

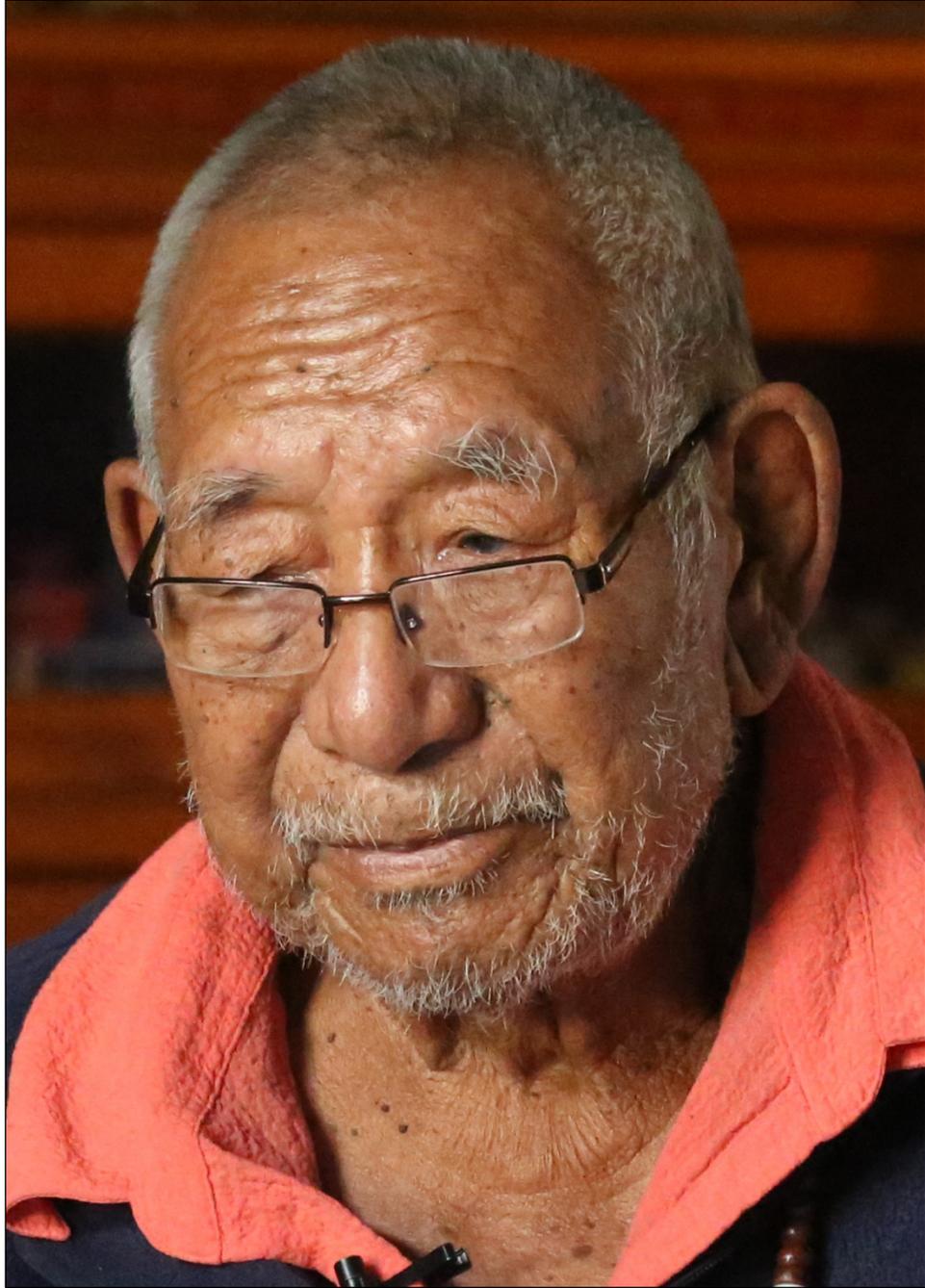
# **Tibet Oral History Project**

Interview #38N – Lobsang Gyamtso  
April 14, 2015

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# TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #38N
2. Interviewee: Lobsang Gyamtso
3. Age: 85
4. Date of Birth: 1930
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Tsangdok
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: April 14, 2015
10. Place of Interview: Paljorling Tibetan Settlement, Prithvi Chowk, Pokhara, Nepal
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 20 min
12. Interviewer: Katharine Davies Samway
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Dhiraj Kafle
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

### **Biographical Information:**

Lobsang Gyamtso was born in Tsangdok located below the great monastery of Gaden, very close to Lhasa. He remembers going to graze animals at the age of 7 or 8 and playing with other young herders. As he got older, he began working on the farm by helping to sow crops and dig irrigation channels. He explains how the neighbors helped each other on rotational basis and also hired laborers paid with grain or the loan of farm animals for plowing.

Lobsang Gyamtso joined Gaden Monastery to get an education but he was not very good at studying the scriptures so he was given other responsibilities. After spending 10 years at the monastery, Lobsang Gyamtso then joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] to fight against the invading Chinese army. He was sent to Gyaching in Kongpo, where they planned an attack on Tibetan New Year's day upon a Chinese garrison. He was then deployed to Lho Dhongkar, which fell on the route of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's escape.

Lobsang Gyamtso and his colleagues also decided to flee. After reaching Indian Territory he worked as part of a road crew in Gangtok, Sikkim and then moved to Mustang in Nepal hoping to fight against the Chinese again. He joined the Lo Dikzug 'Mustang Organization' and describes the trainings and operations carried out against the Chinese.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Utsang, childhood memories, farm life, herding, monastic life, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas, escape experiences, life as a refugee in India, guerrillas in Mustang.

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## Interview #38N

**Interviewee: Lobsang Gyamtso**

**Age: 85, Sex: Male**

**Interviewer: Marcella Adamski**

**Interview Date: April 14, 2015**

Question: Could you please tell us your name?

00:00:13

**Interviewee #38N: The name is Gyamtso, Lobsang Gyamtso.**

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 permission for the Tibet Oral History Project with which we work to use this interview?

**#38N: Yes.**

Q: Thank you. During this interview if you wish to take a break or stop at any time, please let us know.

**#38N: Okay.**

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

**#38N: Okay.**

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

**#38N: To me?**

Q: Yes.

**#38N: There will be no problems for me.**

Q: Do you have relatives still in Tibet?

00:02:10

**#38N: There are relatives but [I] have no idea. It has been many years since [we] met. My five brothers are all dead except for me. They are dead.**

Q: Thank you. We're honored to hear your story and appreciate your participation in the project.

**#38N: Okay.**

Q: Where were you born?

**#38N: It is called Tsangdok. It is right below the great monastery of Gaden.**

Q: And in which province is this?

**#38N: Me?**

Q: Tsangdok...

**#38N: It is in Utsang. It is in Utsang.**

Q: How close to Lhasa were you?

**#38N: It is close. In the old days it was a day's horse ride. These days one can reach in quick time.**

Q: Did you visit Lhasa very often?

**#38N: [I] did not go often.**

Q: Was your town Tsangdok, was this a village or a town or just a little settlement?

00:04:16

**#38N: It was fairly large. And right on a drivable road. It was a large town.**

Q: And how many people...about how many people lived in this town?

**#38N: I cannot say.**

Q: Do you know about how many families?

**#38N: There might have been 60-70 families.**

Q: And the drivable road that you had in your town, was this built by Tibetans?

**#38N: It was built by the Chinese. In the past there used to be fields, fields for cultivation. The Chinese built [a road] right through the middle.**

Q: About what year was this?

**#38N: I do not know. I cannot remember.**

Q: So the people, whose fields were used to build the road, did the Chinese compensate them for that land?

**#38N: Oh no, there was not [any compensation], nothing at all.**

Q: What kind of work did your family do?

00:06:36

**#38N: It was only farming. It was farming and there was no trading or any other kind of jobs. It was only farming, farming and rearing cattle like cows and oxen, and horses, donkeys and mules. That was it. Horses and mules were used for transportation.**

Q: So did you have any yaks?

**#38N: [We] did not own yaks. [We] were just farmers. However, there was an animal called *dzo* ‘animal bred between a yak and a cow’ that plowed the fields in Tibet. *Dzo* were used to plow the fields.**

Q: What kinds of jobs did you...as a child when you were about 7 years old, what kinds of jobs did you have on your farm?

**#38N: One looked after the animals. At the age of 6 or 7 we grazed the animals.**

Q: Where did you go to graze the animals?

**#38N: [We grazed the animals] nearby our hometown, sometimes driving [the animals] to the hills and sometimes to a large ground.**

Q: Could you please describe a typical day when you would look after the animals?

00:09:06

**#38N: In the morning when the animals were driven out, the parents gave you lunch. It was not necessary to herd during wintertime.**

Q: Yes?

**#38N: One need not go herding during winter, need not herd the animals.**

Q: Winter?

**#38N: Yes, during summer the fields were sown. Animals must be herded when the fields were sown.**

Q: What would you take for your lunch?

**#38N: For us villagers the food was normally grain or *tsampa* ‘flour made from roasted barley.’ The main [food] was *tsampa*.**

Q: Anything else?

**#38N: There was not anything else. Mixed in it might be some butter or cheese.**

Q: Did you go on your own to the...when you were grazing the animals up in the hills or did you go with other people?

**#38N: We would be in a group of 5-6 children or three, four, five or six together. [We] drove [the animals] together to a vacant land.**

Q: When you were driving the animals did you use any special calls or any equipment to keep them together?

00:11:23

**#38N: Each child carried a staff like this [indicates walking stick] and brought [the wayward animals] together.**

Q: If any of the animals ran away what would you do?

**#38N: [We] worked together to bring them back. [The wayward animals] were not left behind but brought back.**

Q: So how would your group of children...how would you work together? What would you do to help bring the wayward animals back?

**#38N: Everybody worked together to bring [the wayward animals] back.**

Q: All the children together brought the wayward animals back...

**#38N: [The children] drove [the wayward animals] together. You brought [the animals] back in the evening and did not leave any behind; brought back together.**

Q: Did you ever lose any animals to...either wild animals or anything?

**#38N: It never happened.**

Q: Were there no wild animals?

00:13:20

**#38N: There were not many wild animals in our region.**

Q: Did you enjoy this kind of work? And if so, what did you enjoy about it?

**#38N: [I] enjoyed it. One took along *pa* 'dough made from *tsampa* and tea' given by the parents. Everybody went together. During the daytime [we] herded the animals and saw to it that they did not eat the crops. Then everyone sat around playing.**

Q: What kind of playing around did you do?

**#38N: The children just played about for there was nothing else to do.**

Q: What kind of games, like running and...?

**#38N: Yes, like that for there was nothing to do. The animals grazed and there was nothing to do. So one ran about and played. As little children we played with clay and at times ran about. That was it.**

Q: What would you do with the clay?

**#38N: One just made conical shapes like hills and roads. Children cannot make anything else.**

Q: And then would you make other things like animals to go on those roads or...?

00:15:28

**#38N: Yes. It was like that. That is what children do.**

Q: I've had a very different life from you. So this is very interesting to hear about your life with animals living out in the wild life.

**#38N: Okay.**

Q: Was there anything you did not like about herding the animals?

**#38N: There was not anything one did not like. It was just herding animals as a child. As long as one had a bellyful of food that was enough. One went to graze and that was it.**

Q: You've just been telling us about what you did...herding when you were about 6 or 7. As you got older, did you have different jobs to do on the farm?

**#38N: It was just working in the fields. It was farm work.**

Q: As one grew older?

**#38N: Yes.**

Q: So what jobs did you have to do? What responsibilities did you have on the farm?

**#38N: Yes?**

Q: What responsibilities were there on the farm?

00:17:30

**#38N: There was digging the earth. While sowing the earth must be dug. Then creating channels for irrigation and such. After harvest [the crops] must be brought to the house. The animals did the transportation. The horses and mules did it.**

Q: Do you think...do you think that your life on the farm was a hard life?

**#38N: Looking at it, it seems hard. However, once one is used to the work, then that was it. Whether it was hard or not one must continue to do it. It was not bad. Looking at it, it involved working with soil and it was very difficult. However, one continued to do it and it was not bad. That was your life.**

Q: What was the hardest part about life on the farm?

**#38N: The hardest part was at the beginning, at the time of sowing when one must dig the ground. That was the hardest.**

Q: Why was this so particularly hard?

00:20:00

**#38N: That was because it entailed working in the soil. One must dig the earth and create channels. That was difficult, and also channeling water.**

Q: Do you think it was harder for your parents than for you?

**#38N: All the responsibilities rested on the parents like providing food for those that worked in the fields, and the onus of sowing the fields and harvesting. These responsibilities lay with the parents even though the children did the work; the children did it.**

Q: So your family hired people to work for you, did they?

**#38N: [Hired workers] came. Sometimes [we] went [to work for others] and sometimes [others] came when there was more work like at the time of sowing.**

Q: Were these paid helpers or were they neighbors or family members you just help each other?

00:22:10

**#38N: It was on rotation basis, rotation basis. Also at the time of sowing the earth must be dug up by plowing and those poor people that did not own *dzo* were supplied with *dzo* and helped with transportation by sending horses and mules. Such was the mutual help.**

Q: I'm not sure if I've understood completely, but was this a voluntary helping each other or did you pay people, say with grain?

**#38N: Grain was given. Grain was given if [someone] asked for it. It was grain if one wished for it or if they did not own many animals and *dzo* were required for plowing at the time of sowing, then such was provided. *Dzo* were given and horses at the time of transportation of harvest. So it was like paying wages. It was helping each other.**

Q: Did you ever own your own land or did you always work on your parents' land?

00:24:24

**#38N: [I] worked on the parents' land and lived with the parents.**

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

**#38N: I had four elder [siblings] and I am the fifth. There were three brothers and two sisters. No one survives now; all have passed away.**

Q: How long ago did they die?

**#38N: Some passed away earlier and some after the Chinese appeared when times turned bad. I have no knowledge how for I was here.**

Q: So how much land did your parents own?

**#38N: [My parents] owned a fair amount of land. I cannot say how much but it was fairly large.**

Q: And how many animals?

**#38N: There were around five *dzo*, four horses, ten donkeys, 16-17 cows and a hundred sheep.**

Q: Was your family considered a wealthy family?

00:26:49

**#38N: No, [we] were among the middle class. [We] were humble and did not owe anything nor did [we] lend. [We] lived humbly.**

Q: So if you had...if there were three sons in the family and the parents died, what happened to the land?

**#38N: The land was divided equally. If [the brothers] lived together in the house that was fine. If not, it was divided equally. The animals, everything was divided.**

Q: If there were daughters who were not married, would they get any of that land and the animals?

**#38N: Girls should also be given the same for they should not be treated badly. They have worked hard together. So the parents provided the same [to the girls].**

Q: In my country when people who owned farms die and they have many children and they give a little bit to each family...to each child, what sometimes happens is that they become poorer and poorer. Did that kind of thing happen in Tibet?

00:29:43

**#38N: That did not happen. [The children] managed okay. If it was a daughter, she would have a husband and they would make life together. If it were a son, he would bring a wife. [They] did not become that poor but managed okay.**

Q: But if you had, say this much land then it was divided between three, say sons wouldn't they each get much less land than the family originally have?

**#38N: [They] did not face any problems but managed okay with everybody's help. It would depend on how hard one worked. If one worked hard on the farm, there would be good results from the land. Should one not put in effort then there will be no harvest.**

Q: Can you give an example of when that happened?

**#38N: Yes, one must work hard. The region was a vast area of land and the land holdings were not small. The fields were fairly large.**

Q: Did you have the opportunity to go to school?

00:32:23

**#38N: No, not at all.**

Q: Did you ever go study in the monastery?

**#38N: [I] was in the monastery for a short while. However, I did not have the brains to study; never was intelligent. [I] could not study.**

Q: [You] weren't intelligent?

**#38N: Yes, I never was. [I] forget whatever is taught.**

Q: Was this the same when you were a little boy or a young man that you had a hard time remembering things?

**#38N: [That was] when [I] was fairly older.**

Q: Around what age?

**#38N: Around 8, 9 or 10.**

Q: When [you] went to the monastery?

**#38N: Yes.**

Q: For how long did you stay in the monastery?

**#38N: I was there for around 10 years.**

Q: Ten years?

**#38N: Yes.**

Q: Was this the monastery that was close to your home?

00:34:28

**#38N: Yes, the closest monastery.**

Q: Gaden?

**#38N: Yes, it was Gaden.**

Q: Why did you go into the monastery?

**#38N: Initially, one became a monk hoping to remain as one but later it was not to be.**

Q: So going into the monastery was this your idea or was it your parents' idea?

**#38N: It was the parents' decision.**

Q: Why did they decide to send you to the monastery?

**#38N: Since we were five brothers, I as the youngest was made a monk. The older ones were working at home.**

Q: What were your parents hoping would happen by sending you to the monastery?

**#38N: The hope was to study the dharma and to become educated but I did not have the aptitude and that did not happen.**

Q: So did you live in the monastery or did you live at home?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Those 10 years, right?

Q: During those 10 years, did you live in the monastery or did you live at home and visited the monastery time and again?

00:36:56

**#38N: Yes, [I] did like that.**

Q: [You] lived at home and...?

**#38N: Most of the time [I] lived in the monastery, but sometimes visited home and stayed there.**

Q: When you were in the monastery how was your day? How was it arranged? What would you do?

**#38N: By living in the monastery, if it went well one received an education and if not, as a young freshman, one must do things like sweep the monastery and such.**

Q: In a day, for instance.

**#38N: Yes, in a day.**

Q: What did you spend your time doing?

**#38N: The parents brought food supplies. I needed to eat food which the parents provided when [I] lived at the monastery.**

Q: What other duties did you do in the monastery?

**#38N: Those that were older and did not know the scriptures were required to perform various kinds of duties in the monastery, like when there was a *geshe thangka* ‘offerings made for one graduating with a degree in philosophy.’ Those of us that did not know the scriptures...when one did not know the scriptures one was assigned any important work that came up; one must do hard work. Those that knew the scriptures did not need to perform such duties.**

Q: Was there a particular event or moment that led you leaving the monastery?

00:39:35

**#38N: Later I was 28 years old. Later I turned 28 years old. When [I] became 28, the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] was established at the place called Diguthang to counter the Chinese. Then [I] went to join it. [I] could not learn the scriptures and joined it for around a year. [I] joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* at the age of 28 and lost Tibet at 29.**

Q: Could you tell us about life with the *Chushi Gangdrug*, please?

**#38N: Okay, but I do not have a lot to say.**

Q: Perhaps briefly?

**#38N: How should [I] say?**

Q: You joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* at the age of 28. What did you do there?

**#38N: When [I] joined at the age of 28...on the first day of Losar ‘Tibetan New Year’ [I] was sent towards Kongpo by the *Chushi Gangdrug*. We were a hundred horsemen that were deployed and went to the place called Gyaching in Kongpo.**

Q: Where?

**#38N: Gyaching.**

Q: Kongpo Gyaching?

00:41:25

**#38N: Gyaching.**

Q: Gyaching?

**#38N: Yes. It is in Kongpo. Kongpo Gyaching. [We] went there. It was planned to hold ground on the eve of the New Year and attack on the New Year day. A part of our group from Lhasa was to block [Chinese] vehicles that came through Powo Tamo and the rest dashed in.**

Q: Entered where?

**#38N: Into the Chinese stronghold.**

Q: Was there a Chinese military base at Kongpo Gyaching?

**#38N: There was and [we] entered it. We were not aware but what they [the Chinese] had done was...earlier they had faced some problem. So [they] had dug up the ground all around the wall and stocked food supplies, water and everything in it. We rushed into the building to fight but all of them...there were plenty of wooden boards in Kongpo.**

Q: Plenty of what?

**#38N: Wooden boards.**

Q: Wooden boards?

**#38N: Yes, there were plenty of wooden boards. [The Chinese troops] had covered the foxholes with wooden boards after running in. It was not a successful [attack].**

Q: What happened to the troops of the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

**#38N: Seventeen or 18 of our men got killed there. Some fired on the Chinese in the foxholes and suffered broken arms. It was like that.**

Q: Were those that suffered broken arms Tibetan fighters?

**#38N: Yes, they were Tibetans. There were holes through which the Chinese peeped and fired upon us. Our men were foolhardy, did not have knowledge. [They] rushed in foolhardily and suffered broken arms.**

Q: What happened to you in this attack?

00:44:41

**#38N: I was not injured in any way but a few of my colleagues...there were different groups and I lost four colleagues.**

**In all the Chinese killed 16-17 men. They shot from the bunkers.**

Q: And the Tibetans who had broken hands, how did they get broken hands?

**#38N: The Chinese had created holes, created holes. [They] had dug bunkers and then created [holes] to shoot from and fired from there. We did not have any training. Tibetan people are stupid charging and shooting directly and then got hit on the hands.**

Q: What do you remember about how you felt that day when there was the attack?

**#38N: Naturally there would be some amount of panic in the mind when it concerned your life.**

Q: And when you felt panic how was that revealed?

00:46:53

**#38N: Nothing else happened. That was it.**

Q: Did you flee from there? What happened after that?

**#38N: After that [we] came to the place called Lhoka. [We] arrived in Tsethang in Lhoka where the army camp was located. Then monks from Lhasa appeared. Our group in the army was deployed to a place called Lho Dhongkar.**

Q: Lho Zongkar?

**#38N: Lho Dhongkar.**

Q: Lho Dhongkar.

**#38N: It was like this [gestures off camera]. This was the road to Tsona. One took this road to go to Tsona. The Tsona road was here and Lho Dhongkar was here. There was only one road and His Holiness the Dalai Lama took this route. We were supposed to guard that route.**

Q: At Lho Dhongkar?

**#38N: Yes.**

Q: Did you see the Dalai Lama on this journey?

00:48:41

**#38N: We could not see. [We] could not see His Holiness because when His Holiness took this route we were behind it. There were many valleys and [we] were to stop the Chinese should they come through there. From that point there was only one route. Should there be two; His Holiness could take another route. Since there was only one route, we were to guard it.**

Q: So this attack on the Chinese garrison was part of that plan to safeguard the Dalai Lama. Is that right?

**#38N: [The incident] in Kongpo took place earlier. That was on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> lunar month. [We] reached the place on the eve and attacked in the morning of the 1<sup>st</sup> day. His Holiness arrived after that, a few days later.**

Q: Going back to the New Year attack, what happened to the Tibetan soldiers who were killed or injured?

**#38N: [We] just about managed to bring the injured along. They might have got some sort of treatment in the army camp; I do not know about it. As for the dead [they] were killed inside the Chinese garrison. They were firing from all around the fence. There was no way one could do anything [about the dead]. If a person was carrying money, one could not go to retrieve it. If a person was wearing an amulet, a stupa or things like that one could not go to retrieve it. It was impossible because of the firing. [The bodies] had to be left there.**

Q: Did the Chinese ever return those dead bodies to the villagers?

00:51:52

**#38N: No, [the Chinese] did not return. Even if one wanted to go and retrieve money or amulets on the bodies, it was impossible because of the firing.**

Q: Did the Chinese bury the bodies? What did they do with these bodies?

**#38N: Who know what [the Chinese] did?**

Q: So you were in the *Chushi Gangdrug* for two years, I mean for one year. What else did you do in *Chushi Gangdrug*?

**#38N: Then it was when [we] came to Lho Dhongkar. Nothing else happened. We came to Lho Dhongkar and remained at the route of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Once His Holiness left, Tibet was on the verge of being lost...Lhasa was lost and then the Chinese came swarmed like anything in just one day. Around 63 of our horses were killed. Sixty-three horses got killed together with two men.**

[Discontinuity in video. English interpretation missing.]

Q: The stories you're telling us, the memories you're telling us about your time with the *Chushi Gangdrug* are very, very interesting. Could you tell us about some other memories you have of that time?

**#38N: [I] do not have anything else to recount. There is nothing to say except about the journey coming here.**

Q: Could you tell us about your escape story, please?

00:54:00

**#38N: At the Indian border was a bridge, the other side of which was occupied by the Chinese. The Chinese had already taken control. The opposite side was in Indian Territory and there were Indian soldiers present. Then we were within [Indian Territory] in Mon Tawang. There is a place called Missamari in India, which is very hot. We came through that region, through Bomdila.**

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

**#38N: It took two days. Fleeing day and night, it took two days.**

Q: Were the Chinese pursuing you all this time?

**#38N: [The Chinese] were in pursuit. There were some that got killed and [we] were forced to flee. Some were caught and some killed during the flight. [I] managed to escape. It depended upon one's destiny. [I] got to live until now by not falling into their hands. Or else, [I] would have been finished.**

Q: Did any of your other companions survive with you?

00:56:15

**#38N: Some managed to escape while some were killed. Some got left behind. If one cannot undertake the trek one would be caught and killed.**

Q: What was the most frightening part about your fleeing to the border?

**#38N: When a person becomes tough there is hardly any fear or hunger although there was not anything to eat. There was hardly any hunger or fear. One came away in that manner.**

Q: Could you tell us about your life once you crossed the border? You mentioned that it was very hard. How did that affect you?

**#38N: It was very hot. We were put in a train and driven for a night. After a night [we] were left at Siliguri.**

Q: From where?

**#38N: They put us in a train in Missamari and drove for a night. The Indians drove us. The Indians were in authority then. The Indians drove to Siliguri where [we] were given food and then sent to Gangtok.**

Q: Why did the Indians put you on a train and take you to Gangtok?

00:58:40

**#38N: The Indians took us. Everyone had collected at one place, Missamari. Those that came through Bhutan were in Bhutan. Those that took other routes reached other places. Most of us that came through Bomdila were at Missamari. [We] traveled in the train. The Indians provided food for a few days, provided good food. After a few days [we] reached Siliguri. [We] were provided with food and then sent to Gangtok.**

Q: Why to Gangtok?

**#38N: Yes?**

Q: Why to Gangtok?

**#38N: We were to construct roads in Gangtok. They had to give us work. We could not survive without work.**

Q: How many of you were on the train?

**#38N: [I] have no idea how many were there. One had no experience then.**

Q: About how many compartments did the train have?

**#38N: The train was like it is today.**

Q: You had never seen a train then having just arrived from Tibet. Was the train long? How many compartments were there?

01:00:53

**#38N: The train was long but [I] do not know how many compartments were there. One had no such awareness then.**

Q: But all the passengers were Tibetans, were they?

**#38N: Were Tibetans.**

Q: Men and women and children?

**#38N: There were.**

Q: How long did it take you to get to Gangtok?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: To Siliguri.

Q: How long did it take from Missamari to Siliguri?

**#38N: [I] do not know. It was a night or two. Perhaps it was one night.**

Q: And once you arrived at Siliguri what did the Indians do with you?

**#38N: The Indians provided food. After food there were vehicles ready. There were vehicles ready in which we rode all the way to Gangtok. We were in *toptsang* ‘communal eating unit’ of 100 or 50 or 60 men.**

Q: I imagine this work was very different from work you had done before. Was it very hard work?

01:03:18

**#38N: It was difficult for one must blast rocks. It was difficult blasting rocks. It was very difficult.**

Q: Was this a new kind of work for you or were you able to build up on what you already knew?

**#38N: It was new because one had never built roads before. [I] had no experience, neither did I nor my colleagues. There were around 60 colleagues none of whom had any experience.**

Q: And the hot weather. How did that affect people?

**#38N: [The weather] was moderate.**

Q: Was that weather closer to Tibetan weather than Siliguri?

**#38N: Fairly so. The people of Sikkim understood a little bit of Tibetan. They understood a little bit of Tibetan.**

**[Sikkim and Tibet] are on either side of a mountain pass.**

Q: How did the local people react to Tibetan refugees coming?

01:05:21

**#38N: [They] were not bad; were fairly good.**

Q: What would they do?

**#38N: They provided us places to stay. Otherwise, we did not have anything to do with them.**

Q: There wasn't any interaction?

**#38N: [I] do not think so but have not much knowledge. [I] was young then and did not have much interest.**

Q: For how long did you stay there?

**#38N: Perhaps for two years.**

Q: And when you did the roadwork, were you paid for that?

**#38N: [We] received a fairly good salary.**

Q: Do you remember how much you were paid?

**#38N: [I] do not know and cannot recall. At that time we had lost our country of Tibet. Whatever salary one received, one ate good food. There were groups of community kitchens and one cooked good tasty food. That was it. If there was any surplus money one drank *payi* ‘beer brewed in bamboo tubes.’ The wealth one had accumulated in the past had come to naught. So one had no thought about wealth.**

Q: So when you left Gangtok...when you left Gangtok, where did you go?

01:07:45

**#38N: From there [I] went to Mustang. [I] went to Kalimpong from Gangtok and then from Kalimpong to Darjeeling. From Darjeeling [I] was sent through Raxaul [to Mustang, Nepal]. The way through Raxaul, which [I] took was very difficult. And then it was Nepalese Territory. The Nepalese stopped you and the Indians stopped you. So [we] journeyed through forests and crude paths in the nights and reached Mustang.**

Q: Mustang?

**#38N: Yes.**

Q: Why did you come to Mustang?

**#38N: That was because we...why should I not tell the truth? We wanted to put up a challenge, thinking, “It matters not if [I] died or anything happened.” There was no other thought. “I wish to live here and engage in some work, some business.” One did not have such thoughts. One went to Mustang with just the thought of fighting [the Chinese].**

Q: Were any of your family members with you?

01:09:51

**#38N: From Tibet?**

Q: Yes.

**#38N: I was alone. What family would the like of us have brought along?**

Q: Where had you got separated from them?

**#38N: The separation came about when it was said that Lhasa was lost. Then there was no way one could remain. They were left behind in Tibet and I had come here. So [we] are separated. There was no meeting, nothing.**

Q: When you were in Mustang you said that you were thinking a lot about the Chinese and fighting them and that's what you thought about. So what did you do in Mustang?

**#38N: While in Mustang we stayed under rocks in the mountains.**

Q: Climbed mountains?

**#38N: There were mountains with snow at the top and rocks below where [we] stayed, and also under rocks on nearby mountains. That was how [we] moved about.**

Q: And what did you do there?

01:11:51

**#38N: [We] were making an effort to go there [Tibet]. However, in order to go there, it was impossible at the beginning because there was no food. One was hungry and without clothes. One plucked grass and the leaves of trees to spread underneath and used a flat stone as pillow and slept among the grass. [I] have undergone such experiences. There was no blanket to cover yourself.**

Q: So did you ever go into Tibet?

**#38N: [I] did not.**

Q: While you were in the Mustang force?

**#38N: No.**

Q: So did you ever fight the Chinese when you were in Mustang?

**#38N: There were many encounters during which we fought them [the Chinese] and there were casualties on our side, too. There were some that were killed on their side. Many encounters took place. After I had been in the force for a few years, [I] was appointed to look after the animals like yaks, horses and mules and as a messenger to inform the soldiers...for instance to inform you that it was your turn to go or his or mine. [I] was given this responsibility. So I could not go to the border except a few times. Although [I] went to the border [I] did not get to fire on the Chinese.**

Q: Were you working with a particular group like you were with the *Chushi Gangdrug* or were you just a group of Tibetans working on your own?

01:14:46

**#38N: It was called the Lo Dikzug ‘Mustang Organization.’ It later was called Lo Dikzug.**

Q: Did Lo Dikzug provide you with any kind of training or provide any training to the people fighting?

**#38N: It did. There were some people that returned from abroad to impart such.**

Q: Where had these instructors been trained abroad?

**#38N: [I] do not know where.**

Q: And what did they train them in?

**#38N: About firing a gun, sprinting and hiding. Earlier one did not know how to hide or sprint. One sprinted directly and charged directly. We fought like children did. If one had a knife at the waist, one just drew it and charged. So there was no way to succeed. It was not possible since they [the Chinese] had good weapons.**

Q: Did you receive this training yourself?

01:16:47

**#38N: I was trained a little bit, but I had to take care of the animals and everything. When yaks were called for, yaks had to be readied and when horses were called for, horses had to be kept ready and when men were asked to come, men had to be asked to get ready. I was given this responsibility and that was what I engaged in.**

Q: So how long were you with Lo Dikzug?

**#38N: [I] was there from the start until the Nepalese drove [us] out. I do not know how many years it was.**

Q: Did you enjoy your time with it, with the organization?

**#38N: It was fairly good. It was very difficult in the beginning with the scarcity of food and clothing. We even ate the hide of animals by shaving off the fur and boiling it. Later it was okay with good food. [I] enjoyed it.**

Q: What else did you enjoy?

01:18:43

**#38N: The food had been poor. That was about it. We single men needed a belly full of food. At the beginning the food was extremely poor. One went hungry more times than full. Later, there was enough food to satiate and it was good.**

Q: Well, thank you very, very much for your very interesting interview.

**#38N: [Joins palms]**

Q: I understand that you need to take some medicine.

**#38N: Yes.**

Q: So we'd like to thank you again for talking with us. I have to ask you two questions first. If the interview was shown in Tibet or China, would it be a problem for you?

**#38N: What problem would there be for me? I will not face any, but our government is facing problems.**

END OF INTERVIEW