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Interview H.0229.03 : Tape 3

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Name: Jama Ngagdrug [Tib. ja ma ngag phrug]
Gender: Male
Age: 80
Date of Birth: 1923

Abstract

[Note: The first 2/3rds of the accompanying Tibetan tape is missing. To find where it starts search for "tape begins here."] Jama Ngagdrug [Tib. ja ma ngag phrug] was a monk and trader from Targye Gomba [Tib. dar rgyas dgon pa] Monastery in Kham. He was one of the tsondzin leaders in Chushigandru and was with Gombo Tashi [Tib. mgon po bkra shis] when he went to get the government's guns from Shang Ganden Chöngor [Tib. dga' ldan chos 'khor] Monastery in 1958. In this interview, he explains how he and Gombo Tashi fled from Pembar to Lhoka and then escaped to India.

Tape 3

A: Then Andru Jinda told me, "You should take the pack mules of the Ammunition Office [Tib. go mdzod las khungs] with you and you should also lead the main troop. You should guarantee that you will be able to take care [Tib. 'go thon] of the Ammunition Office." I told Jinda, "I can't guarantee that I can take care of the ammunition office. If we confront the enemy, it is not okay for me if I lose the Ammunition Office to the enemy and come back alive. I will make it so that if the Ammunition Office is lost then Jama Ngagdrug would also be killed. I can't guarantee that I can take care of the ammunition office, but I will sacrifice my life if I lose the Ammunition Office."

Q: You meant that you should not come back after losing the ammunition office, right?

A: Yes. Then Andru Jinda said, "That is alright. You lead the Ammunition Office and go to Gyamtsoling [Tib. rgya mtsho gling] and then contact with Potö [Tib. spo stod] in Kongpo." Then I led the Ammunition Office and went to Gyamtsoling. When I got there, 10 of my 12 soldiers who had disappeared came back. I heard that two of the soldiers had been killed when they got scattered from our fighters and met the Chinese soldiers on their way. One of them was called Tsheba [Tib. tshe dpag] and the other was the nephew of Pachen [Tib. dpa' chen]. After a week, Andru Jinda came to that place.

Q: Where did the 10 soldiers come back from?

A: They came back when I was in Gyamtsoling. By then, Andru Jinda brought the clerk of Tengchen called Karupön Trunyi [Tib. dkar ru dpon drung yig] and a person called Nagru Depön [Tib. nag ru sde dpon] with him. Jinda had left about 100 riders in Khyungpo Tengchen.

Q: Did he send the soldiers to Khyungpo Tengchen before that?

A: Yes. He had sent those soldiers to help the people in Khyungpo Tengchen to fight the enemy. Then we crossed the Atsha Bentsa [Tib.?] la mountain pass and arrived at Atsha Tshokha lake.

At that time, Andru Jinda gave me a statue of Avalokitsevara which was a protective talisman given by the 13th Dalai Lama during the war in Targye Gomba. Then Jinda told us to draw lots as to which of the groups should go to Kongpo Bala [Tib. bar la], Kongpo Namsey [Tib. rnam sras] and to destroy the highway on the other side of the river. He was thinking to go to Lhoka with the main troop. I was among the people going to Kongpo Namsey according to the lottery.

Q: At that time, how many soldiers did you have with you?

A: I had about 60 riders with me. At that time, there were about ten horses and mules in that place and some of my soldiers

wanted to exchange horses, but I didn't let them do that. I didn't let them steal horses. On the next day, when we were taking a rest for a day, we had to wait there and watch whether the Chinese were coming or not. Right after that, we heard that the Chinese are coming.

Q: Who told you that?

A: The miser told us. When we went outside [to look], we knew that it was a plane. The people might have thought that the sound of the plane was the sound of vehicles. The plane had come to watch where we were going.

By then, Gyado Thöndrub was in Kongpo Giamda. He sent a messenger to me saying, "You should withdraw and come to Giamda at 7 a.m. tomorrow morning. Jinda has already left for Lhoka." The next morning I arrived at Giamda and the fighters of Litang, Kongra [Tib. kong ra] and Jüpa [Tib. 'jus pa] who had gone to destroy the highway had also gathered there. Then Gyado Thöndrub said, "Let's have tea and relax and then let's blow the trumpet and go to do practice drills."

However, I told him, "We are not going to practice drills. Since Andru Jinda has already left, we should leave. It is not good to stay here like this." He replied, "You go ahead and stop for a meal in Nyimala. I will follow you soon." I went and stopped for a meal in Nyimala where there was a village. There were many horses grazing on the mountain there and our soldiers said, "Let's go change our horses" but I told them, "You aren't allowed to go to change the horses. We have to leave because the highway is near by."

When we stopped for the meal, Gyado Thöndrub arrived and I told him that we have had our meal and now we are leaving. You should come along soon. Among the soldiers there was a person called Aten [Tib. a brtan] from Tshawa Rongpa [Tib. tsha ba rong pa]. He came back riding a mule and said, "The whole area was full of Chinese. So we were unable to get through that place."

Q: Was that in Kongpo Giamda?

A: It was at the upper part of Giamda in Nyimala.

Q: How far is Nyimala from Giamda? Was it like a half-day journey?

A: Yes. Then I told him to deliver a message to Gyado Thöndrub [about this]. When we arrived near a bridge, we met people who were sent by Chushigandru to transport about 500 loads of foodstuffs such as bricks of tea and pork. They were sent from Kongpo to Lhoka. Four or five of the people transporting the foodstuffs came to me, one of whom was wounded.

Q: Where did they get wounded?

A: They confronted the Chinese on their way and lost the 500 loads of foodstuffs with the pack animals to the Chinese when the Chinese fired at them. Right after that, Gyado Thöndrub came to that place and said that he didn't get a chance to boil tea and he asked me "What shall we do?" I said, "Let's go to the other side of the river and send the pack horses carrying foodstuffs down to that village.

After that, the Chinese soldiers came up. At the front line there were about 30-40 tractors and they had set up Bren-guns on the tractors and they were shooting very severely.

Q: Were there many Chinese soldiers?

A: There were about 70 trucks.

Q: Were the trucks full of soldiers?

A: Yes. We exchanged fire and the trucks stopped down there. At that time, there weren't any casualties. When our pack horses loaded with foodstuffs withdrew towards the village, the Chinese shot them very severely and the place was full of dust and two of the pack-horses were killed.

After that, we were unable to get through Kongpo so we had to go to Mashung again to the place where we were attacked by the Chinese cannons. Right after that, Litang Gyado Thöndrub and Lobsang Champa [Tib. blo bzang byams pa] came and asked me, "From which direction shall we go? Would it be better to go to Nagchuka or go to Nagshö Biru or go back to Kongpo?"

Q: When you were unable to get through to Kongpo Giamda, you withdrew from Kongpo, right?

A: Yes. Then I told them, "I did a divination [Tib. mo] and the result was that it would be favorable to go to Mashung. We shouldn't go to Nagchuka because the horses would be unable to go and we shouldn't go to Nagshö Biru because the situation is different than before and the Chinese had won and we have lost so the miser will hand us over to the Chinese".

So we decided to go to Mashung. The two of them should take 50 riders and go ahead as the advance troop and I will take 200 riders and come behind. At that time, we saw some monks from Ganden Monastery who were running away. They said that Lhasa was lost.

Q: At that time, Andru Jinda had left for Lhoka, right?

A: Yes. After that when we reached a plain the advanced troop was staying there. They said, "We can't go forward without a guide. So we sent people to the nomad's area to find a guide for us." Right after that, two nomads came with them. I told them that you have to pay sufficient wages to the nomads so they paid six hundred sang notes for each of them.

Then 50 advanced troops left with the nomads. When they arrived at the place where Jinda (Gombo Tashi) was wounded, it had become dark and the nomads had already left and there wasn't a guide for us.

Q: The nomads just took the money and left, right?

A: Yes. I said, "Let's go ahead on horseback. We have to go through the road before we arrive at Kongpo Barla." That was the road to Lhoka.

Q: Do you know the name of that place?

A: No. Then we crossed the highway and stopped for a meal near a mountain range. Gyado Thöndrub suggested that we should stay overnight in that place, but I said, "We had better leave because Andru Jinda had already left." On the next day, we arrived at Wolga [Tib. 'ol dga'].

Q: So you had arrived at Lhoka, right?

A: Yes, but we hadn't crossed the [Yarlungtsangpo] river to Lhoka. In that place, I found there were about 200 riders from Targye Gomba and a Payroll Office of Chushigandru. They said that they had come to receive Andru Jinda and they said to us, "You don't need to go there. You should stay here." I told them, "I am going there and you should also leave because if you have come to receive Jinda, you had already received him [he meant that Jinda had already left]. You have about 200 soldiers, but there aren't many experienced soldiers. Most of them are monks from the great monasteries like Sera, Drepung and Ganden."

They said, "We can't go back if the Payroll Office doesn't go because we were chosen from among many groups. I told them, "You should consult with the Payroll Office and had better leave. I am leaving and I am going to stay for one or two weeks in Lhagyari and take a rest. Targye Gomba Pachen has already left for Dowa [Tib. do ba] Dzong so I am also going there." Then they said, "Please deliver a message for us [to the main regiment]." I said, "I will not deliver the message because the situation has changed. You should think about what you ought to do. Do not wait for a message."

On that day, we crossed the river in coracles. It was about midday when we got to the other side of the river. By then, I heard that Tsetang was lost. After I heard that Tsetang was lost, I was told to go to Lhagyari to find a battlefield. I watched the plain of Lhagyari and checked how we should fight the battle and came back.

After that, I heard that 200 riders of Targye Gomba had also arrived at the ferry site and they told me to give them some ammunition, but I didn't have any ammunition to give them. At that moment, the office of Chushigandru located in that place told me to go to Yartö Dragla [Tib. yar stod brag la]. I told them, "Unless you have one load of ammunition to be given to the 200 riders of Targye Gomba, I am not going to Yartö Dragla." So they gave me a load of ammunition saying this is the only ammunition left and I gave the ammunition to Nyarong Kelsang Dorje [Tib. nyag rong skal bzang rdo rje] and Pema Tsewang [Tib. pad ma tshe dbang]. I told them, "This ammunition is to use when you withdraw and run away because you have only 1,000 bullets and that would be useless for fighting because it is not enough. So you should think about it and come along. Tonight I am staying in Yartö Dragla. I am not sure whether I will stay there tomorrow or not."

Then I sent my soldiers over there and I stayed in Yartö Dragla with two servants. At the east side of Yartö Dragla, there was a Payroll Office of Chushigandru and they were sending tsamba, meat and butter to Nyan [Tib. gnyan]. Andru Jinda had already left for Nyan.

At that time, I told the Payroll Office that I had 200 riders with me so "Give us some tsamba, meat and butter. Later, if the situation is okay. I will clear the account. If the situation is bad, then one's own soldiers ate one's own food. There is nothing to say about that. You better give the food to one's own soldiers, otherwise you will lose them to the enemy."

Then they said, "We are very sorry, but we can't give you the foodstuffs because we were told to send the tsamba, meat and butter to Nyan and Andru Jinda had already left for Nyan." Then I said, "Okay."

After that, the Chinese soldiers came to Yartö Dragla. By then, the soldiers who came from Kongpo Barla also arrived there. When we tried to go through a plain in that area, the Chinese were shooting cannons so we were unable to get through. Right after that Jama Sampel [Tib. bya ma bsam 'phel] and those people working in the Payroll Office who refused to give us foodstuff also came to that place. When the Chinese fired cannons, Jama Sampel rode a horse and came back. Then I told three of my helpers "Now the Chinese are firing canons, so there is a danger that the horses will be killed. Therefore I am going to gallop my horse on the plain." When I galloped along the plain, the Chinese fired several canons. When we got at the end of the plain, we knew that one of my helpers was missing. Later, we learned that his horse got frightened and went to another place and I was alone.

In that place, there were 30-40 donkeys loaded with meat and butter that had stopped in that place. Those belonged to Chushigandru and were going to be lost to the Chinese. The soldiers who were with me came over and I told them to take the meat and butter. Then two of us divided a load of butter and I took half a load of butter and a carcass of meat.

After that, I saw that the people of the Payroll Office were going there and I heard Litang Jamatsang saying that he had been injured. He was not wounded by gunshots but when he fell from his horse. Then I told him, "When I told you guys to give me the foodstuffs you refused. But now I am taking meat and butter by myself." He didn't say anything. The next morning, Jamatsang, told me "You are really smart. You are taking away the foodstuffs." After that, I told the other soldiers to eat meat and butter and go to Nyan. I will wait for three of my servants and then I follow you. Then I stayed with one fighter. That night my servant told me, "We had better leave because all the other soldiers have left for Nyan." By that time, I also saw many Chushigandru soldiers going through that place and I saw Kharchen Chandzö was there. He gave me two loads of ammunition and said, "Take this ammunition

and the Targye Gomba group should go in front." Then three of my servants came along and I was planning to go, but Kharchen Chandzö delivered another message saying that we should cross the Jatsala mountain pass. We don't need to go at the front

After that, we arrived at the Nyan Jatsala mountain pass which was the crossroads for going to India and Tsöna. At that time some of our soldiers were coming back. When I asked them why they were coming back all of them said that they didn't know. At that time, Andru Jinda was also leaving that place. I told my servants to take a rest in that place and I will go to see what happening. Then I saw that Tashi Bera, the Commander of the Trapchi Regiment had arrived there. I sent two soldiers to ask Tashi Bera why the Chushigandru soldiers were coming back. He said, "I don't know. I just came to check whether my soldiers are all here or not."

While we were going through that place, at last Andru Jinda came along. I asked him why the soldiers are coming back. Andru Jinda said, "We couldn't go through Tsöna because it was full of Chinese soldiers. So we withdrew our soldiers. We have to keep some best quality troops to protect the large number of people who are fleeing with their family members and children. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to get through." At that point, when I told the soldiers to stay with me, they didn't listen to my order. Andru Jinda said that he was going to stay in Nyan Jatsha Monastery.

After that, I arrived at the estate that belonged to Sambo and we stayed in that estate. They gave us hay and fodder for the horses. The next morning, when we were planning to leave, the Chinese were firing cannons. I told them that we should leave because if they fire cannons many horses and mules will be lost. Later, we learned that the Chinese had been firing cannons in Drigutang and we just heard the sound. When we reached a place where three roads intersected, Kharchen Chandzö was there with 15 loads of ammunition. He said, "The Chinese are coming here from Tsöna so we should send fighters to stop them." So I sent the pack horses and I went to the village nearby and I saw there were two groups of fighters boiling tea. The soldiers told me that they had worked hard in Lhoka. I told them, "It is good that you worked hard. Please go up to this place [where the Chinese are going to come]." They agreed to go there.

Right after that, a person riding a mule came down and I told him to go up there, but he said, "I am not going up there. I am a magji." Then I told him, "If you are a magji, the name magji was given for fighting with the enemy. So please go up there." He still said that he is not going. Then I told him, "If you are not going, I will teach you a lesson! [Tib. ltad mo lta]. You might be a magji like shit and loose stool!" At that moment, he had a good servant who said, "Don't say that. We will go." They had only one packhorse and my servant helped them load the horse and they went up there.

Q: He was the magji of what?

A: He said that his name was Tenzin and he was the Markham Magji in Lhoka. He was the person riding a mule who's photo is in the Dalai Lama's biography. After that, I told Kharchen Chandzö that the two of us had a quarrel. Kharchen Chandzö said, "He is a very bad person and a liar also." That night Andru Jinda came and the two of us drank tea.

The next morning, I told Kharchen Chandzö, "Now wouldn't it be better for us to leave?" He said, "Gyado Thöndrub hasn't come. We probably should wait for him." Then I said, "If you are waiting for Gyado Thöndrub to come, I am leaving." Then I crossed the Gangla snow mountain pass and I arrived in Indian territory. At that time, many people were crossing the mountain pass. There were Chushigandru soldiers and there were also many miser fleeing.

Q: What was the name of the mountain pass?

A: It was called Magola. After crossing the mountain pass, some people were just firing guns. They were the monks from the great monasteries like Sera and Drepung. They were just shooting because they could flee and there weren't any targets to shoot. After that, we didn't have tsamba to eat so I sent a servant with 100 dayan and told him to go and buy some food. He bought some internal organs of animals and we boiled and ate them. The next morning Andru Jinda came.

Q: Did he come after you?

A: Yes, sometimes he was going ahead and sometimes he was coming behind. Jinda said, "Some of the soldiers have loaded up with meat and they are coming down". Probably they have slaughtered yaks. If they do that within the Indian territory, it might block our way down". At that time, Andru Jinda came to that place. I told him to ride my mule and said that you can't walk, but he refused and went ahead. Then we arrived at Mon Tawang [Tib. mon rta dbang] and one day I was called to a meeting of Chushigandru and I was told to go to Kalimpong with five people to get the trader's money of the wool trade which ha been left with Sandutsang and Pandatsang.

[Note: Tape begins here] When I arrived in Kalimpong and asked about the money, they said that there wasn't much money that would be useful for Chushigandru. But you have to take whatever money [that there is]. They had put the money in a woolen bag and sealed it.

Q: Did they tell you take the money?

A: Yes. Six of us went to get the money. There were 3 lakhs of rupees. We took the money to Missamari.

Q: At that time, was the Dalai Lama in Missamari?

A: Yes, at that time, Andru Jinda, Amdo Khyenrab [Tib. mkhyen rab] and Drau Künkhyen [Tib. gra'u kun mkhyen] were going to have an audience with the Dalai Lama. I handed over the money to Kharchen Chandzö. He was a very good person. He put the money in a big trunk and pressed it closed with a big stone. Right after that, Andru Jinda came and said that he was given the title of dzasa. So it was said that we have to celebrate that and the celebration was held in Missamari. At that time, the Dalai Lama said that we have to elect people's deputies. But nobody implemented that.

Then Gyalo Thondup and Taktse Rimpoche came for an inspection and went back. At that time, the princess of Sikkim came and they said that Sikkim will give jobs to the soldiers of Chushigandru in Gangtok. So all of the soldiers of Chushigandru were sent to Sikkim. At that time, it was said in Missamari that the people should chose whether they will manage their own livelihood or go to the settlements. By then, there were about 700 youngsters in Chushigandru. It was said that they will be sent to a school and they were kept in Missamari.

Q: How old were you then?

A: I was 37. I was staying there.

Q: You didn't go to the school, right?

A: I didn't even think about that. The youngsters who were going to the school were all in their twenties. And Kharchen Chandzö and Baba Yeshe were the leaders of the youngsters. Then I went to Sikkim where my brother was. Later I stayed in Kalimpong. So this is the conclusion.

Q: When you heard from the monks of Ganden that Lhasa was lost, what did you think?

A: I thought that if Lhasa was lost, then it is finished. So there is no other way but to go to Lhoka.

Q: In the beginning, when you set up the organization of Chushigandru, what was your thinking at that time?

A: At that time, I didn't think that it will be good and we could handle the Chinese. But I thought we couldn't stay like this. We didn't have any choice but to oppose the Chinese because if we didn't oppose them we would be imprisoned anyway. Therefore, it would be better to fight and die when our stomach is full rather than suffer hunger in a Chinese prison and the only possibility was to die in the prison.

Q: Did you have this kind of thought all during the times when you were in the Chushigandru.

A: Yes.

Q: How did Andru Jinda become the leader? Did the people elect him?

A: He was not elected. He was the person who started the organization and gathered the people in Lhasa.

Q: Therefore he naturally became the leader, right?

A: Yes. But we were not talking about somebody being the leader and somebody being the servant. At that time we were saying, "When we confront the enemy, we should point the spearheads at the same target. When we would get some good fortune, we should place our bowls together [Tib. dgra byung na mdung rtse mnyam gtad bzo/ grog byung na phor ru mnyam 'dzugs bzo]."

Q: Later, when Andru Jinda was going with the fighters, you were doing this, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Who decided to move the regiment of Chushigandru from Drigutang to Tsöna and Lhagyari?

A: The better or important [Tib. drag pa] persons in the groups like Litang Jamatsang [Tib. bya ma tshang] Litang Alodawa, [Tib. a blo zla ba] Jagö Namgyal Dorje, Litang Jangtsa [Tib. 'jang tsha] Chöndze, Sandu Lonyendra [Tib. blo snyan grags], Chamdo Dotse [Tib. rdo tshe], Amdo Jimpa [Tib. sbyin pa] were at Drigutang. Drigutang is a plain and there were no villages near by. Therefore, I think it had been difficult for the men and the horses to stay there during the winter season.

Q: Do you mean the horses will not have grass to eat in winter?

A: Yes, and the men also need food. So they stayed in the village for that reason.

Q: At that time, did the above-mentioned persons discuss and make the decision to move the regiment?

A: I think they might have done that. I don't know for sure.

Q: Who made the decision? Was Andru Jinda there?

A: No, he wasn't there. He was with me in the north.

Q: While you people went to the north, did they move the regiment?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have anything to say about the trouble regarding Jagö Namgyal Dorje going to Dakpo [Tib. dwags po]?

A: At that time, probably, Namgyal Dorje, Lonyendra and Jangtsa Chöndze might have left for India. Phurba Rignam [Tib. phur pa rig rnam], Bachupön and Chantreng Dotse went to Dakpo.

Q: Namgyal Dorje went to Dakpo saying that he is going to receive Andru Jinda and he stayed for a long time there and the miser made a petition to the main regiment.

A: I heard that in the beginning, the Amdo group went to Dakpo and they raped women and robbed the miser. After that, Phurba Rignam, etc., the three persons [Phurba Rignam, Bachupön and Chantreng Dotse] were sent to Dakpo. After that the Amdo group came back, and the Derge and Chamdo groups stayed in Dakpo. At that time, the soldiers of Chushigandru discussed and decided to go to see Gyalo Thondup and Lhamo Tsering to ask for money and arms support. They said, "If we stay like this, we can't handle the Communist Chinese." Then Lonyendra and those people went to Bhutan and arrived at Kalimpong.

Q: Did Lonyendra tell you about this?

A: Yes, he said that he went to see Gyalo Thondup and asked for money and arms support, but Gyalo Thondup didn't agree to that saying that he didn't have money and arms. Then they told Lhamo Tsering about that. At that time, Lonyendra told me a proverb, "Although there were two different monks, they were reciting the same prayers." [Tib. 'don mi a mchod khag khag yin na yang 'don rgyu chos spyod gcig pa red]. He meant that Gyalo and Lhamo Tsering were talking in the same way. Therefore, they directly contacted the Guomindang which agreed to support a certain amount of guns and give 20 lakhs of Indian Rupees. Lonyendra said, "It was at the same time that we heard that Drigutang was lost that the two of us were called by the Guomindang. So we didn't contact the Guomindang.

Q: That was in 1959, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Did Lonyendra tell you about this when you arrived at India?

A: Yes.