

Interview H0214: Urgyen [tib. o rgyan], (India, 1983) : Part No. 7 of 9

The interviewee was a well-known Drepung Loseling monk who at one time held the powerful position of Chagdampa. He discusses how he came to be appointed to that position. He also tells about the famous incident when he, as Chagdampa, killed the thief named Gangstug.

Q

It is 10. 9. 1983, Sunday at 9.10 a.m. As Gelek Rimpoche has introduced me to you, there are lot of things I would like to ask you about your whole life story. When I was a child, you, Chagdampa Urgyen la, were very famous in [Loseling](#). You had rich experiences. How many years did you serve as Chagdampa?

A

For 9 years.

Q

Did you serve continuously?

A

During the Reting regency I did it for 4 years.

Q

You were appointed during the Reting regency, right?

A

Yes. Then I stopped doing it for 5 years. Then I worked as Nyertsang for 10 months. After doing that, I worked on the staff of the [Tsongjö](#) Serbang [tib. tshogs mchod ser sbreng]. In the 8th month, I invited the lama [unclear].

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When the old [Shengo](#) finished his term at the end of the 6th month, the new [Shengo](#) came and I gave the [Shengo](#) 3 [sang](#) and a [khata](#) scarf called ashe as a gift (tib. [gyabden](#)) when I asked him for the Chagdampa position. The [Shengo](#) would make notes of the people who were asking to get appointed as the Chagdampa and Shingyner [tib. shing gnyer] positions and they would report these to the [Yigtsang](#) Office and the [Trunyichemmo](#) [who headed that office] would do the decision [unclear]. I was in [Loseling](#) College. I also went to the [Yigtsang](#) Office [unclear]. I knew all of them and I asked them how many people were asking to be appointed Chagdampa. They said there were 11 people. [unclear]

Q

What month was that?

A

It was in the 8th lunar month. I heard that the [Trunyichemmo](#) were asking whether I was staying here [in Lhasa], and where was I staying and what work did I have. [unclear]

Q

Who said that?

A

The secretariat of [Yigtsang](#). The [Yigtsang](#) Nyerpa told me this and he said that he told the [Trunyichemmo](#) that I don't have work. From Drepung, he [? unclear] went to Sera on the 6th of the 9th month. Then I heard on the 6th [day] they received a letter calling the Khempo, etc. to come to the [Yigtsang](#) Office. On the 7th when I went to the Shengo's office, the senior [Shengo](#) told me to sit down and have tea --it was like the saying, "Do not discuss things while your mouth is empty." [tib. kha stong pa la gros ma byed]. He then told me to read the letter which said, "The representatives of the Laji's Khempo who acted rashly and the Khempo of the two [tratsang](#) [involved] must come to the [Yigtsang](#)." [tib. bla spyi'i mkhan 'thus don ma go dang/ grwa tshang gnyis kyi mkhan po yig tshang du bcar dgos].

The [Loseling](#) Khempo asked me, "This is strange. I wonder what it could be. Was there any trouble in the past? [tib. a ya mtshan/ [gang](#) yin na/ sngon ma'i rnyog dra 'dra yod red pas]. I said, "The trouble in the past was like the proverb, "The horse had run and the dust

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was cleared." [tib. rta rgyugs rdul yal]. The [Loseling](#) Khempo then asked me whether I had a horse and I said yes. I had a red horse that was saddled. And Chöndzin la [tib. chos 'dzin lags] [the Shingnyer] also had a horse. The Khempo told me, "The Tibetan government's [kudrak](#) are malicious/bad [tib. ngan po] so you should be careful and should propitiate the deities [tib. 'phrin bcol]." When we went via Parikhug [tib. brag ri khug], the three Khempo were also going there. And then we were called into the [Yigtsang](#) Office.

Q

What time was that?

A

It was around 10 a.m. At this time the Yigtsang's [Trunyichemmo](#) were [Rampa](#), Jogteng [tib. lcog steng] and Bumthang [tib. 'bum thang]. I don't remember the other one.

Q

One [Trunyichemmo](#) might have been Lheding [tib. lha lding], right?

A

Probably. [Rampa](#) and Bumthang were telling each other, "You give the order." Then Jogteng told Bumthang to give the order and Bumthang gave the order saying, "The two [Shengo](#), the Khempo of the [Laji](#), the Khempo of the two Tratsang, the Chagdampa Urgyen and the [Gomang](#) Shingnyer Chöndzin must listen carefully." That year was the Water-Horse year, the year in which the Dalai Lama held his first ceremony in the 7th lunar month. [unclear] The order said, "Chagdampa Urgyen and ShingNyer Chöndzin are appointed to serve as the Chagdampa and the [Shingnyer](#) as before. The two [Shengo](#) must not think that you are above them and will use your power over them. You have to consult with them. It is like the saying, "If you are not auspicious inside, you cannot accomplish your work outside." [tib. nang bkra ma shis na/ phyi don mi 'grub]. You the Chagdampa must do your best. If you do that, it will be good and the higher ups will also not need to hear any troubles [tib. snyan 'jam po] and you will have tranquility [tib. 'jam po]. If you do that, it will be like the Tsogchen [Shengo](#) giving the speech, "To have a mild dream when sleeping and become like day break when we wake up." [tib. gnyid khug nas rmi lam 'jam pa/ yar sad nas nam langs pa]. Also, the Chagdampa must hand over all the gifts called büthob [tib. 'bul thob] to the [Shengo](#) because the [Shengo](#) have to give many [tonggo](#)

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using these. And you are not allowed to receive newly created extra things [tib. sngar med gsar spros]. The two of you have to do your work not worse than before, even if you can't do it better than before. And do not forget my words as soon as you get out the door". [unclear]".

Q

Didn't the [Trunyichemmo](#) say any other things?

A

No, and we told them that we will do whatever they tell us to do.

Q

Who was the Khempo then?

A

It was the late Ngagpa Khempo Shenyen Tsöndrü La [tib. bshes gnyen brtson 'grus lags].

Q

Didn't he become a [Shengo](#) in the past?

A

No. He worked as the [Shingnyer](#) for 9 years. The [Gomang](#) Khempo was Chönphel Gyentsen La [tib. chos 'phel rgyal mtshan lags]

Q

Where was he from?

A

He was from Central Tibet (Ütsang [tib. dbus gtsang]). The [Loseling](#) Khempo was Yeshe Jinpa [tib. ye shes sbyin pa] from [Tsangpa](#) Khamtsen who was from Drongsar [tib. grong gsar] which is located near Lhasa. The Ngagpa Khempo was Ngawang Gyatso [tib. ngag dbang rgya mtsho]. He was the tall, fat and bald one.

Q

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What is the full name of the Chöndzin La?

A

His name is Lobsang Jinpa [tib. blo bzang sbyin pa].

Q

What is your name?

A

My name is Thubten Legshe [tib. thub bstan legs bshad].

Q

Your real name is Thubten Legshe [tib. thub bstan legs bshad], right?

A

Yes, but nobody calls me Thubten Legshe.

Q

Why were you called Urgyen la?

A

My name Urgyen was given by my father who was named Jampal Gyentsen [tib. 'jam dpal rgyal mtshan]. He was a Chanang. In the monastery, I became the Gegö for 7 years. In the charter list for getting alms (gye [tib. 'gyed gtong rtsa tshig]), my name was written Tsha [tib. tsha ba] Khamtsen Thubten Legshe, so they didn't know who that was. When they asked the Khamtsen, they said there wasn't a person called Thubten Legshe.

Q

What happened after you received the order?

A

Then when we came out from the [Yigtsang](#) and went to [Nechung](#) monastery where they served us noodles for lunch. The Khempo Yeshe Jinpa was already there and they had heard about the order and congratulated us and said now it is good. This was because

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when I was Chagdampa, I never beat people except sometimes in the office I would beat people a little bit when something went wrong. Then I went to [Sera Je](#) and they served me noodles and then I went to [Sera Mey](#) where I knew many people like Trijang Labrang's Chandzö, etc. and they also served me noodles. Then I went to Ngagpa College where they also served me noodles, but I couldn't eat it. Then I went to Shedrubling [tib. bshad sgrub gling] where they served me rice mixed with melted butter and yogurt (tib. shomdre [zho 'bras]). After that, I went to the [Laji](#) where many people from my [tobtsang](#) came to congratulate me. There were more people coming to congratulate me than the Khempo and the [Shengo](#).

Q

When you came back to the monastery, what did they talk about? Were they surprised?

A

Yes. They were all saying that this is really good news. When I came back to the monastery, the [Loseling](#) Khempo said, "I thought you and [Shingnyer](#) Chöndzin La probably might not be appointed again, especially because you have something pending from the past [tib. shul]."

Q

Did he mean because you killed the thief named Gangtsug [tib. rkang btsug]?

A

Yes. I told him that this case was settled and they had already issued the verdict. Then I went to the Shengo's office and the new senior [Shengo](#) told me, "Now it is good that we can sit on the same cushion and work together. I will not make a big deal about it [tib. ngo so med da]." [unclear].

Q

What was the name of the senior [Shengo](#)?

A

His name was Yeshe Gyentsen [tib. ye shes rgyal mtshan]. He was from Ütö [tib. dbus stod] (the upper part of Central Tibet).

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Q

What was the name of the junior [Shengo](#)?

A

His name was Jinpa Khechog [tib. sbyin pa mkhas mchog]. He was from [Gomang](#) College and his home was Kyarpo [tib. skyar po]. [unclear]

Q

What did [Shingnyer](#) Chöndzin La say?

A

He said, "Now I have to work with you and it is like the saying, "Looking at the bad omen again and smelling the odor again." [tib. ltaṅ ngan la lta skyor dang [dri](#) ngan la snom skyor]. I feel annoyed like it is becoming dark [tib. ca ma zing/ sa rub pa lta bu] when I have to work with you." I said, "We don't need to work together. We have separate duties." Then I didn't talk with him.

Q

Did he say that as if he was kidding?

A

Yes. He was kidding. We paid 30 [dotse](#) to the [Shengo](#) for the büthob (gift) which we had to pay, but we also paid 125 [dotse](#) as a donation for the [tonggo](#) which was extra, so Chöndzin La and I had to suffer this loss.

Q

When they gave you the order [in the Yigtsang] were the [Shengo](#) present?

A

Yes.

Q

So at that time, there were 7 people, right?

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A

Yes.

Q

What did you tell the [Shanggo shingnyer](#) and such people?

A

I told the [Shanggo shingnyer](#), "The lords and lamas gave the order, but for me it was like the saying, "Even if your feet hot and don't want to, you have to sun bathe." [tib. ma 'dod tsha ba 'tshigs kyang/ nyi ma sro dgos shar ba red]. I also don't want to work with you." So the junior [Shengo](#) said, "What's the matter?" I said, "He is very proud. [tib. Ita ba mtho po], but I will never ask him to help me even for five [karma](#)." Then we went to the [Laji](#) and the Khempo tripa was there and we reported how the [Yigtsang](#) gave the order and about the instructions.

Q

Who was the Khempo tripa?

A

He was from Gya Khamtsen so he was called Gyapa Khempo Lobsang Jungne La [tib. rgya pa mkhan po blo bzang 'byung gnas]. He said, "It is very good. It is unprecedented that you were appointed again because you are an old person like, "The fire of the eons, and the water from the original existence." [tib. bskal pa'i me dang/ srid pa'i chu] and you are auspicious to have been appointed continuously [tib. bskal pa bzang po] and not get accused for the matter of the thief Gangtsug. Even if the higher ups wanted to say, "Well done." [for killing Gangtsug], they couldn't say that. Actually, it was helpful to the government that you put down [tib. mnya' bcag] [Gangtsug]. Therefore, you were appointed again. Actually, we pressed down the khatsara [nep. kha char], (the mixbreed between Tibetan and Nepalese); we didn't press down [dewashung](#) (the Tibetan Government), we raised the government up, so it was well done. Therefore, even if you can't work better than before, you must not work worse than before. You are very eloquent, so I don't have anything to tell you like, "Giving a new explanation for an old temple." [tib. lha khang rnying par gnas bshad gsar pa]."

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Q

How many people were there when the whole [Laji](#) met?

A

There were 11-12 Khempo and ex-Khempos [tib. mkhan zur], two [Shengo](#), the [Tsogchen chemmo](#), the Phodrang depa and the two Jiso. The [Laji](#) also served me left over rice and yogurt, and the Khempo tripa told the others, "Nobody can handle this person [me]. He is really tough."

Q

The other people who asked for the Chagdampa position might have thought that you had done something secretly to get it, right?

A

Yes, even the [Shengo](#) might have thought that I had some backers because they were saying, "It is strange that Urgyen was appointed again." The two [Shengo](#) also said, "We hoped that you would ask for Chagdampa position again so we could support you. But if you didn't ask, we couldn't mention your name. But this time, it was well done that you got appointed again."

Q

When did the [Trunyichemmo](#) and those people come?

A

They came on the 6th of the 9th lunar month. [unclear]

Q

What did you do after the [Laji](#) adjourned?

A

Then I went back to my [shag](#) (apartment). When we came to the Mönlam, I was the senior Chagdampa and I had to go with the junior [Shengo](#) and the junior Chagdampa had to go with the senior [Shengo](#) to the south gate of the [Jokhang](#) where the Ganden monks

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were. The Sera monks would sit at the north side of the [Barkor](#) and Sera Tago [tib. Itag sgo] back door. Since I was the senior Chagdampa, I had to look after the monks in the Shingra [tib. sking ra] courtyard. The senior Chagdampa also had to go on patrol to the [Nangtsesha](#).

Then we received a letter saying that the two [Shengo](#) and the Chagdampa had to come to the [Yigtsang](#). We went to [Tse](#) riding horses and they asked who are the Chagdampa. The [Shengo](#) made the report. The Talama [tib. tab la ma] said, "This is not going to be okay. We have to make a change because the Sera monks stay in the Drölma Lhakang [tib. sgrol ma lha khang] area and the Ganden monks stay near the south gate. So you, the senior Chagdampa must do the work of the junior Chagdampa and the junior must do the work of the senior. You have to change this and return the money to the senior. So the junior Chagdampa returned 150 [dotse](#) to me because the [senior's] work is harder. I had to escort the [Ganden Tripa](#) and I had to take charge of the Sera Tago back door and go to the [rungskhang](#) and check when they were using tea and the butter [tib. ja gad mar gad].

Q

Who gave the speeches in the prayer assembly [tib. tshogs gtam]?

A

Sometimes, I gave them and sometimes he gave them.

Q

Who gave the speech at the [Nangtsesha](#)?

A

Both of us had to give half of the speech. [unclear] At that time, the work duties of the two Chagdampa changed, but our way of seating remained as before. During my 9 years serving as Chagdampa, there weren't any quarrels and cases [tib. lab rgyu gleng rgyu].

When the Japanese came to the Mönlam Torgyag [tib. gtor rgyag] exorcism, something happened and they were stoned. So they [the Japanese] went to Trelde Linga [tib. 'phral bde gling ga] Office and later Möndrong Kungö [Shölpa](#) [tib. smon grong sku ngo zhol pa] was the interpreter. He had great loyalty [to the government]. On that day, the Chagdampa and the [Shanggo shingnyer](#) were there. They put out chairs so we sat on chairs and the Japanese sat opposite us. [unclear]. One of the Japanese had wrapped white cloth on his

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head and was talking a lot, and there was one clerk from the [Shöl](#) legung who said that his earring had been lost. Then 2-3 monks came who probably had beaten the clerk and they threw down his yellow cap (tib bogtho ['bog tho]) and said, "Your bogtho is here. You wear this bogtho and get your salary from the [dewashung](#) (government), but you serve the foreigners. Looking at this, we should have killed you, but this time we will overlook your actions [tib. ma yin go yin]." Then they showed their fist and told the clerk, "Can you see this [their fists]? We should have beat you with this!"

This was during the Reting regency. When it was said that the Japanese had been stoned, we were called to the Shö ga. It was the time when Ngagpa la [tib. sngags pa lags] was the Nendrön. He said that the Japanese were stoned at the time of the Mönlam Torgyag so you must arrest the monks and ask what happened. By that time, the Mönlam was over and we told the Nendrön that we hadn't known that the Japanese were stoned. We were in Lubug [tib. klu sbug] at the time of the Torgyag and then we came up to report the departure [of the scapegoat], so we didn't know which monks stoned the Japanese. If you inquire and identify the monks who stoned the Japanese, then we will arrest them. The Nendrön told me, "Can I report this?" I said, "Yes." Then we were told to go back and they didn't inquire about this.

Q

When you went to Trelde Linga what did you talk about?

A

At that time, Möndrong Kungö told us that we have to say something clever (tib. khepo [mkhas po]) [about the Japanese]. We did as he said and they didn't say anything [argue]. They served us Indian tea and snacks. Möndrong Kungö told ua that we had to give then a [khata](#). We said [to them] that there will be such small cases and we said something cleverly. So they [Japanese] were very glad and they also took photos of us carrying the staff [of office] and another photo without carrying the staff. And they also gave us some sweets as a gift.

Q

At that time, were both of the Chagdampa there?

A

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Yes. They also shook hands with us. Probably they were happy. After that nobody inquired about this.

Q

What is the name of the junior Chagdampa?

A

There were many junior Chagdampa [over the years], but at that time, the junior Chagdampa was called Gyentsen Chönphel [tib. rhyal mtshan chos 'phel].

Q

Where was he from?

A

He was from Tölung Gyangkar [tib. stod lung gyang dkar]. After that, there was the law case between the main [Shatra](#) family and the secondary branch of [Shatra](#) called [Shatra](#) Surpa [tib. zur pa].

Q

How about [Trimön](#) [tib. khri smon]?

A

There was a [Khamba](#) staying in Trimön's House who was displaying his things for sale in the market called Wongtö Shinga [tib. 'ong stod zhing ga]. Then the Nangma told him that he had to pay a fee for the space he was using (tib. sabla [tib. sa gla]), but he said, "I didn't have to pay sabla. I am displaying my own things on my own space, so why should I pay you the sabla? You eat a big shit!" [tib. skyag pa che ba zhid zo a]. The Nangma said, "You gave me shit, right?" And he just left him there and reported this to the two [Shengo](#). The [Shengo](#) said, "Both of the Chagdampa should go taking some Thabyog with them and they should bring him here." However, when we went there, he had already fled. He had gone home and shut his door tightly so we couldn't arrest him. However, after that, we opened the door and arrested him and took him to the Shengo's Office. We beat him with switches and locked him up.

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By that time, [Trimön](#) might have been the ex-kalön, [kasur](#) [tib. bka' zur]. He was wearing a white lower monk's garment [tib. sham thaba dkar po], a raw silk shawl [tib. lem thang] and a monk's red vest (tib. tönga [stod 'gag]). He was carrying a cane and took a nun wearing a red [chupa](#) as his servant.

Q

Where was he going?

A

He was going everywhere. I thought if we didn't apologize to him, it will go against the norms of loyalty [tib. la rgya la 'gro gi ma red] because he was a [Kalön](#). So the two of us Chagdampa went to apologize to him carrying a [khata](#) ashe. When we went into Trimön's house, [kungö](#) Shükhüpa [tib. shud gud pa] was leaving.

Q

Was Shükhüpa related to [Trimön](#)?

A

Yes, probably. We told him that a very bad thing has happened [tib. dpe bsags bzhag], so we have to meet [Trimön](#). He told us to stay there. Shükhüpa went inside and didn't come out for a long time. So we went near the veranda and there we saw that [Trimön](#) was running towards us wearing a shawl and Shükhüpa was coming on this side. Then [Trimön](#) told us, "The compassionate [lord](#) has come. Please take me "[tib. mi dbang thugs rje chen po phebs byung/ yag po zge rdag byung nga khrid rogs gngang] and he prostrated towards us three times. We didn't have any place to avoid him because one side was a wall and the other side was the stone floor. [unclear] We told him, "Kungö, please don't prostrate." Anyway, his hair knot was touching my boots. [unclear]. Then I told him, "We have come to apologize to you." He replied in a voice like singing, "Apology is apology" [tib. dgongs sel lags dang dgongs sel]. Then he said, "Please come in. Do you drink [chang](#)?" Then Shükhüpa told us to leave.

On the next day, [Trimön](#) went to see Reting Rimpiche and told him, "Last night 21 Tsogchen [Shengo](#) and 30 Geyog came to arrest me. So please save my life." At that time, [Trimön](#) was wearing a chuba called Tsechuma [tib. tshal phyu ma] and a monk's vest called tönga. So we went to apologize to Reting. We met Drönyer la [his steward] and I

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told him that we want to apologize to Reting, but he said, "There is nothing to apologize for because this was a crazy person's talk and he also didn't wear his uniform but instead wore a Tsechuma and a monk's vest and moreover, he also went to the Kashag and told the Kashag, "The regent is a child and doesn't know anything." So there is no need to take care of anything and no need to apologize. So we didn't need to apologize to Reting and the [Khampa](#) was released.

On the next day, [Trimön](#) took a nun servant and carried a cane and he entered the door of the big kitchen (rungskhang [chenmo](#)) and climbed up the inner stone steps and came to the Shengo's office and said, "Tsogchen [Shengo](#) la are you in? [tib. tshogs chen zhal ngo lags bzhugs yod pas]. Then he left and then came back to the Shengo's office and said the same thing. He did the same thing three times. Then the Kashag also didn't care about him. [unclear]

[part missing on tape] We went there [?] according to Kashag's order carrying a [khata](#) [unclear] and then he gave us 25 [dotse](#) and we could get skin bags of butter and rice from the [Laja](#) Office, the [Tseja](#) Office, the [Shöl](#) legung and also from the Tsamshe [legung](#) [tib. rtsam bzhes las khungs] [Which was the treasury that collects grain products mainly used for rituals.] We accumulated this stuff for the picnic given by the two [Shengo](#) after the [Tsongjö](#) Prayer Festival. We had a picnic for two days and used about 100 [dotse](#) which was common money [rather than their private money].

Q

When you met the Chinese officials, what do you tell them and what did they say?

A

I don't remember that. We just chitchatted and they said that they went to see the Kashag.

Q

What happened when the Chinese looked from the roof of their house during the Mönlam Torgyag?

A

At that time, the Chinese official and the interpreter came to the Shengo's office two days before the Torgyag.

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Q

Was it on the Lubug Gardrig [tib. klu sgug gar sgrig] (the ceremony where the soldiers parade in ancient uniforms)?

A

Probably it was.

Q

There was an interpreter from Wapaling [ch. he ba liang], right?

A

Yes. They also gave us a [khata](#) Ashe and said [unclear], Please grant us permission to watch Mönlam Torgyag from our roof." We said we will report this to the Kashag. It was the time of the Reting regency and we reported to the Nendrön that the Chinese wanted to see the Regent. Then the Chinese came just before it was dark and we told them, "We have never let the Chinese watch the Mönlam Torgyag from the roof, but we will give you special permission to watch from the roof. They put rugs on the edge of the roof [tib. nya rgyab] and watched the Mönlam Torgyag. Some might have been sitting on chairs and they were also taking photos. The Ladhakis, Gorkha (Nepalese) and Khunu were watching from the roof top of a one story house in front of the [Jokhang](#). Otherwise, nobody was allowed to watch the Mönlam Torgyag from the roof tops.

Q

Would you please tell us in detail from the beginning about the thief Gangstug?

A

One day, I was eating [pag](#) in the Shengo's office. From the place where the junior [Shengo](#) sits, he can see the road outside and one day the junior [Shengo](#) told me "Sir, [tib. sku zhabs] look there." At that time, Lobsang Jinpa was under the [gomchor](#) and he could see the place down there.

When I was eating [pag](#) in Shengo's office, the junior [Shengo](#) told me that a Korchagpa [tib. skor 'chag pa], (a low level worker who patrols the streets and delivers messages in Lhasa) was bringing a person by his hair. The junior [Shengo](#) told me to get up even

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though I was eating [pag](#) and go down there. When I asked what happened, the Korchagpa said, "People saw this person stealing a pair of trousers from the Lama Gyüpa's place where they were selling used household items in [Gyambumgang](#) [tib. rje 'bum sgang], so I caught him at the [Muru](#) Damra [tib. rme ru 'dam ra]. Therefore, please give him a severe punishment, because he has many collaborators [tib. [lag](#) 'brel] who come in gangs [tib. dpung sgrig]. We couldn't catch him until now."

At this time, I became like possessed by a deity and I told them to bring him up and I beat him with switches about 20-30 times. [unclear] Usually, I would sleep in the veranda in the Shengo's Office and on the night before this thief was caught, I saw in my dream someone sitting on a chair in front of me who told me, "You can't find his partners, so just go ahead and kill him by beating him with switches. Otherwise, he will cause a lot of trouble." Then I said yes in my dream and the Shengo's office was packed with people and I felt shivering in my body. After some time, someone woke me up and when I woke up, I was very agitated. Then I got up and washed my face and when we were drinking boiled water, I told them about my dream and I said how about me asking Tenma [a deity] for a prophecy? The senior [Shengo](#) said, "It is said that dreams are impermanent and illusions. If they are permanent, bring my [late] mother " [tib. rmi lam mi rtag 'phrul pa yin/ rtag pa yin na ngs'i a ma khrid shog].

Q

Who was the senior [Shengo](#)?

A

He was called Chögye la [tib. chos rgyal lags]. The junior [Shengo](#) called Namkha la [tib. nam mkha' lags]. He was from [Deyang](#) College. He also said, "It is said don't trust whatever you heard." [tib. bshad tshad bden par mi 'dzin], so there is nothing to trust in dreams, but the dream you see after midnight is regarded as a somewhat reliable." Then when we beat that thief, he said his partner was nicknamed "the pork-marked young monk," (Inchung Bartsag [tib. in chung sbar tshag]). He told us that he is in the tea shop near the Nepalese Consulate. I said that we should stop people coming out from that house because Inchung Bartsag will jump out from behind the small house and flee. I took two Nangma and some Thabyog and went to arrest him.

When we came near Shatra's House, I told the Geyog not to shout because he may get frightened and run away. When the Geyog went inside, Inchung Bartsag was climbing up

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a ladder [to flee]. Then the Geyog hit him with his stick and he fell down and we arrested him. When we arrested him, he said that he has a partner called [Khampa](#) Chöndze who wore a [chupa](#) made from woolen material and on top of that he wore a [chupa](#) made from the raw silk called Shutsidru [ch. xu [zi](#) chou]. He also wore a pair of long boots and golden rings and a jade bracelet. He didn't look like a thief at all.

Then we took back Inchung Bartsag who had broken down the door of an old man and woman. When we brought him, the old man and woman told us, "Thank you very much." Then the two [Shengo](#) asked the deity Tenma to go into trance and give a prophecy, but they didn't tell her clearly, so as Tenma was about to go into trance, I told the deity, "Until now, we have been propitiating you by offering you [khata](#) and [chang](#), but now in Lhasa, there are many thieves coming in gangs of 18-19 just in front of the lords and lamas of the government. So if you do not give the prophecy, it useless to propitiate you." Then the deity gave me the prophecy. The medium really had gone into trance and she said, "Hir hir," and then threw blessed barley.

[Translator's note: Here Urgyen was reciting the prophecy at a very high speed with an intonation just like the oracle had said. The interviewer pretended to understand so didn't tell him to say it slowly, so the following translation is just a small part of the prophecy that I could understand.]

"If you trust fully, you will get the full result and if you trust half you will get half a result. You put your knees down and ask [Nechung](#) for a prophecy. Do not talk much. I will help you [tib. blos sgang ga bkal na sgang ga dang/ phyed ka bkal na phyed ka/ pus mo'i lha nga sa la btsugs nas rdo rje grags ldan la zhus/ smra ba ma mang/ sdong grogs yong]

Then I told them to make [Khampa](#) Chöndze, the thief, lay down and I beat him with switches in front of the old man and woman. The old man and the woman yelled, "We Thank the compassionate [lord](#) very much! [tib. dpon po thugs rje chen po thugs che gngang]. Probably, there were about 1,000 people in the crowd watching when he beat the thief.

Then we took [Khampa](#) Chöndze through the meat market and the place where they shoe horses. Inchung Bartsag came there and told [Khampa](#) Chöndze, "Brother, please confess well." [tib. lcog sku mkhyen yag po zhu rogs]. [Khampa](#) Chöndze replied, "I don't know you!" Then Inchung Bartsag said, "Please don't say that you don't know me." Then I tied up [Khampa](#) Chöndze and took him to his home, but his house was empty and then I told the [thabyog](#) to hold the thief well. Then the two [nangma](#) were coming holding small whips like they use for donkeys. They said they paid 4 [sang](#) and 5 [sho](#) for the whips. Then I told

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them to make the thief lay down and whipped him right there. I was afraid that he might flee if we didn't put him down.

Then both of the thieves said that Gangtsug is in the Nepalese Consulate. So we went to the Nepalese Consulate and they said, "He had gone out to roam around, and will come back only in the evening. He is fond of gambling with dice and the majong, so probably he went to a park. In a house in the Nepalese Consulate, there was a statue and they had offered 100 butter lamps. [unclear]

Q

Was this Gangtsug's house?

A

No. Gangtsug's house was also in the Nepalese Consulate. Then it was quite late and it was about the time to hold the evening tea assembly meeting. Then someone gave me some tea which was helpful because I was thirsty. Then there were some Nepalese soldiers there talking in Nepalese about Gangtsug. I could understand a little Nepalese although I couldn't speak it. The soldiers were saying in Nepalese, "He is here and this is his house." Then I told the Nangma, "You go back, but I am not going back until my work is done." Then I told the [thabyog](#) to smash the door. There was no choice but to smash the door. Even if I died, I won't stop breathing. [tib. [shi](#) na'i dbug 'gro ba mi 'dug]. Then they [Nepalese] said please don't break the door, we will bring the key and they brought a key with a bell attached to it.

Then I said, "He [Gangtsug] is a thief who is well known in India and Tibet [tib. rgya grags bod grags] and you are the thief's household [tib. rkun tshang] and you have collaborated with the thief, right? Then they told Gangtsug to come out and he came out. Gangtsug was a tall porkmarked man with a Kongpo hairstyle. He was wearing the kind of boots called Garlo and a chuba. Then I told him, "Wow! Are you the one called Thief Gangtsug? You are really handsome, tall and have an imposing face" [tib. a po/ kyed rang rkun ma rkang btsugs zer mkhan de yin pas/ bkar bzo dod po 'dug ga/ sku gzugs che ba jig'dug/ zhal ras rdzig pa jig 'dug]. Then I told them to tie him up. At this time, the alley near the Nepalese Consulate was packed with people. The Nepalese said, "You don't need to tie him. He is not a thief and from generation to generation they have never stolen anything. I swear by the Gota [urdu. gota kasam] that his father didn't steal anything except he caught a small amount of fish. You can take him to the Shengo's office. They also told Gangtsug,

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"You must report well to the Shengo's office and tell them what you did and what you didn't do. Then we will go to the Shengo's office and talk with them and we will request that the Kashag, [Shöl](#) legung and the [Nangtsesha](#) should release you." I said, "You can tell [Shöl](#) legung and the [Nangtsesha](#) [unclear], but the Shengo's office is in charge of law and order [tib. khrims] during the Mönlam. Then I asked them if he is a thief and they said he wasn't. You tell me that he is not a thief and tell me to untie him, so I will untie his ropes, but can you prove that he is not a thief?" They said, "Yes."

So then I untied Gangtsug and tied up the Nepalese who told me to untie the thief. Then he said, "Please do not tie me" [unclear] and he was kicking Gangtsug saying, "This is all because of you." Then I said, "We didn't tie you up, but you told me to untie him saying that he was not a thief. Therefore, I tied you up." Then he said, "I have the title of an official [tib. las byed pa] and I have a red tassel on my horse." I said, "There is nothing to be surprised about you having a tassel because the donkeys, horses and mules also have tassels. Because you supported the thief, I have tied you up." Then I tied him and we arrested two people.

Q

Who do you mean two people?

A

Gangtsug and the [Khampa](#) Chöndze.

Q

Who was that Nepalese? Was he the captain [tib. dpon po]? [Tibetans called the head of the Nepal Office "captain"]

A

He was the interpreter to the captain and the second official under the captain.

Q

Was he a Nepalese born in Lhasa?

A

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His face looks like a Nepalese, but he was a Muslim with a beard. Then I untied the Nepalese and tied the thieves.

Q

What did he [Nepalese] say?

A

He was crying and snot was coming from his nose and then he said, "He [Gangtsug] is the thief; he stole the things." Then I told him, "You must be careful what you say. Otherwise, you will make a mistake." [tib. kha la bdag po yag po rgyag dgos red]. Then the two Nangma took the thieves to the place called Sabokhang [tib. sa bog sgang] in front of the [Jokhang](#) and told the thieves to kneel. There was a pile of switches there. [unclear] Then I relaxed and went there. All the Geyog have already come by that time, and the monk and lay officials were packed in the upstairs of the [Jokhang](#) in the big rooms with large windows faced to the south and west [tib. zur ljongs rab gsal] that overlooked the Sabokhang. And there were more people in Sabokhang than in the Mönlam Torgyag.

Then I stripped him completely naked and I told Gangtsug, "You, Gangtsug look at the three of them carefully [the thieves] and see how they got beaten from the beginning to the end [unclear]. You, however, had been free like an innocent person [tib. dkar po gu yang] and you didn't get beaten, so now you must get naked." And then I started beating him with switches.

Then [unclear] a Geyog called Gobshag came out with a stick and [unclear] and he [?] was bleeding from his neck and he ran away [unclear] and nobody caught him and he didn't come back.

Then we beat Gangtsug and locked him up in prison. At that time, the Mönlam Jigyab [tib. spyi khyab] official was Küsangtse [tib. kun bzang rtse] Dzasa (and general), and the [Tsendrön](#) was Thubten Gawa La [tib, thub bstan dga' ba lags]. The Nyertsangnga [tib. gnyer tshang ba] was Jangnöpa [tib. bya dngos pa]. Then I was called in by them and they told me to sit down and they said, "Whatever good or bad happened, we are with you." Then they asked where is the [Shanggo shingnyer](#) and the Geyog. I said they were coming. Then all of us were asked what we are going to do about the [Gangtsug case]. I said, "We will work together. No matter what happens, even if we have to wear cangue on our necks and if we are told, we will jump into the river." And all the others also yelled after

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me saying, "We agree to do as he said." [tib. khong gis bshad pa de rang yin]. And we also said if they provoke us we have to challenge them.

The senior [Shengo](#) told the [above mentioned officials], "Kungö, you have called the Chagdampa. Please tell us what you want to tell him. If we think it is right, we will do it. If we think it is wrong, we will not do it." Then they [the officials] said, "The Khatsara [half-Nepalese] said that they want Gangtsug to be handed over to them." [due to extra-territoriality]. Then the [Shengo](#) said, "Do you mean that we have to hand over Gangtsug? Did the Nepalese give you your title and the golden amulet you wear on your hair knot? Did the Nepalese give you your [Tsendrön](#) title and your [chablug](#) [tib. chab blug] water bottle and the pen case [tib. gser ril smyug sgrog? Now it is like the loose shit came to visit the shit [tib. skyag pa'i rtsa la rnyang ma bcar ba]. Now you tell us what you want. You just tell us whether we are allowed to give the legal punishment or not. [unclear]." Then Küsangtse was agitated and said something [unclear] and there was no conclusion. Then we said, "You don't need to report this to the [shö ga](#), we will report it because we are the ones who give the legal punishment." They said, "You can report it if you want to." Then we came back and it was time for the evening tea.

Q

Was this at the time of Mönlam Torgyag?

A

No. It was after the [Tsongjö](#), on about the 25th. Then he [the Shengo] told me that I and the [Shanggo shingnyer](#) must go to see the [Kalön](#) Lama Temba Jayang [tib. bstan pa 'jam dbyangs]. So after the evening tea, we went to [Muru](#) [tib. rme ru] to see Temba Jayang and we got a chance to see him right away. He told us to come in and then I offered a [khata](#) scarf and told him everything that happened and he just said, "Oh. I see. Yes yes." Then I said, "We came to seek your advice [tib. dgongs skor zhu]. Then he said, "You have the monastic charter [tib. bca' yig] issued by the 5th Dalai Lama, so there is nothing to ask anybody about what to do. [meaning that they have the legal right to punish people during the Mönlam] It is like first we cut the cloth and then we sew the cloth, right? If you tie the rope to the animal's nose, it cannot go everywhere. If you didn't tie the rope to the animal's nose, then it will go everywhere. It is like this. The Tsogchen [Shengo](#) is just for one year and after that you will become an ordinary monk and you will put your boots on your shoulder and cover your head with a towel, right? The charter issued by the 5th Dalai

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Lama is like, 'Even if the water passed by, the pebbles will still remain.' [tib. [chu](#) phyin kyang zam pa sdod kyi red]. The monastic charter will remain forever. If you don't think carefully, you will get into trouble! [tib. mgo log rtsed yong nga] If you ask people too much and can't make your own decisions and withdraw [tib. phyir 'then] [from your decision], you will get into trouble. You have to make the decision. There is nothing to ask about. Do you understand?" Then we said, "Thank you so much."

The [Shengo](#) were also glad to hear that, so that night we beat Gangtsug with switches. When the white banner of the [Tsongjö](#) Serbang reached the stupa Kaling Gobshi [tib. kar ne sgo bzhi] [at the north side of the Barkor], Gangtsug died.

Q

When they sent out the Lugong, was he dead?

A

Yes. We were there when the Lugong was sent out and when we all came back, the Shengo's office was empty. [unclear] Then on the next morning, we had to make a report and on the day after that, I received a message in front the Kaling Gobshi from the two [Shengo](#) telling me to come to the Shengo's office where they said that Gangtsug had died. I said, "There is nothing for me to do because I am not a lama who can transfer his consciousness. You carry a [khata](#) and report to the junior lama in [Shöl](#)." [unclear]

When I was coming near the gate of [Shöl](#) [recording stopped for a while]. When the Serbang ended, people were packed near the Shengo's officer and we put on the clothing for dressing corpses [tib. ro gos] on Gangtsug's body and threw it out from the Shengo's office. Probably, they didn't tie the body well and the body fell out on the ground. Then the body was carried away by the government's untouchable caste of people who take away the corpses of the beggars (tib. [ragyaba](#) [rags rgyab pa]). Then we handed over the other thieves to the [Nangtsesha](#).

Then in the 4th month, we were called to the [Yigtsang](#) regarding the Gangtsug case. I was called there after the 15th. Probably on the 20th, the [gag](#) gave the order and we were scolded a lot by the [Trunyichemmo](#).

Q

Was that the [Yigtsang](#) in [Norbulinga](#)?

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A

Yes. And then the Khempo sat down.

Q

How many Khempo were there?

A

There were about 11-12 Khempo and the two [Shengo](#) and the Phodrang depa. Actually all the [Laji](#) were there. We two Chagdampa were bending over at the waist.

Q

Did Ngagpa la ask you the questions?

A

Yes.

Q

What other [Trunyichemmo](#) were there?

A

Rampa, Jogteng and Bumthang [tib. 'bum thang] were there. Then the [Trunyichemmo](#) told us to stay relaxed and the Talama was laughing. [unclear]. Then we were called in and the Talama read the verdict. The Talama said, "This is not an interrogation with a seal on it [tib. zhu ba rgyags sbyar]. Rather it is a note with a seal on it [tib. tshig [tho](#) rtags sbyar]. The [Yigtsang](#) didn't interrogate you. All the [Laji](#) have to know this because the monks are fierce [tib. bka' gnyan po]. We just made a note of whatever you said. Now all of us were standing and the Talama said, "You know how to eat, but don't know how to work. From the beginning, if you had reported the case clearly it would have settled earlier, but you didn't report clearly. But it is good that now you have reported clearly, so we thank you for this. You might have a pain in your waist. Then we left the [Yigtsang](#) and went back to the monastery. [unclear] At that time about 1,000 monks were there receiving us.

Q

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Probably, they knew about the Gangtsug case, right?

A

Yes, probably. [unclear] The the Khempo told the monks, "We went to see them [Yigtsang?] many times, because it was like the patient didn't meet the right doctor and didn't get the right medicine. Regarding catching the thieves, the Chagdampa was called by the [Yigtsang](#) and he reported clearly about the case. The Yigtsang's anger ceased [tib. dgongs pa dangs] and they wrote about the case on the [samtra](#) and then this was copied onto paper and it became a note with a seal on it. This was not an interrogation report with a seal on it. The [Yigtsang](#) said that they are going to report this to the regent. Then the [Laji](#) reported that if there is any punishment or fine, we, the [Laji](#) will take it. We, reported, "If the [Yigtsang](#) couldn't stop their anger, all of [Sendregasum](#) will meet and make a report." Then the [Yigtsang](#) said that we don't need to do that. The case will be settled. So all of you can relax because everything is going to be okay. The monks said thank you and all of them returned.

Then on the 6th of 5th lunar month, the [Shengo](#) could stay only for one month and all of the Khempo and the representatives were called by the [Yigtsang](#). The Khempo told me, "The [kudrak](#) are malicious, so we have to be careful. I was wearing the vest made from brocade, but I changed into another one. When we went there, it was the time of [drungja](#) and we waited until the [drungja](#) was over and then we were called before the [Yigtsang](#) and they gave us an order which said, "This time we will overlook your acts [tib. ma yin go yin] because the case was settled like piercing the puss with a knife [tib. rnag thog gtsag 'khel]. But you are not allowed to do that again and all of you have to do well and the [Laji](#) has to give instructions to the monastic officials and the [Laji](#) should keep this order in the document box and read it when a new [Shengo](#) comes."

Q

What did they write in the order?

A

They wrote all about Gangtsug and the cause of the case and most of that was what I had reported to them. They couldn't say that it was well done, but they didn't say it was done badly. They left it sort of like neutral [tib. btang snyoms]. It neither said that we are allowed to work at our job, nor it did it say that we are not allowed to work.

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At that time, some people spread a rumor that the senior [Shengo](#) and the senior Chagdampa will be sentenced to life imprisonment and the junior [Shengo](#) and the junior Chagdampa will be handed over to the Dambag [tib. dan 'bag] [shungyupa](#) farmers and the Shingner will be banished. But we didn't get any punishment and we were also told to have [pag](#) in the Shabden Lhakang [tib. zhabs brtan lha khang] in [Norbulinga](#), but we didn't go there and returned to the monastery and Trijang Labrang served us rice and yogurt and asked us anxiously how the case was settled. In the next year, we became the Chagdampa and Shingyer again, even though we didn't ask for it. I did the Chagdampa for 9 years and then I became the Gegö.