

Interview H0000: with Setrong Wangye [tib. gser grong dbang rgyal], (China, May 1993) : Part No. 4 of 7

Setrong Wangye was a member of a rich shungyupa (government taxpayer serf) family [tib. gshung rgyugs pa]) in Tülung [tib. stod lung] district. His family had large land holdings with its own miser [tib. mi ser] or bound peasants/serfs and also held the position of Gyatso gembo [tib. rgya mtsho rgan po] for the district. He discusses pastoral nomad policies and practices as well as taxes. He details how the gangdro tax was done and how government taxpayer serfs (tib. shungyupa) had to work for the government to transport grain from Tsang Province to Lhasa. He also describes the duties of the local official called Gyatso gembo, and he talks about the practice of sending a soldier to the government as a corvée tax. He then discusses a land dispute and irrigation practices.

Q

Please tell us in detail how you collected the taxes for your family for a one year period and how you divided them? You said that you took care of the [chitre](#) (outer tax to government), but your [miser](#) might also have had to work for some [chitre](#).

A

We, the big [shungyupa](#) households, did not have any taxes to collect from others. We had a large area of land and mountain areas because many fields of the extinct taxpayer households were merged with ours. The inferior fields in the mountain area were far away on the border of Yangbajen [tib. yangs pa can]. These were leased out and we got some lease fees from them. The fields that were located on both sides of the river on the way to Yangbajen, belonged to us. From the time of our forefathers, the people living in the agro-pastoral areas have asked to lease the fields in that area from us. Even during our childhood, these fields were left as before and we collected a little bit of lease fees. We didn't collect a large amount of fees [answer not finished]

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Q

How much lease fees do you get from the fields that were leased?

A

We didn't have a summary of that. It was just a small amount. We had some lands in that area which were claimed to belong to Drepung's [Hamdong Khamtzen](#) and when we had a law case with them, we just let it go. In the place called Bang, in the upper part of valley, some of the pastures belonged to [Kundeling](#), but most of the pastures belonged to us. There were 6-7 nomad households there. When I was a child and went to the areas where they would cut the grass [for winter fodder], the nomads would bring milk and butter to us. They were saying to us, "We are grateful to you patron (tib. [jindag](#) [sbyin bdag]) for giving us this pasture." There wasn't any fixed kind of fees for grazing animals there.

Q

Was the place where you cut the grass a fenced area?

A

No, it wasn't fenced. They had just piled up some stones on the corners as demarcations to indicate that people were not allowed to graze their animals within that area. And people would not graze there. The grass was cut to feed the [dzo](#) (cross between yak-cattle) in spring.

Q

Outside of this grass cutting area, the pastures were used by the nomads, right?

A

In the beginning, this used to be a large nomads area, but in 1937-40, the area had a rinderpest [tib. hon nad] epidemic and of 270 animals, only 13-14 were left, so the herd had to be ended.

Q

This was your family's herd, right?

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A

Yes. These were the offsprings of the 20 female yaks given by the [Laja](#) office a long, long time ago for which we had to pay 40 [khe](#) of butter as the lease fee, regardless of whether the number of animals increased or decreased (tib. kyeme chime [skye med 'chi med]). Later, my late older brother asked a nomad to keep the 13-14 animals [that were left] and we had to buy butter from the nomads in order to pay the 40 [khe](#) of butter we owed to the [Laja](#) office.

Q

What taxes did you have to pay the government for the land you held?

A

There were 3 major kinds of taxes called Gyashing Ngösum [tib. rgya shing rngod gsum]. They included Gyasö [tib. rgya gsos], Shing dngul [tib. shing dngul], and Möngö [tib. smon rngod]. As for the Gyasö, I heard that in the old days, the Tibetans and the Nepalese fought a war and in Lhasa people destroyed Nepalese stores and robbed the Nepalese traders, so a deal was made to repay some money to the Nepalese. It was around 1700, and the [Qing] emperor helped in this and paid the money to the Nepalese. From then on, they (Tibet) had to repay the money to the Chinese government, so they raised a tax called Gyasö ("restitution to the Chinese"). As for the Shinggö, it was firewood for the Dalai Lama's kitchen and for the Mönlam Prayer Festival. And as for the Möngö, it was a tax that involved roasting barley to make the [tsamba](#) that would be used in Mönlam Prayer Festival. This tax had to be delivered to the [Tsamshepa](#) [tib. rtsam bzhes pa] who collected barley mainly used for making [tsamba](#) for the monks in the Mönlam. Then another tax was called Damul [tib. 'dam 'ul] which means the [ula](#) (corvée) tax to cut the reeds in the swamp area that were used for the Dalai Lama's stable.

Q

You had to pay money for this, right?

A

Yes. We paid money for this and hired people [to do the corvée work]. Otherwise, if our people had to go to cut the reeds, since they had to remain in the water to do this, and since

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it was deep, up to one's waist, people could get sick and so this was a danger to their lives. When a kind of insect called Dambu [tib. 'dam 'bu] bites you, you get a sore that was terrible. So we didn't go ourselves, but hired others from the areas known as Lhalugorpa [tib. lha klu skor pa], Thamba [tib. dan 'bag], and Jara [tib. sbyar rag] to do this. Those people were accustomed to cutting reeds and they didn't have any problems. We also had to pay a tax called Kyije [tib. skyi bcad] to the Dalai Lama's stable in [Shöl](#) [tib. zhol chibs ra]. This was a tax in leather for making horse halters. We had no leather, so we paid this in money. Then to the [Laja](#), out of the butter tax, there was the tax of many clay bowls for making the Chinese food called steamed meat [ch. zheng rou]. Since we weren't potters, we just paid money instead of the products. We also had to deliver Tibetan paper which we bought in Lhasa and delivered it to them because we didn't make paper.

Q

You also had to deliver butter, right?

A

Yes. That was the butter lease for the animals I mentioned before. We also had to pay some interest for the principal called the Endowment Fund [tib. thebs 'char ma dngul] that we probably had borrowed in the past. This money and the butter were not regarded as a tax because we had the principal. We also had to pay the interest in barley to the [Shöl](#) Legung [tib. zhol las khungs] for the principal of a grain loan that was said to have been taken in past.

Q

Do you know the amount of the Gyashing Ngösum tax that you had to pay yearly?

A

It wasn't a large amount because it was the cost of the barley in the early times which was like 1-2-3 tranga for a [khe](#) of barley. They used to cause some trouble saying that since the price of barley has gone up, so you have to increase the amount of money, but we went to the home of the person in charge and bribed them with money or meat and butter, and requested them not to raise it. These were the permanent taxes in-kind paid by the [shungyupa](#).

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Q

How much money did you pay for the Gyashing Ngösum?

A

I think we had to pay a total of about 20-30 [dotse](#) a year for the Gyashing Ngösum which should be paid on time and should not be delayed.

Q

How much did you pay for cutting the reeds?

A

This was a harder one since we had to pay cash to the hired people. For all of the [shungyupa](#) we needed to hire about 100 people [answer not finished]

Q

How many people did you have to hire?

A

We had to get the money ready in the 6th Tibetan month and go to Lhasa and report to the Office in charge of Feeding Government Horses (the Tsanyer Legung) [tib. rtswa gnyer las khungs]. I didn't have any document regarding this, otherwise I had the annual lists [of taxes].

Q

Can you tell us the approximate number?

A

... [unclear] we used to tell the Tsanyer Legung to take cash/money. The Tsanyer probably collected the money and paid the people about 10 [dotse](#) for the [ula](#) for cutting the reeds. At that time, money was very scarce and we had to be careful in paying that.

Q

How much did you pay for the leather tax?

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A

The leather tax was maybe 5-6-7-8 [dotse](#), but I'm not sure. It was also very hard and we had to go to the Chipdrung [tib. chibs drung] (who was the person in charge of the Dalai Lama's stable in [Shöl](#)).

Q

Wasn't he called Kungala? He as a kind of idiot who was working as a clerk in [Shöl](#) Legung.

A

Yes. He was an old scary man who used to live in the stables. I have gone there many times to pay him the money.

Q

Do you remember how much you paid for the clay bowls and paper?

A

I also don't remember that. For the clay bowls we just paid the cash, but we bought the paper and delivered it. We used to buy paper from the woman shopkeeper with the twisted mouth called Ama Porkhogla [tib. a ma spor kyog lags]. This was the place where we bought paper when we were going to school. We would order about 200-300 pieces of paper that was made in Nyemo and which was the size of a door leaf [tib. sgo tshad ma]. The prices would go up. Otherwise, a piece of paper cost about 1 [sang](#). When we delivered the paper to the [Laja](#), one of their clerks called Jipa [tib. spyi la] would collect the paper and we also went to their home and gave bribes of half a sheep carcass and told him that we have to deliver the paper so please help us. I went many times to bribe the clerk called Lobsang Tenzin [tib. blo bzang bstan 'dzin]. Otherwise, they would check the paper one piece at a time, and if the paper was a little bit torn up, they would take it out and tell us to bring new ones. When the clerks were bribed well, they would just count the papers shouting 1-2-3-4-5 and collect them.

Q

Did you have to pay any barley and money to the district?

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A

There were also taxes for which we had to pay a lot of barley, money, and meat to the district. This was called Yongshe [tib. yong bzhes].

Q

This is strange. Actually, the taxpayer serfs [tib. treba] have to pay the taxes in-kind to the place where they live, but you had to pay the taxes to Lhasa.

A

At that time, there were 18 districts and estates near Lhasa that were called "the [dzong](#) and estates under Shöl" [tib. zhol 'og rdzong gzhis]." The estates like Lhongö [tib. lho ngos], [Trapchi](#), Langru [tib. glang ru], and Tsey [tib. tshal] were included in this. Nowadays they are called suburbs [ch jiao qu].

Q

Were you included among these?

A

Yes, of course. The districts within Tsede district [in the west] and Taktse [tib. stag rtse] and probably Metro Gongkar [tib. mal gro [gung](#) dkar] [in the east] were included in this. The estate called Tranggo [tib. 'phreng 'go] which was located on the other side of the mountain pass in the south was also included in this. That is why we paid taxes to Lhasa. Otherwise, the taxes were collected at the local area (the district).

Q

How much taxes in-kind did you have to pay to the district?

A

The district would say that the [miser](#) have to pay for the [donggo](#) [prayer ceremony] when the Lama Gyüba go to Chimilung [tib. 'chi med lung]. We had a pay about 100 [khe](#) of barley.

Q

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Was this for a year?

A

Yes. In this tax document there were many ways of naming items like the "white meat" and "black meat." White meat meant mutton and black meat meant beef.

Q

This barley was the substitute for the meat, right?

A

Yes.

Q

Did you pay the real meat?

A

No, we paid barley for it. The taxes in-kind that were collected by the district were called Yongshe which means "collecting the income."

Q

[Tashi Tsering said:] They did the same thing in Namling [tib. rnam gling] district [where he was from]?

A

Yes, all the districts had that, and the [shungyupa](#) went to deliver it.

Q

Were there any money taxes in a year?

A

No, there weren't.

Q

Were there any other taxes that were paid in-kind?

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A

That was all the taxes in-kind. Of these, the Gyashing Ngösom was the main one and the most famous kind of tax.

Q

What about the gangdro?

A

As for the gangdro taxes, there were two kinds of travel documents. One was called Bugtham Lamyig [tib. sbug tham lam yig] and was issued from the Secretariat of the Dalai Lama (tib. [tsega](#) [rste 'gag]). The other was the Kashag Lamyig issued by the Kashag. These two had red seals and black seals [tib. dam phrug dmar nag].

There were 3 ways of sending the horse and the pack animal corvée: 1. as Dzongkyel [tib. rdzong skyel], which was taking things from one district to the next. 2. as Satshig [tib. sa tshigs], which was sending things from one relay station to the next. 3. as Shikyel [gshis skyel], which was sending things not exactly from one estate to the next estate, but it was little longer than the relay station distance. In Tülung, there were also two kinds of Lamyig with red and the black seals: a permanent [lamyig](#) (tib. tenja [lamyig](#) [tib. gtan 'jags lam yig]) and temporary [lamyig](#) [tib. gnas skabs lam yig]. The holder of the Tenja Lamyig were the clerks of the [Tseja](#) office who went as Government traders (tib. shungtsong [tib. gzhung tshong]), the two gold collectors (tib. serpön [tib. gser dpön]), and the [Drichu](#) Serkha [tib. 'bri [chu](#) gser kha].

Q

They would go every year, right?

A

Yes. The latter went to Chamdo for trade. The other two went to [Tö](#) Garthog [tib. stod sgar thog] (Far Western Tibet) for trading. Each of these had a new and old trader, so there were actually six such traders for whom we had to provide many pack animals because they carried many loads of merchandise. Among the three groups in Dechen, we had 61 [gang](#) and we had to divided the needed pack animals [based on this land] and carry the loads up to Yangpajen Samsar [tib. zam gsar] (new bridge).

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Q

In one year, how many pack animals did you have to send for these three traders from the [Tseja](#)?

A

There were also two butter lease collectors, the Nagchu Shepön [tib. she dpon] and the Troshö Shepön [tib. gro shod] from the [Tseja](#).

Q

Weren't these from the [Laja](#) Office?

A

Oh yes. They were from the [Laja](#) office. At that time, once every 6 months, we, the upper group of families (tib. Tötsho [stod shog]), had to submit a summary report called datrug songtra [tib. zla drug song khra] to the Tsikang Office about how much in taxes we provided for 6 months. We would copy the number of horse corvée and pack animal corvée we had to send from the [lamyig](#) and submit the report, although it was just an empty (formality). But if they didn't submit it, they will say a lot.

Q

For one time, did you have to send about 20-30 horse corvée and pack animals?

A

From our household, we had to send about 10-15 pack animals at one time. Later, we also had to transport grain from [Tsang](#). This was called bumdru [tib. 'bum 'bru] which means 100,000 [khe](#) of grain. It had to be brought to the Ritual Performing Office (tib. shabtenkhang [zhabs brten khang]) and the Military Salary Office (tib. magphogkhang [dmag phogs khang]). We had to bring a large amount of grain for the Shabtenkhang office which was located on the top of the main gate of the Potala.

Q

That [office] was concerned with soldiers' salaries (tib. dungö [tib. 'du 'god]), right?

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A

That office was established later, long after that. In the beginning, for 6,000 [khe](#) of grain, we had to send 1,000 pack animals. Later, the [miser](#) complained that one animal can't carry 6 [khe](#) so it was reduced to 5,000 [khe](#). There was no fixed time for the transportation. When it was said that they have to perform many rituals because it was the inauspicious (tib. gaà [gag]) year of the Dalai Lama, a large amount of grain had to be transported. The tax was increasing for transporting the military salary since the number of soldiers was increasing in modern times. Most of the grain was brought from [Tsang](#), although the government transported the government grain in Tülung which was supposed to be used for giving loans for interest. But it was not enough so we had to transport grain from [Tsang](#). The grain was handed over to the [miser](#) by measuring them in a volume measure container called [bo](#) [tib. 'bo]. It was handed over in Lhasa by measuring it in the same way. So we also had to serve them beer and bribe the people with money who measure the grain in Lhasa and tell him, "Please be careful when you measure the grain in the [bo](#)." This was the Gyatso Gembo's work. Although it doesn't make much difference how to measure the grain, they could just count wrongly like jumping from 28 to 38, and they could steal a lot of grain [so they had to bribe them].

Q

[Tashi Tsering said:] Those grain measurers were called Bokha [tib. 'bo kha ba]. They had a special shirt made like a [bag](#) so they could steal the grain, right?

A

Yes. There were such people in the [Shöl](#) Legung, the Magphogkhang (the military salary office) and in the Shabten Legung (rituals office). When they stole some, we didn't bother about it and left it because they were stealing it from the grain that was already measured. When they measured the grain they would put some in their pouches [sewn into their gowns] while measuring it and they would also throw some which would be beneficial for us. When one person measured about 100 Bo and his pouch became full of grain, and another person would come to take over from him. These persons had to be young and strong because they had to lift the [bo](#) and pour the grain in the basket [tib. sle'u] and then the grain would be put in the storage place through a hole [tib. shor khung] [into the granary room]. Usually, the [miser](#) would miss some grain [be short], but after we bribed

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the measurer, we didn't miss much. That's why the taxpayer serfs (treba) would say that the number of taxes was like the number of hairs on their head and like wrinkles [ripples] on the water [tib. skra grangs [chu](#) gnyer]. It was kind of countless because we had to go whenever we were called.

Q

On average, how many horse corvée and pack animals did your family have to send in a year?

A

We had some [treba](#) living in Dechen and we gave them some barley and hired them to do the horse and animal corvée tax. Otherwise, we couldn't be able to send (provide) the horse corvée right away when they call us.

Q

But you had to send the pack animals, right?

A

Yes, we had to. But we also couldn't send our pack animals. We would hire the pack animals. In the beginning, we had to transport just 5,000 [khe](#), but later we had to transport 100,000 [khe](#) and many clerks of the [Tseja](#) and [Laja](#) came bringing grain [to be transported].

Q

[Tashi Tsering said:] In 1954-55, the clerk of [Shöl](#) Legung, the Shöldrung [tib. zhol drung] Lobsang Dramdül [tib blo bzang dgra 'dul] who was nicknamed "Crane" [tib. khrung khrung] also came, right?

A

Yes. He came several times when large amounts of grain were transported.

Q

[Tashi Tsering said:] At that time, Lobsang Dramdül went to bring the grain from Shigatse, but he didn't have much grain because he lost most of the grain playing

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mahjong. But since he had the [lamyig](#) (government permit), I measured the grain from Namling and sent them down [to Lhasa].

Q

How did you organize the pack animals? Did you keep them in a house all the time?

A

The difference between the aristocrats and the [shungyupa](#) is that all the pack animals required from our land were sent by us, not the 12 [miser](#) families. They didn't have to send a single pack animal. When we needed 1-2 people for going after the pack animals, then we would call the [miser](#). We had one [lag](#) [a unit of 10] of mules and horses and many yaks and oxen. In that area, oxen were very popular. So we would send many pack animals and we would send some strong and young [nangsen](#) (house servants), and if one wasn't enough, we would say that such and such person from the 12 households should go to transport the loads of grain.

Q

So they only sent the accompanying people, right?

A

Yes. This was a person who usually would come to do farming, and we would give them [tsamba](#), tea, butter, and all their food. For the aristocratic and religious estates, the people who went with the pack animals would take their own food.

Q

Can the household send young kids [to accompany the pack animals]?

A

No. They wouldn't send an incapable person and we also wouldn't accept it. Kids can't work. So they would send a capable person. Normally, at this season, there were just a few people irrigating the fields, so for the others, we would let them go home and tell them that we will call them when we need you. When we leave them [at home], we don't need to give them food. The aristocratic and religious estates don't give food, so they call them up all the time and make them do whatever work they have, even things like carding wool.

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They also did very bad things, for example, on an estate belonged to [Kundeling](#), if there was no other work, they would make them check all the horse feed troughs to pick out the leftover kernels of grain from among the hay in the trough. They were even thinking if they only got one handful grain from that [it was okay], because they didn't need to feed them.

Q

Did the aristocratic and religious estates give drinks to the [miser](#) [when they worked]?

A

No they didn't.

Q

Maybe some would give them black tea, right?

A

Yes. Probably because the [miser](#) would bring the firewood and make the fire, so they just had to give a handful of tea leaves.

Q

What was the main work of the Gyatso Gembo? Was it mainly like a kind of staff for the district?

A

It wasn't like the staff of the district. It was a job that was involved with the affairs between the district and the [miser](#). As for work that had some income, even if it involved only a [khata](#) (scarf), the district would be involved in it. As for dealing with the taxes, leave alone getting any income, you have to use your brain a lot. So the district would push this on the Gyatso Gembo's head and the district would even say that making the 6 months summary report was also the Gyatso Gembo's duty and the district wouldn't deal with it.

Q

Did you get beaten?

A

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No, never. At that time, I had learned lessons and I put forward a kind of method through deep thinking. I told the [miser](#), "When the person who came to impose the taxes would come to beat one of the misers, he or she should run away right away. The others should take off their hats and beg for mercy. Do not say anything wrong verbally and don't fight with them. If people catch your words, that would cause trouble." There were a few people coming to impose taxes and there were at least ten some misers. In this way, I tried to avoid beatings.

Q

Did you ever encounter the messenger named Adrung Tashi [tib. a drung bkra shis]?

A

Usually Adrung Tashi would not go through this place so I didn't encounter him. There were some other bad government [adrung](#) (messengers), but when they came to our place, they didn't have anything to do. Normally, the adrungs would come and tell me that they need 3-4 corvée horses on the next day. Some of them would say that they need the corvée horse right away, but I would never agree to send it right away, even though we had 4 [miser](#) waiting and ready to send the horses. [Instead] I would ask the [miser](#) whether or not they could send it the next morning.

Once a soldier almost beat me up. Fortunately, the district hear was a short monk official nicknamed Tsogril la [tib. tshogs ril lags] who used to be the caretaker of the temple of Avalokitesvara [tib. 'phags pa lha khang] in the Potala. I used to get along well with the district. So I went to the district right away and reported that the soldier was almost going to beat me up. The soldier told me that he wants 2 corvée horse right away. I told him, "It would be best if we could send it tomorrow. If not, we will send it the day after tomorrow." So he came to beat me up, so I ran away. After that, the soldier didn't get the horse corvée even after two days. When we did something like this, they would tell each other and it would become better.

At that time, the taxes were called civil and military taxes in-kind and in labor [tib. zhi drag rkang 'gro [lag](#) 'don]. Whenever the regiments would go to Kham, they would cause a lot of trouble and impose a lot of horse corvée and pack animal taxes. Some of the soldiers brought their wives and [even] carried their dramnyan [tib. sgra snyan] lutes on their backs. They were very bad and they would cause a lot of chaos.

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At that time, our family was obliged to send a soldier called Gyena [tib. brgyad sna] which was known to have started [as a tax] in 1913-14 at the time of the 13th Dalai Lama. I heard that in the [Tsang](#) area another type of soldier was recruited. At that time, we, the government taxpayers or [shungyupa](#) had to send one soldier for every 8 [tregang](#) (tax units of land) we had. The aristocrats had to send one soldier for every 4 [dön](#). There were many orders from the Dalai Lama saying that the [dön](#) and the [gang](#) should be equal. On this, there were no exemptions for the aristocrats and the monasteries. This was also called Gangdön Gyeshimag [tib. rkang 'don brgyad bzhi'i dmag]. This military tax was an additional tax on top of what we were sending for the horse and pack animal corvée and paying the taxes in-kind.

In addition to that, another military tax called the Jugnyi Drugna [tib. bcu gnyis drug sna] was imposed. With this, the [shungyupa](#) had to send one soldier for every 12 [gang](#) and the aristocratic and religious estates had to send one soldier for every 6 [dön](#).

There was also another kind of military tax which didn't have anything to do with my family. In 1790, when there was a Chinese Amban in Tibet, he said they should set up a military regiment in Tibet so that they [Beijing] won't need to send soldiers from China. This regiment was called the Gyajong Magar or "Chinese Trained Regiment" [tib. rgya sbyong dmag sgar]. It had 3,000 soldiers. Later, it was called the [Trapchi](#) Magar [tib. grwa bzhi dmag sgar].

At the time of the 13th Dalai Lama, they made the Nyina [tib. nyis sna] [military tax] where two military [gang](#) of the Gyajong Regiment had to send one additional soldier. These soldiers were for the newly established Bodyguard Regiment of the Dalai Lama [tib. sku srung dmag sgar].

Q

Did you have to send soldiers for the Gyajong Regiment? From where did the Gyajong soldiers come?

A

No, we didn't have to send that. They made 3,000 [magang](#) [a [gang](#) of land from which the holder had to send one soldier] for the 3,000 Gyajong soldiers. This was one of the four exemptions. Those taxpayers were given one [gang](#) of land. Since they sent one soldier, they didn't need to do corvée work or pay any taxes. They had a certificate issued by the Chinese Minister staying in Tibet [ch. zhu zang da chen]. The old certificates are in the

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archive [ch. dang an guan]. There were two dragons on both sides and it was written in both Chinese and Tibetan. It was very imposing, but later they collected that back and issued a smaller one. The size of the certificate was like the size of a sheet of Tibetan paper. Each [magang](#) was given this kind of certificate.

Later, it was said that it is too light [easy] for the [magang](#) to send only one soldier. So the 13th Dalai Lama gave the order that they had to send another soldier from each two [magang](#) for the Bodyguard Regiment of the Dalai Lama.

Q

So actually, each [magang](#) had to send a half soldier, right?

A

Yes.

Q

The 13th Dalai Lama made this, right?

A

Yes, he made it in 1915-16 when he set up many regiments and made many military plans like the first regiment [alphabetically] (kadang), the second regiment (khadang) and the third regiment (gadang). He was actually planning to make the second ka and third ka [unclear]. After the war with Lujun [ch. lu jun], the Tibetans learned a lesson and said that it won't work out if we didn't have more soldiers and they made friends with British and planned to buy weapons from foreign countries.

Q

Was the Kadang Magar [tib. ka dang dmag sgar] set up at that time?

A

No. It was set up in 1915-16. Actually, the [Trapchi](#) Magar was set up in 1790, but the Kadang Magar, because it was the Bodyguard Regiment, it placed in the first place. There were 3,000 soldiers in the [Trapchi](#) Regiment.

Q

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Did the other regiments have 500 soldiers each?

A

They also had almost a thousand soldiers. Later, the Gyena Regiment became the regiment led by Commander Derge Sey [tib. sde dge sras]. The Jugnyi Drugna [Regiment] was led by the Depön Rong Gabde [tib. rong dga' bde]. The [Trapchi](#) Regiment was the Khadang Regiment and there was also the regiment called Simpa [tib. gzim pa].

My family was obliged to send one soldier for the Gyena and in addition to that, I had to send one third of a soldier [together] with the Seshim [tib. zas zhim] family, so I had to pay a little bit of money to Seshim. It was because we had 8 and one third [gang](#), so we had to pay that.

We had to send one soldier for the Jugnyi Drugna, but we could get money for 4 [gang](#) from other people. In addition to that, we were regarded as one of the "best households" when the [Drongdrag](#) Magar [tib. grong drag] was set up [where soldiers were recruited from the well-to-do households]. We had to send three soldiers, but we could get a little bit from the 4 [gang](#).

Q

How did you find the soldiers? Were they sent from the [miser](#)?

A

We sent soldiers from among the 12 households that belonged to us. We used to choose youngsters who were not that good in farming, but were quite obedient. We advised them that you would be the right person to become a soldier and gave them some gifts. We sent three tough soldiers from among our own [miser](#).

Q

Did you pay them salary?

A

The local (Tibetan) government used to pay two [khe](#) of barley per month and I heard they also gave a kind of clothing payment to them. Actually, they didn't give them useful clothes so we had to pool something for their summer and winter clothes. It was called Yargün Gyöndu [tib. dbyar dgun gyon bsdu]. This was one of the taxes in-kind. The soldier we

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sent could get salary from the government which was enough for his [tsamba](#). We also had to give him barley, money, and clothing as a supplement.

Q

How much did you have to pay for one soldier in a year?

A

When we sent the soldier named Lobsang for the Gyena soldier tax, we gave him a full set of woolen clothing, although the quality was not very good. And we paid him ten some [khe](#) of barley. Normally, when people would hire soldiers, they would pay 8 [khe](#) of barley, so we paid him a slightly better amount than the hired soldiers.

Q

You paid the same to the other two soldiers, right?

A

Yes.

Q

What kind of advantages did they get by becoming a soldier? Did they have to go or did they go for getting some advantages?

A

Yes. They thought being a soldier would get them some advantages. If we didn't pay them well, we wouldn't find a person to go to serve as a soldier. Some of the youngsters also felt happy to go to become a soldier because they wouldn't need to do the ugly and hard farming work and they can wear quite good clothes. They had enough salary from the government and they also could get some barley from us. When they wanted money, instead of barley, we paid them money. So they didn't need to worry about their food and clothing.

At that time, there wasn't much discipline for the soldiers. We just sent people who wanted to become a soldier. When some of them said that they are not going to leave their old parents or wife and become a soldier, we just left them. It was kind of voluntarily to

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send them to become soldiers. In case we sent them by force, if they didn't stay there and ran away, then we would pursue them for that.

At that time, when the soldiers were to be sent to Kham, the main thing was that we used to educate the soldiers, "Do not drink alcohol and gamble. It would be okay if you could find a life partner and bring her back. Do not do any sexual misconduct. The most important thing is to be careful and don't lose your gun and the bullets. If your gun would go off accidentally and kill someone, that would be a disaster and you would have to go to court and we would have to find a new soldier."

Q

Do you have some kind of the term to serve as a soldier?

A

No. There wasn't anything like that. If they behaved well, there were very old soldiers among the Gyajong. Some soldiers spent their whole life in the regiment. Some of them were unable to succeed as a soldier and the regiment will send an order to us to send a new soldier.

Q

Which are the regiments for the Gyena and the Jugnyi Drugna?

A

The Gyena was the "Tadang" [tib. ta dang] Regiment whose Depön was Derge Sey. He was the one who later revolted [ch. qi yi] [against the Tibetan Government]. The Jugnyi Drugna probably was the "Thadang" [tib. tha dang] Regiment. Those were the new soldiers for which the local government didn't need to give us land [as a tax base for service] and other things, except for their salary. And there were also the Nyina soldiers. This was the idea of the 13th Dalai Lama.

Q

The Dalai Lama made this advantageous for the government. This was the result of using his brain, right?

A

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Yes.

Q

At that time, the 13th Dalai Lama thought of making his government powerful and consequently the problem between the Tibetan Government and Labrang [Panchen Lama] arose, right?

A

Yes.

Q

Who was the Depön of the Jugnyi Drugna?

A

In the beginning, the Depön of Jugnyi Drugna was Rong Gabde. I went to bring about 30 soldiers from our area to Tsethang [tib. rtsed thang] where they taught them the drills.

Q

Were you obliged to be the Gyatso Gembo [tib. brgya [tsho](#) rgan po] because of the land you held or did you do it voluntarily or did the [miser](#) elect you?

A

After they made the Iron-Tiger Land Enumeration, as I told you before, many extinct taxpayer households were attached to us and we became the biggest taxpayer family in that area. At that time, our household had good land and a good living condition. We can't say that the [miser](#) elected us, and we also can't say that it was an order from above. At that time the superiors just appointed us as a Tsodrag [tib. gtso drag], as one of the important households in the area who represented the people. We were permanently appointed as the Tsodrag from generation to generation, as well as the Gyatso Gembo. We got about 60 some [khe](#) of land for doing that.

Q

That was your income for doing the job as a Gyatso Gembo, right?

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A

Yes. This was the salary. However, when I had to go to take care of the taxes riding a horse with a servant, I had to take my own [tsamba](#), tea, and butter and there wasn't any monthly salary. I got the yield of 60 [khe](#) of land and I didn't need to do any corvée work or pay taxes in-kind for that.

Q

Was the Gyatso Gembo the same as the [gembo](#) (headman) in each village, or it was kind of above them?

A

It was kind of above them. There were 9 genkhag [tib. rgan khag] areas where there were [gembo](#) in the upper part [of our area] and I was the equivalent of the team leader [ch. zu zhang] of these nine [gembo](#). The middle part [of our area] probably had 8 genkhag and there was a Gyatso [gembo](#) there also. In the lower part, probably there were 12 [gembo](#). It was little bigger because [Tshurpu](#) [tib. mtshur phu] Monastery was included there. They also had a Gyatso. When we had to talk about taxes and whenever the Gyatso would send a letter sealed with one's personal seal, all the [gembo](#) would come to the meeting right away bringing their own food.

Q

Tell me some examples of disputes that occurred regarding taxes and how were these disputes were settled.

Q

Do you remember any lawsuits between the [miser](#) and the serf owners? How did they settle these disputes?

A

There was an estate called Satsham [tib. sa mtshams] that belonged to Kündeling [tib. kun bde gling]. They had 30 some households of misers then. Now I heard that they have about hundred households. At that time, they had 8 [dön](#) of land. The estate and the [miser](#) had a dispute about irrigation. When there was a drought, they needed to irrigate the

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fields. The shidü (estate manager) gave the order that, "Until all the fields of the estate were irrigated, the [miser](#) are not allowed to irrigate their fields." The [miser](#) waited for 1-2-3 days, but there was very hot sunshine and their fields were drying up. So the [miser](#) could no longer bear it and most of the [miser](#), about 30-40 households, went to beat up the estate steward. At that time, they closed the gate of the estate, but there were some elderly people who mediated, so the estate steward just barely avoided getting beaten. Anyway, it became a lawsuit.

Q

Did the [miser](#) irrigate their fields?

A

The [miser](#) said, "From today on we will irrigate the fields of the estate and the [miser](#) at the same time. We won't wait until the fields of the estate would be irrigated, and they just irrigated their lands on that day."

Q

What year was that?

A

It was in 1948-49, just before the People's Liberation Army came to Tibet. I heard about that. At that time, they hadn't filed the lawsuit to the district. I went there right away and talked with one of the main persons among the [miser](#) who was called Thundrub Tashi [tib. thon grub bkra shis] and who was slightly related to us. Normally, I treated him very well. So I sent a person to call him while I stayed in my household. I heard that he was sick. When I asked what happened to him, they said, "When the [miser](#) went to the estate, he was at the front and when he got near the gate, he was extremely aggressive and he stoned the gate of the estate. Some of the elderly seized him. At that time, he fell down and got sick. So I went right away to his home to see him. He was lying down there. He was not that seriously [ill], so I sat there and asked him what happened. At that time, the Shabdöpa [tib. zhabs sdod pa], (the official of Kündeling) called Nyangtse [tib. myang rtse], was the estate steward.

Q

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I think now he is in Canada.

A

Although Thundrub Tashi was related to Nyangtse much closer than I was, he said, "This time, we are going to file a lawsuit wherever we have to because we, the [miser](#), are working for so many taxes. It is like the proverb, 'The size of the field is like a palm, but they have to work for the taxes like the size of the arm' [tib. zhing kha sbar mthil tsam la khral [lag](#) ngar tsam rgyug dgos kyi yod]. So I am going to file a lawsuit wherever I have to go, even if I have to go to Lhasa." He meant the Kashag. Then he said, "There may be some of the [miser](#) also want to come with me voluntarily. Even if he is an official of Kündeling, what is there to be amazed about?" Then I told him, "Don't do like this. I will mediate between the [miser](#) and the estate." Then I went to the estate. He was just staying there not knowing what to do and he said, "It worked out so well that you came here." Then I told the estate that I will mediate and told him that I went to see Thundrub Tashi and talked with him, but we didn't come to any solution. I advised Thundrub Tashi that you shouldn't file a lawsuit against the estate ..." Then I asked the estate, "What are you going to do?" He said, "Please, do whatever you think would be good." They really scared the Shabdöpa official because they ganged up and came to beat him up. Secondly, the law was also not on his side.

Q

This was called a peasant's revolt [tib. zhing pa'i 'os lang], right?

A

Yes. Then I said that it won't be okay if we don't report it to the district, so I sent some of the [gembo](#) and representatives to report this to the district. After that, I went to the district and said that I am going to mediate.

Q

At that time, the district didn't know about it, right?

A

Yes. According to custom, even if we are going to mediate, first we should report it to the district. I had to go to the district and say that I am going to mediate. This was called

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longbeb [tib. slong 'bebs]. After that, I talked with the [miser](#) and the estate and mediated, and made a solution that in the future the estate and the [miser](#) shall irrigate their fields at the same time. I told the [miser](#), "What you want is the irrigation, right? It would be useless to beat or kill the estate steward." Then we made a pledge, and I showed the pledge to the district. As for the district, it would be troublesome if they had to deal with these kind of things and they couldn't get any income from that, so the district also praised me and said, "You are a real man." I was able to settle it very well.

Q

In the past, Gabde and their [miser](#) also had a lawsuit and the [miser](#) were shut up in [Shöl](#) [tib. zhol] and whipped, right?