. There was a mistake and then it disintegrated. Then I left and came to Kathmandu.**

Q: Was there a mistake in the armed force?

**#12N: Yes.**

Q: Among the leaders and such?

**#12N: Yes.**

Q: *Pa-la*, that's quite a summary. I think *pa-la*, is getting ready to wrap up, don't you?

01:19:20

**#12N: I do not have much more than this to talk about.**

Q: I understand. Okay, *pa-la*. I only have one question about this story. It's a very good summary of the issues but when they were dropping...was it ammunition, guns into...for the Mustang fighters, they were dropping them into Tibet. Who was doing the dropping? Who was sending them?

**#12N: The United States of America.**

Q: Why were they...why were they sending it, dropping it into Tibet instead of into Mustang?

**#12N: No, it seems [the weapons] could not be dropped into Mustang Territory. Tibet was your country. So it was [dropped there].**

Q: *Pa-la*, did you ever see any of the things that they dropped? If you did, can you say what was in the delivery?

01:21:13

**#12N: Yes, there were guns. A type of gun that holds five rounds of fire, a type of gun that holds eight rounds and machine guns that hold 35 rounds.**

Q: Thirty-five?

**#12N: Yes. Then artillery mortars and such were there, and then hand grenades.**

Q: Were these actually used against the Chinese?

**#12N: The Chinese...[we] were in Mustang for 13 years. [Andrug] Jindha said it was pointless to remain but must venture in our territory to cause harm to them [Chinese]. Then [the guerrillas] went into Tibetan Territory and damaged Chinese motor roads and attacked army bases and such things.**

Q: The weapons were used?

**#12N: Yes, attacked the Chinese.**

Q: In the course of the 13 years?

**#12N: Yes.**

Q: They were all used. So you attacked army bases. Did the Chinese retaliate when you did that? Were they defending themselves?

01:23:41

**#12N: [The Chinese] retaliated.**

Q: So were some of the men...

**#12N: [Interrupts] [The Chinese] fired but did not hit [us]. They took another route unseen by our men, took a detour and captured many of our men, captured and killed. [The Chinese] did so.**

Q: So we're talking in terms of years...what year is this that you are talking, *pa-la*?

**#12N: The army was established in '61. '61, '62, '63, '64, '65, '66, '67, '68, '69, '70, '71...it must in the '70s.**

Q: *Pa-la*, did you happen to know any of the men in your group who were trained by the American CIA in Colorado? Were any of the men in your group...were any of the men in your group trained in Colorado by the CIA?

01:25:50

**#12N: There were. There were teachers.**

Q: Do you remember the names of any of the men that...their Tibetan name or their code-name?

**#12N: All of them have passed away.**

Q: Code names and such?

**#12N: The names...but [the men] are no more.**

Q: I know many of them did, but to honor them, can you tell us what their names were?

**#12N: [I] know the names but it is not right to say so.**

Q: I see. Okay.

**#12N: They are dead and it is not right.**

Q: Oh, I see because they are departed. So you served Tibet for a long time in Mustang.

**#12N: Yes.**

Q: Yes, you did.

**#12N: [I] have gone through a lot of hardship. And then one must go to the Changthang ‘Northern Plateau.’ There were no blankets and only the clothes you wore. It was the same when one slept in the night. One slept with the gun and trudged during the day with the gun. There were no horses and one walked on foot. In the night one slept on the ground in the wilderness or in caves in the mountains. There were no blankets, nothing. It was so cold that in the morning one could not walk because the feet were frozen! And the hands were frozen. There was nothing hot to drink. However, they destroyed our land of Tibet and the fury made you seem tireless.**

Q: *Pa-la*, what do you think of the way Tibet including the *Chushi Gangdrug* and other groups tried to protect their country? What do you think of how they did that? Do you have any thoughts about that before we finish this interview?

01:29:36

**#12N: [I] have struggled a lot and wonder what the result will be. Other than that there is not anything definite [I] can talk about. Everything is in their [the Chinese] hands. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is advocating the Middle Way. It will be very good if the Middle Way brings about a result. If the Middle Way does not, then His Holiness the Dalai Lama is elderly and with the Tibetan people living in alien lands, it will be difficult. That is about it and there is not much [I] think about having undergone great hardship.**

Q: *Pa-la*, you have given us a very, very important story and I want to ask you just one more time, if this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you, but we won't show your face? So if this interview was broadcast just with your voice, would this be a problem for you?

**#12N: They [Chinese] would not recognize [the voice]. With no face shown, there are voices resembling each other. It does not matter.**

Q: Well, thank you very much for sharing your story with us, *pa-la*.

**#12N: [Joins palms]**

END OF INTERVIEW