

Common Folk Oral History Collection
Interview OR.0016.02 : Tape 2

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Location of Interview: Mag xiang, Panam [tib. pa snam] County, Tibet Autonomous Region, China

Date of Interview: August 2000

Language of Interview: Tibetan

Interviewed by: Melvyn Goldstein and BJ

Name: Chabsi Mimang [tib. chab srid mi dmangs]

Gender: Female

Age: 54

Date of Birth: 1946

Abstract

Chabsi Mimang was from a poor, landless family in the Old Society. At the age of eleven [1957], her family sent her to be the servant of a butcher in her area and she did not return until 1961, two years after the Democratic Reforms began. In this interview, she describes the public struggle sessions that took place, the Cultural Revolution period and the difficulties she encountered trying to persuade people to join the commune.

Tape 2

Q: Did any people die at that time?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you see people die?

A: I didn't actually see people dying, but many people died. When I went to Dūjung I heard that a monk died in Kunra. He was beaten very seriously during the daytime [during a struggle session] and then he died that night. When they were taking him to the hospital he died on the way. They were making people bend their body down like this [at the waist horizontal to the ground] during the whole day so the blood was probably not circulating.

Q: For how many hours did they usually hold that kind of meeting?

A: It was held for about one month or a half a month. At that time, they were told that they were not allowed to remain as monks and nuns. Khyenrabla knows all about those events. Later, it was said that there was religious freedom and they set up monks in the monastery.

Q: How did they destroy the monasteries?

A: There were two nunneries in Temei. One was called the Dragkar [tib. brag dkar] Nunnery. It was a very good one. I went to visit the nunnery last year. There was a cave in which it was known that Padmasambhava [tib. slob dpon rin po che] had been there. There were hand prints of Padmasambhava there, and a big tray for holding one hundred Tshog offerings. And there was a spring. I went to see the spring, though I was not doing any superstitious things. During the Cultural Revolution, the people in the village and the animal herders destroyed the nunnery. But the dharmagrove in the nunnery where the debating was done was not destroyed. All of the houses of the nunnery were destroyed. The nunnery had trees that had been planted by the nuns and all of these were cut down and carried away, and used for the roofs of houses and for a bridge.

Q: Who were the actual people going to destroy the monasteries? And who organized that?

A: The activists during the Cultural Revolution organized that, and there also were the leaders of the village.

Q: Were those activists from the village?

A: Those nunneries were destroyed by the people in the village. The place where Jachō is living used to be a nunnery that was called the Khangsar Nunnery. The upper one was called the Dragkar Nunnery. They did reforms and made Jachō and Wangdü

live in the nunnery. There was a nun from the family of Director Ngodrub who used to be a nun in that nunnery. Later they adopted a daughter for her and made them live on the stone-paved floor of the nunnery. They made the nunnery into households. Now there are no nuns and monks in this place. And there was a nun called Rangdrol. She was an illegitimate daughter. She took a magpa and they were living in the village. And there was another nun called Gyasa. She lived there after she lost her celibacy.

Q: When the Red Guards went into the households and took away the statues and the religious texts, did they do that once or did they go to the households several times?

A: They went once, and they also went to the households later on.

Q: How many times did they go?

A: They went three times in some households and one time in other households. They went twice in many of the households. At that time I was in Dūjung.

Q: How many times did they go in Dūjung?

A: They went twice to the households. The Red Guards in Sogang village were the worst at destroying those things. After destroying things in their own village, they came to destroy things in our village. Khyenrab la was one of the leaders. And there was Pesal Thöndrup, the wife of Doctor Penchung, and Rishar Pemba Kyiba. I heard that those were the main people destroying things. But nowadays Khyenrab la is kind of doing good to me, and he likes the religious side a little bit. He had a gelong monk [tib. dge slong] in his home [doing prayers]. After destroying the things in Sogang, they went up to Melung to destroy things.

Q: Is Dargye [tib. dar rgyas] still living here?

A: Yes.

Q: What was his position in the past?

A: When I was the head of the xiang [ch. xiang zhang] he was the Branch Party Secretary [ch. zhi bu shu ji]. At that point, he was driven out of his position because he was accused of having relations with two people from Gola Pema who fled abroad.

During the Cultural Revolution, it was so bad that people were not allowed to make friends as they would say that they were making relations with the enemy. They were saying that they were putting their legs together into the same trousers with the enemy. Actually, how could two people wear one pair of trousers?

Q: Did they establish a shock brigade [tib. 'phral sgrub ru khag] here?

A: Yes, they did.

Q: What were they doing at that time?

A: It was created to do work. All the destruction was done by the Red Guards who were wearing red arm bands.

Q: How did people join the Red Guards? What were the criteria for joining them?

A: They were looking at whether the person's history was clean or pure, and whether they had not had any relations with the ngatsab, monks and nuns.

According to the changes that took place in the society during the Cultural Revolution, the poor people and the blacksmiths were considered as good status, and the Work Team used to stay in their houses, though they could see the lice on their bodies moving. In those days, whoever was poor was regarded as good. But nowadays, nobody is going to the houses of the poor people. People go to the houses of the rich people. Now, I am very happy, but the most difficult thing is to be the leader of the village. That really hurts my feelings. I am fifty-five years old and I am doing my job self-reliantly. I have never asked the Work Team or the leader of the xiang to settle matters in our village. Gyatso La knows about that. In the fourth month, the cadres came to give socialist education [tib. spyi tshogs ring lugs kyi slob gso] in this place.

Q: Nowadays, do people apologize to the households in which they had destroyed things during the Cultural Revolution?

A: No. They are not doing that at all. Who will do that? During the Cultural Revolution there was a Chinese Party Secretary named Pang Jiandong, and there was Li Tuming who had a crooked mouth. He was probably from Shey [tib. bzhad]. He is in China somewhere. They were good people, but the people put paper hats on them and took them around the streets accusing them of not building the dam well. At that time, some Red Guards went at the front and some were following the two of them. Those people were so powerful. I gave them boiled water to drink.

Q: How are the relations between people at the present time compared with the past during the Cultural Revolution? Has it gotten better or worse?

A: According to my point of view, the economic conditions have improved. But the people have become more avaricious [tib. sprang rtags tsha po] in their ways of talking and their attitudes, and they have become unwilling to listen to the orders from above [tib. sgal ral tsha po]. In short, they have become worse. They are thinking that all people are at the same level like all the mountains are same in height [tib. ri 'go mtho shas med pa]. I think the best time was just after the reforms and during the Mutual Aid Team. People's attitudes were good and they were willing to eat and drink. They were not stingy. And they were helping each other in harvesting and fetching water, and they were not aggressive [tib. nga rgyal]. But now people will not go to help unless the

leader of the village points their finger to do that. I have been helping the people, though people might have some opinions. I built a house with five rooms for a family. The masses helped them by collecting the stones and the earth. I myself brought the wood materials. All of the work was done by the masses. I don't have a feeling of regret.