

Interview H0215: with Shakabpa, Wangchug Denden [tib. zhwa sgab pa, dbang phyug bde ldan], (India, 1983) : Part No. 4 of 13

W.D. Shakabpa was a very prominent aristocratic government official who held the rank of Tsipön. He is the author of "Tibet: A Political History." He discusses the Pandatsang incident in Lhasa and also about how Panda Tobgye rebelled in Kham. The subject discusses in detail about Reting's going on a pilgrimage to see visions in the holy Lake and to his birthplace in Dakpo. Shakabpa also talks in detail about going with Trimön on pilgrimage to Tsari and their contact with the Lopa people.

Q

The things which were supposed to be said by Tsarong do not seem to be true. If it was true, you should know about it.

A

On most of the occasions, I was present.

Q

Then what happened? Then was it decided to demote Prime Minister [Langdün](#) or to make him just an ex-prime minister?

A

He would still remain as the Prime Minister in name, but he would not have to go to the office.

Q

Was this decided by the Tsondu?

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A

The Tsondu suggested this to the Kashag.

Q

The Tsondu just suggested it?

A

The Trungtsi reported whatever was agreed upon in the Tsondu to the Kashag. The Kashag said, "Today is the day of exorcism, Torgyag [tib. gtor rgyag] [exorcism rite to get rid of all that is evil] and also the sun has set, so tomorrow before the ceremony we shall talk to the Prime Minister. So the next day early in the morning, when they went and told this to the Prime Minister. [Langdün](#) said, "That is fine. If it is done like this, it is very good." At that time, we did not know what was going on. Then he was no more.

Q

Was it finished on that day itself? There was nothing to talk or deliberate anymore? Was he dismissed so easily?

A

Yes, it was done very quickly and easily.

Q

Then the [Panda](#) trouble started?

A

I think the [Panda](#) trouble started before [Langdün](#) resigned. I am certain it was at an earlier period.

Q

How did this rebellion of [Panda](#) start?

A

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I am quite well acquainted with [Pandatsang](#). According to what I have heard, it was during the period when [Panda](#) was having his accounts audited by the government [tib. gzhung rtsis]. During the 13th Dalai Lama's reign, all the wool of the Tibetan Government was entrusted to [Pandatsang](#) to be sold and the money was to be used for buying Chinese silver [tib. rgya dngul]. In that year, the government was auditing the accounts of that trade. [Panda](#) himself denied having any knowledge about it. At that time, I think Trenthong was the Doji.

Q

During the [Panda](#) episode, was [Trimön](#) still in office?

A

No, [Trimön](#) was in Lhasa. The Doji was Trekhang. I think a year after the 13th Dalai Lama passed away or around that time, Norgye Nangpa was the Depön of the Artillery Regiment [tib. me sgyogs dmag sgar] which was the Markham Border Security Force [tib. smar khams sa srung]. [Panda](#) Tobgye was the head of militia and he was appointed as a [rupön](#) and he went too. He was appointed by the government.

Sometime later, when Norgye Nangpa went to the Tsambu area to collect something to be used for the religious offerings for the deceased Dalai Lama, the [Panda](#) faction ambushed them at night. However, before this night ambush was staged, they circulated a leaflet. The content of the leaflet was as follows: "When the Dalai Lama has barely passed away, they have banished Kujar and so on. Normally, the government officials come as the Doji and on top of that, when the [depön](#), [rimshi](#) and the [letsenpa](#) and the phogpön come to Kham, they give a lot of trouble to the [Khamba](#) people. They whip them saying that the Khamba's ears are on their ass [tib. khams pa'i am mchog rkub la yod]. They also accused them of robbing [valuable] [zi](#) beads [tib. gzi] from people's necks and so on. The leaflet further said that they [the Khambas] must take control of the territories up to the Shargongla [tib. shar gong la] Pass.

This pamphlet was definitely circulated. As a result, there was an armed revolt in those areas. The [Chadang](#) Depön was not there [at the regiment's headquarters]. Only a [rupön](#) was there. He was shot dead and there was talk that his wife and children were also killed. Norgye Nangpa's house was looted and the government soldiers' arms were also taken away. There were 2 cannons which were also taken. When the news about this reached Lhasa, the order was issued to expel them so the Doji took immediate action and expelled

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them. They ran away further down without fighting. They left Panda's territory going down from Markham to Ba [tib. 'ba'] and then to Pokok. From there they could not be expelled since it was in Chinese territory.

The government was talking to the Chinese. In the meantime, Panda's house was surrounded by the soldiers in Lhasa. At that time, [Trimön](#) was a shape. The soldiers were stationed on Surkhang's roof top and Köchag's roof top and [Panda](#) was surrounded in the middle. However, [Panda](#) had bolted his door and would not let anyone enter.

Q

Normally, when an official comes to seal the door [of a person's house, thus confiscating the property] was it proper to lock the main door?

A

I don't know for sure if an officer went to seal his door. I wonder? All the negotiations were carried out through the shop entrance. Tsatrütsang and the [chandzö](#) of Phabongka and Trülku Champa Chödrak [tib. byams pa chos grags] went to the Kashag and they were the people who carried out the negotiations between [Panda](#) and the government. The gist of the talks was that Tsatrütsang, Trülku Chödrak and [Sendregasum](#) would take responsibility that no fresh trouble will be started by the [Panda](#) faction and furthermore, they would compensate or return whatever had taken from the [depön](#) and the soldiers. Finally, the problem was settled and an agreement was reached.

Q

Wasn't there something about a shot being fired and a man killed?

A

The gun went off by accident and it killed Panda's best and favorite horse. Actually a soldier was checking his rifle to see if it was in order and ready to be fired since they were getting ready to confront the surrounded [Panda](#). Probably, they [Pandatsang] tried to oppose.

Q

When the shot was fired did the police who had so far been surrounding the walls and peeping every now and then, climb down the wall?

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A

No, there was no talk like that. When they heard the shot, all the soldiers nearby loaded their guns fearfully, but fortunately someone shouted. "Don't shoot"

Q

When the guns were loaded, were they told not to shoot?

A

Yes, they were told not to shoot. There was lot of confusion. The shops in that area in Lhasa were closed for 2 days. The neighboring markets from the long pole called Sharkyari up to Kapshöba's area were closed. The roads were also blocked.

Q

I think [Sawang](#) Trimön was very helpful and treated [Panda](#) very kindly during that time. He helped [Panda](#) whatever way he could. There is a song which goes roughly like this, "From the Golden House of [Pandatsang](#); Golden messages were sent; [Sawang](#) Trimön on his rooftop: sits counting them." [tib. gser khyim spom mda' tshang nas/ gser gyi brda ma btang song/ sa dbang khri smon thog khar/ grangs ka skyon gyin bzhugs bzhag].

A

I never heard this.

Q

This song has been published in the USA.

A

I have seen some similar songs written in books. In the old days, most of these songs were sung by the water carriers of the monasteries during the Mönlam festival and other big congregations of the monks. Tibetans believe that these songs contain prophecies and so my late father and grandfather would often ask me what songs were being sung by these water carriers. Later, such songs were sung no more. Later people used this method to criticize and defame their opposition. I don't think such songs like the above were sung by water carriers.

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Q

Such songs were prevalent in olden times?

A

Not so long ago.

Q

Then eventually the [Panda](#) trouble was settled?

A

Yes, everything became all right.

Q

Everything was all right?

A

Then again someone like Kusangtse said that there were some problems left concerning the 2 cannons. While I was there I heard that everything was all right. Norgye Nangpa's destroyed property was compensated with cash.

Q

I think this most probably occurred in the Wood-Dog Year [1934]. I mean the [Panda](#) revolt.

A

I think it was at the end of 1934.

Q

Then in the year of the Wood-Pig [1935], when Reting went to [the holy lake] Lhamö Lamtso [tib. lha mo'i bla mtsho], were [Trimön](#), Dombo and [Ramba](#) among the retinue?

A

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Yes, they were there. I was also there. In fact, I was there from the beginning until the end.

Q

At that time, how was it done? I mean was that when Samye was being renovated?

A

No, it wasn't. The appointment of people to look after this renovation was done only after returning from there. Parkang [tib. par khang], Shankha [tib. shan kha] and Kugnö Liushar [tib. sne'u shar] were appointed as the overseers [tib. do dam pa].

Q

Was it after they had returned?

A

It was while they were returning. The Regent had gone for a pilgrimage to Samye [tib. bsam yas]. When he was at Samye he said that it needed renovation and he appointed those people to take charge of this renovation work there.

Q

Did these appointees first come to see the Regent in Lhasa and later returned to Samye?

A

No. Parkang was at that time the Governor of Lhoka Province [tib. lho spyi] and Liushar was the head of Wön Dzong [tib. 'on rdzong]. Shankha was probably summoned. He was there at that time.

Q

Is Shankha and Shasur [tib. bshad zur] the same person?

A

Yes, he is Shasur.

Q

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What happened at that time? It is not very clear.

A

I was present at that time. [Trimön](#) stayed behind when we left for Lhasa. [Trimön](#) had to go to Reting, so he stayed behind.

Q

Why did [Sawang](#) Trimön stay behind?

A

It was because Reting had to go to Reting and [Trimön](#) stayed behind. I was the acting [kadrung](#) at that time. I was appointed to this post on the basis of my being the [tsipa](#) and hence I was taken along with them.

Mentö [tib. sman stod] who had recently come here was the [kandrön](#) and Trimön's lay official bodyguard, his simga Tashi Lingpa [tib. bkra shis gling pa], was also with us. Reting Rinpoche left for Reting monastery with his retinue and went through Phenpo [tib. 'phen po]. We met with Reting in [Drigung](#) [tib. 'bri gung]. Reting came from Lungshö [tib. klung shod].

Trimön went straight up to Yangrigang [tib. yang ri sgang] and from there they went to Thil [tib. mthil]. Dombo arrived at Thil in the evening while they were still there. He was in charge of the prayers and ritual offerings [tib. mchod sprin do dam pa]. The next day [Trimön](#) came a little distance from Thil to receive Reting. They also visited the hermit Tshamba Angön [tib. mtshams pa a mgon].

Q

Were you among those who went to visit Tshamba Angön?

A

I was there. I was with Reting when he went there. [Trimön](#) had gone there the day before and I was with him too.

Q

What happened? What did [Trimön](#) say to the Tshamba Angön?

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A

When [Trimön](#) reached the retreat, he knocked on the door. There was an outer gate. [Trimön](#) knocked at the gate and informed the hermit that he had come from Lhasa. Tshamba Angön asked [Trimön](#) why he had come. [Trimön](#) explained the reasons and the hermit said, remove the sod (bricks) from my hermitage [the temporary wall build outside the hermitage to keep out visitors] and I will open the door from the inside. So the sod was removed and they were invited inside. We too were invited inside. Then he was requested to give us an initiation. With a ritual arrow with colorful silk sashes tied to it (tib. a dadar [mda' dar]) in his hand, the hermit gave us all the initiation (tib. wang [dbang]) by placing the arrow on our heads while talking. On the top of the dadar was a small painting of the deity Dechok [tib. bde mchog] and he gave us a little blessing from his tantric offering [tib. nang mchod]. He let all the retinue enter his hermitage. Then they sat talking for some time.

Q

Was he a good conversationalist?

A

He answered the questions in a nonsensical [tib. cha min cho log] way. You could not make much sense out of his replies. It was rather strange. He was wearing a monk's dress. His hair reached to his shoulders. He was small in stature, and wore a half sleeve brocade vest (tib. töngag [stod 'gag]). He did not have his shawl (tib. [sen](#) [gzan]) on. The next day, when Reting Rinpoche came, the same process was repeated. However, some had already informed him because near his door a white line (tib. karthik [dkar thig]) had been drawn.

Q

Who drew this line?

A

I don't know who drew the line, but it was there. The next day, the escort from [Drigung](#) informed the hermit that the Regent had arrived. So the hermit once again asked them to break down the sod. The pieces of sod were quite huge ones.

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Q

At that time had the wall had been put up again? Who put it up again?

A

After [Trimön](#) had visited him, Trimön's servant put it up again.

Q

You mean when you left the sod pieces were placed back, right?

A

Yes, he told us to build the sod wall and he closed the door. The Regent, [Trimön](#) and I think, [Ramba](#), went inside. We stayed outside. There was a small courtyard. We listened from outside. He threw some leather cushion from inside and the Regent sat on that. The Tshamba Angön again gave an initiation and the Regent brought along some incense and tea and offered them to the hermit. We stayed two days at [Drigung](#) Thil.

Q

According to what I have heard, the hermit was supposed to have said that these high officials have broken my hermitages wall and he refused to reenter his hermitage?

A

I have never heard such a thing. I was present at that time. We had to accompany them wherever they went to visit the holy places. We, the [kadrung](#), had to take down in writing and record these.

Q

For example, did you have to record in writing that they visited [Drigung](#) Angön?

A

Yes, we had to record it in the annual book called Kashag Dröndeb [tib. bka' [shag](#) mgron deb]. If any Lama was consulted about the welfare of religion and politics and if they suggested some rites, we would record it, but at that time, probably, they didn't ask him about religion and politics. I don't remember having the record.

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Q

Angön wouldn't reply properly, right?

A

He was somewhat crazy [tib. smyon pa'i bzo 'dra po]. But he was very pleasant. He had a shining visage [tib. mjal spro po 'od ril 'od ril]. Then we visited the holy places in [Drigung](#). The [Drigung](#) Monastery was quite a huge one. We saw all the sacred relics and objects [tib. nang rten]. There was a holy golden urn [tib. gser bum] which we also visited. We also visited the holy sky burial, the Tenjak Durtrö [tib. gtan 'jags? dur khrod]. After visiting all the holy places and shrines, we stayed for 2 days and then went to Yangrigang where we halted for one day.

The next day, while returning, we visited Nyima Jangra [tib. nyi ma lchang ra] where a Buddhist dialectics class [tib. bshad grwa] was in progress. Not far away was the temple Sha Lhakhang [tib. zha lha khang]. We spent the next night at Thugön [tib. ?]. The next day we left for Rinchen Gang [tib. rin chen sgang] which is in Medro Katsal [tib. mal gro ka tshal ?]. There he was offered a small piece of substance which was supposed to be the heart of the Bodhisattva Changsem Gendün Rinchen [tib. byang sems dge 'dun rin chen]. He just pressed it and it broke. It was yellowish in color. He gave a tiny piece of it to all of us. The Regent himself ate a tiny piece. We spent that night at Medro Rutok [tib. mal gro ru thog"].

The next day we climbed a small hill and reached Wölga [tib. 'ol dga'] where a reception team was waiting at the place called Wölga Dzingche [tib. rdzing che].

Q

Who was the official in charge of Wölga?

A

[The lay official] Lathog Sungkar [tib. la thog zung mkhar] was the head of the [dzong](#). There was a very holy and strange cave there called Garphug [tib. mgar phug] known as the cave of Garmi Yönten Yungdrung [tib. mgar mi yon tan gyung grung]. In Dzingche there was a beautiful statue of the Maitreya Buddha, Gyalwa Champa [tib. rgyal ba byams pa] which was supposed to have been made during the time of the Great Tsongkhapa [tib. tsong kha pa]. The statue and its background murals were done excellently.

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Now there was another very strange cave known as the cave of the protective deity Pehar [tib. pe har]. To this cave, the [dzong](#) had to offer a whole carcass of sheep every year. Since they offered the carcass every year, the cave was filled up with carcasses, so we had to go under the carcasses and the horns and legs would touch our heads. The interior of the cave was completely dark. The caretaker of the cave and another person were sent first with torches and people were sent in to apply gold to the statues. After them the Regent and [Trimön](#) went in and when they came out, they sat near the entrance of the cave and then we were sent in one by one.

When we came out, the Regent looked us over and smiled. I just wondered at his peculiar behavior. When I entered the cave it was quite scary. In the darkness you had to walk with your heads bowed, otherwise the horns and the legs of the carcass would touch you. The stench of the dried carcass was very strong. When I entered, I found that it was not so scary, because the person in charge of the place and the other person applying the gold were waiting in front of the statue with torches.

The face of the statue was a peaceful one, with its lips curled up and wearing a flat [hat](#). I did not have the courage to study the statue very carefully. I prayed hurriedly and left. We had an artist among us and he said that the statue looked strangely alive and life-like. Phala, who was then the [shöndrön](#) told me when I asked him why everyone was looking at each other sniggering all the while, he said that sometimes a scorpion clings on your body when you come out, that's why everyone was scrutinizing each other to see if anyone had one. If anyone did have one clinging to his body, he was considered to be very fortunate for it was a sign that the deity has granted him his protection. Fortunately, or unfortunately, no one was conferred this honor. It was really stupid. If they told people that there are scorpions in there, people won't dare to get in, right?

Q

Is the scorpion supposed to be the protective deity's symbolic pet?

A

Yes. That was the belief.

Q

So the cave was filled with so much meat, right?

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A

Yes. The cave was filled up with the offerings of meat every year. The meat would rot and naturally insects have infested them. So we went into such a cave. The Regent went in first and [Trimön](#) followed him.

Q

Did the Regent have a scorpion clinging on his body?

A

No. If he had one, we would have seen it. The Regent and others were waiting at the entrance and examining everyone to see if anyone had one.

Q

The cave is filled up with such carcasses. Is it in Dzingche?

A

Yes. The yearly offering piled up and the meat dried up and disintegrated. The carcasses were about two or three hundred years old.

Q

Was there any meat in front of the deity?

A

In front of the statue, there was sort of an altar on which offerings were arranged.

Q

Were the meat offerings placed around the altar?

A

There was a path and we had to bend down while going, because the horns and rib bones etc hurt our heads.

Q

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Did they ever take out the carcasses?

A

No. They were never taken out. The state was extraordinarily strange and pious. I think we stayed in that area for two days.

Q

Did the Regent perform ritual prayers to invoke the diety?

A

Yes. There were about 20 monks of [Namgye Tratsang](#) among the retinue.

Q

Did everyone say that the statue was very life-like or alive?

A

Yes. They said that it was just like a living person. The painter Paljor Gyelpo la [tib. dpal 'byor rgyal po] also told me so. He said the statue looked wet and one could feel the steam rising from it. Paljor Gyelpo was well known to me. He used to live in the Trekhang House's compound. He further told me that the statue was dressed in a woolen felt vest called Töle [tib. stod lhe] which also was wet and had steam rising from it.

From this place, we left for Samtengling [tib. bsam gtan gling] where Tsongkhapa preached the Lamrim doctrine and the scripture of the Lamrim used by [Tsongkapa](#) was there. It was a very beautiful place. We did not halt at this place and continued our journey and reached a bridge called Sersam Sampa [tib. gser zam zam pa]. There was an open place and we pitched our tents and stayed for the night. I took a photograph of Reting and his retinue on this bridge. I think this bridge is among the more famous of its kind. The next day, we left for Gyel Logla [tib. rgyal glog? la], where the sacred lake where the life of the Garuda Deity, Yeshe Khyungtra [tib. ye shes khyung khra] was attached [tib. bla mtsho]. The lake was not very big and its shape is like the letter 'D'.

Q

Who gave the initiation?

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A

The offerings to the deities were done by the monks of the Dalai Lama's personal college, [Namgye Tratsang](#).

Q

Wasn't there any food arrangement?

A

Some tea and probably a midday meal [tib. tsha phog] were served. Tsapok means some sort of snacks taken around 11 A.M. or 4 P.M when travelling.

Q

Usually, this place was regarded as a rough place [tib. 'tshub po], right?

A

I am not sure about that.

Q

Wasn't there any vision in the lake?

A

No, not at all.

Q

Is this lake considered to be very rough normally?

A

This is the life lake of 5 garuda deities and therefore it is quite rough. After a little more traveling, we reached Gyama where our camp was put up at an open area. The next day from Gyama we went to Gyel, which is in South Tibet.

In Gyel, all the people from Ngagpa [tib. sngags pa], Dakpo [tib. dwags po] and Gyel had gathered there. Of course, the monks of the Dakpo [tib. dwags po] monastery had also come there and monks of the Chönkhorgyal [tib. chos 'khor rgyal] were there. It was the

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life lake of Shri Devi Remati [tib. re ma ti]. So the monks from Dakpo monastery remained at Chönkhorgyel.

Q

Had the Ngari monks arrived yet?

A

Most probably. It was during the summer retreat period. Whatever may be, all three monasteries' monks were gathered there. It was a very large gathering and arrangements were made on an elaborate scale. In the evening, all the monks of Dakpo monastery would sit on one side. Ngari monastery sat on another side and they would debate late into the night until the stars became visible.

Sometimes there would be inter-debates between the two monasteries. It was very nice and lively. Of course, Nornang Geshe la [tib. nor nang dge bshes lags] of Dakpo monastery was present. In Chönkhorgyel we visited numerous precious images of deities. In Gyel itself there was the image of Mahakala, Gönpö Kothim [tib. mgon po ko 'thim]. It was said that the Mahakala had dissolved himself into a leather seat Komden [tib. ko gdan]'. We saw this leather seat along with the image.

Q

Nowadays, can people still see this leather seat and also the statue of the Mahakala?

A

There was only the leather seat. There was also the female deity Gung Ngönma [tib. [gung](#) sngon ma] in the form of a small statue. Then there was a chapel of the protector deity called Kanyan Gönkhang [tib. bka' gnyan mgon khang] which was considered to be very dangerous and active. This was not for ordinary visitors. It was only unveiled for the Dalai Lama or the Regent. Whenever they opened it, then they carried out any repairs or renovations needed. Fresh offerings are also made at that time by the official in charge of making offerings. After that they locked it up. It was a very interesting and important chapel. There were the clay statues of Yama [tib. 'jigs byed] and Chögyal [tib. chos rgyal] surrounded by numerous other deities. The priest pointed out a rather strange scene to us. In the Chögyal's mouth there was a rat clamped in between the teeth. It looked as if the

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image had been alive and the rat was caught while trying to escape. We tried to pull it out, but it would not budge.

Q

Maybe a big rat went in and while trying to squeeze in the teeth of the image must have pierced its stomach and therefore got stuck there?

A

I don't know what a scientist would say, but as far as we are concerned, we believe that it was bitten by the deity. The master, Lobpön Sonam [tib. slob dpon bsod noms] of [Namgye Tratsang](#) was with us. The late 13th Dalai Lama used to be very good to him. He showed us this strange sight. At that time, they told Sonam La to try to dislodge the dead rat and they said, "Please be careful least you break the teeth of the statue." Both the Regent and [Trimön](#) saw this. Then he dislodged the rat and stuffed medicine power in the mouth. He told us that during a previous visit either by the Regent or a Dalai Lama to this chapel, again there was either a rat or a frog stuck in the teeth of this statue. We saw this too. The dead body of the rat was completely dry but the statue was made from mud. It was rather strange and baffling. In the middle, [torma](#) offerings were displayed. Then we went to see the lake also.

Q

What does Gatsel [tib. dga' tshal] mean?

A

Gatsel means the place where the second Dalai Lama Gendün Gyatso [tib. dge 'dun rgya mtsho]] and the third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso [tib. bsod noms rgya mtsho] used to live. There were 2 places known as Gatsel and Potala. It was situated at the foot of the hill. It was a branch of Chönkhorgyel.

Q

Actually, was there some sort of monastery formed?

A

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From there you had to go up because no one was living there. Then he offered whatever prayers he had to offer at Chönkhorgyel and then we left to visit the lake.

Q

Was it nearby?

A

No, it was not nearby. You had to travel for some time on horseback. You entered a valley and traveled on horse for about 3 hours. On the way, you came across 2 more important lakes. The life lakes of 2 retinues of the Shri Devi (Remati). One was the crocodile faced deity and the other was the lion faced deity. [tib. [qu](#) seng gdong can]. They said that you should not look at these lakes because if you saw visions there, you would not get to see the visions at the main lake. Therefore, people tried not to look at these lakes. We averted our gaze so as not to look at these lakes by chance. We had to ride very close by these lakes but tried to avoid looking at them. The life lake of the 2 retinues of Shri Devi was actually one lake, but with 2 portions.

Q

Was it one lake or 2 lakes?

A

There are 2 different lakes but you can say it is one lake in the sense that the lake becomes very narrow in the middle, like an ant's waist. After that we found an open space on top of the mountain where we built temporary camps and offered prayers to the deity Remati. The prayers were chanted in great details with full ritual music. When you look down from the peak, you can see the lake which appears Turquoise blue. From there we had to walk down individually without making any noise. They say if you go down with your friends you do not see any vision. So, we all went separately.

Q

What about the servants?

A

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No. We went down separately without any servants or companions, but I did not see any vision. I sat and sat, but no vision appeared to me. I went down 3 times, but I had no luck. Reting Rinpoche, however had a vision, but he did not disclose it to us. Before departing Chönkhorgyel, people started talking about the visions the Regent had seen but he would not make any comment. Later he made announcements about his vision in the Tsondu meeting.

Q

What about [Trimön](#)?

A

Probably, he had some, but nobody asked him and he did not say anything about seeing a vision. We did not ask him and he didn't say anything about it. After that we went down to offer the things to be thrown in the lake (tib. tshodze [mtsho rdzas]). We went down on a riding Yak called Nalo [tib. sna lo]. They had made the arrangements already.

Q

How long did you stay at the lake of the visions?

A

People hid in between the rocks and tried to get visions for 2 to 3 hours. I saw the servants walking up and down quietly carrying the thermos flasks for the Regent. We had nothing for ourselves. After some time, we were called forth to make offerings to the lake on behalf of the Kashag. I went up to the edge of the lake. At the end of the lake the water was rushing in [tib. rgyugs] and there they have made steps where you can walk over and so we went over them and made our offerings. Actually the lake is round in shape. The running water flows in the upper area, the Dakpo side. At the lower part of the lake there was a way to make offerings.

Q

How long did you have to walk from the top of the peak down to the lake?

A

Since it was downhill it was easy, but going up was very difficult.

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Q

Was there a good path for walking?

A

It was like the distance from the Dharamsala market to the Kashag office. There was some kind of trail for the yaks. The Regent and [Trimön](#) rode on yaks but we went on foot. However, while going back up the mountain, we had yaks to ride. Since I was busy doing something, I could not get a yak, since all of them had been taken by the others. I still remember the climb which I had to make on foot. It was literally an uphill task all the way. When we made the offerings to the lake, it was something at the middle portion of the lake to which you can walk on steps. From there it becomes one of the deepest areas of the lake. So we made the offerings there.

Q

Did you make the offerings at the head of the lake?

A

They had built a kind of wall like a dam from the edge of the lake to the middle of the lake where it was probably the deepest. We had to make the offering in that place.

Q

How were the steps? How did it look?

A

It looked like a dam built from the edge of the lake. There were lots of offerings made to the lake. There were boxes, urns, porcelain bowls, silver bangles and other similar ornaments. Since the lake was crystal clear, you can see most of these objects very distinctly.

Q

Was the lake very deep?

A

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In the center it must be very deep. After that we returned up the mountain and by the time we reached there it was 3 or 4 in the afternoon. We were served food. When we reached Chönkhorgyel, it was completely dark. The Regent, I think, went back 3 or 4 times to the lake.

Q

Did he return from Chönkhorgyel to the lake again?

A

That time he went very quietly with only a few servants. His first visit was very ceremonial with all his retinue. His second visit was a brief one. When I say a brief visit I don't mean the visit was only for a short period. I mean he went only with a few attendants with no pomp or ceremony. [Trimön](#) also visited the lakes twice and on both occasions I accompanied him, so I made 3 visits to the lake. On all the 3 occasions, no visions appeared to me.

Q

Why did they visit the lake again and again?

A

I don't know. After that we went to another lake called Jamsing Latsho [tib. lcam sring bla mtsho]. This lake was believed to be a very wrathful one [tib. bka' gnyan po]. On the way it started snowing very heavily. We lost our way every now and then and it was very difficult to walk in the snow so we slide a lot. When we reached down there, they had put up tents and all the other arrangements were made. The people of the area were very, very kind to us. So we made our offerings to the lake and went around it. I was quite scared and I didn't dare to go because it was very slippery. So I did not go. You had to be very careful, because the snow was very slippery and if you slipped then you went straight into the lake. The Regent did not go, but [Trimön](#) went carrying a walking stick. I told him it was better not to go, but he insisted and went. A few of the monks of the Namgye Monastery went. The rest of us did not go.

While we were making the offerings, the weather cleared. Otherwise the weather was very rough. Soon a hailstorm broke out and we had to protect ourselves with raincoats.

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After that at Chökhorgyel Monastery, all the monks of Ngari, Dakpo and Chökhorgyel gathered and they performed a religion dance (tib. [cham](#) ['cham]).

Another interesting thing to be noted here was a very interesting little mask which was known as Senbak Mugchung [tib. bse 'bag smug chung] of the deity Tsimara [tib. tsi dmar ba]. It belonged to one of the protector deity's [gönkhang](#) in the Gyel monastery. There they made a big offering to the Protector deity along with the monks of [Namgye Tratsang](#). All the people were gathered there. The mask was in a box which was kept safe on a table. After some time, the Regent opened the box. The mask was wrapped in silk sashes of multiple colors. He unwrapped the mask and put it on his own face and looked around so that the crowd could view it. It was a very terrifying mask. This gesture shows that the Regent spiritually had a very high realization [tib. rtogs pa mtho po] because if you did not, you would not be able to wear it for it was an awesome and terrifying mask. He not only wore the mask, but looked around at the crowd so that they could see it clearly.

Q

What type of mask was it?

A

It was the mask of Tsimara and it was red in color with the upper teeth on the lower lip. The Regent wore it and showed it to the crowd. Reting really had a high realization, otherwise, he would not have dared to open it.

Q

Did the mask have one eye or two eyes?

A

The mask had 3 eyes. After that we went to the Gyel Lhathok [tib. rgyal lha thog]. It was the monastery of the famous Namkha Gyentsen [tib. nam mka' rgyal mtshan].

Q

At that time, had Reting got all his things [visions]?

A

Yes.

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Q

What did you see there?

A

There was a small hermitage that belonged to Namkha Gyentsen. Nearby there were a few small lakes. It was a very high and quiet area. After that we went to Dakpo Gyatsa [tib. dwags po rhya ysha] where Reting Rinpoche himself was born. His family house was there. The area had very pleasant weather, neither too warm nor too cold. Very similar to Kalimpong's weather. Maize, walnuts, and peaches were growing. However, the area itself was very poor. Even this family was very poor. At the place where Reting was born, they had built a small temple which we call the Tseju Lhakhang [tib. tshes bcu] where the people gathered on the 10th and 25th of every month to pray and make offerings.

Near the door of the temple was a huge rock and it was said that when the present Reting Rinpoche was very young he stuck a wooden peg/stake in the rock.

Q

Were some small pieces of the peg left there?

A

No, there weren't. He had told his parents that tomorrow some visitors are coming to see me and they need this to tie their horses. We can still see this miracle, but there wasn't very much of the wooden peg left because pilgrims visiting this place took pieces of wood from this peg as a religious souvenirs. I saw this with my own eyes. When we reached his birthplace, he looked very happy. At that time he was the Regent and he was young, but he was very particular about everything. He cared about everything like food, horses, dresses, and servants. His horses and mules were excellent. His servants were very well dressed. His tent was tremendously elaborate. We reached there quite late in the evening, just before the sun had set.

The next day we had the [trungja](#). Almost every morning we had a [trungja](#). During the [trungja](#) all his relatives were given audiences in his room. They brought gifts and presents to the Regent. The better ones brought tsamphor [tib. rtsam phor] (wooden bowls in which you keep [tsamba](#)). Some came with [samtra](#) and others presented wooden tables. Most of these people were swarthy looking with goiters and ugly features.

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Q

What did the Regent give them in return?

A

I heard that in return he gave them many gifts that gave them a basis for making a living [tib. 'tsho rten]. Since it was his hometown, we stayed there for 10 days.

Q

Weren't the Regent's parents there?

A

There were not. He had brought his close relatives from Central Tibet. His other relatives in this village he met and they sat in the tents put up in the fields. They enjoyed each other's company for 10 days. [Trimön](#) took leave and left earlier for a pilgrimage to Tsari [tib. tsa ri]. He stayed only for 5 days at the Regent's birthplace and then he went to Dakla Gampo [tib. dwags lha sgam po] and from there to Tsari.

Q

Where is Dakla Gampo and what does it look like?

A

It is a very beautiful and very enjoyable place. There is a place called Sanglung [tib. bzang lung] which was the Nyelmei Dakpo Lhaje's [tib. gnyal med dwags po lha rje] meditation and retreat areas. The roads were very primitive with Ja [tib. ca ?] and you had to cross the gorges through very primitive suspension bridges made out of bamboos attached to rocks. Inside the hermitage, there were numerous priceless icons and statues.

Q

What does Ja mean?

A

Ja means a bridge made by piercing holes in rocks and fastening a bamboo bridge to them.

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Q

What do you call the steps or ladders made by piercing the surface of cliffs?

A

I don't know what they are called, but these Ja are not what you described. So [Trimön](#) stayed there for 2 days and then he left and we went to Dakpo Ganden Rabten [tib. dga' ldan rab brtan]. From there he had to cross a river where the [Tsang](#) River [tib. gtsang chu] and the Central Tibet river [tib. dbus chu] joined together. We crossed the river in coracles. For safety reasons, they joined 2 small coracles and only 2 people were ferried across at a time. Dakpo Ganden Rabten was situated just across this river.

Trimön met Kujar Tashi Thondup [tib. bkra shis don grub] at Dakpo. He had been exiled by the government after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama. He came to see [Trimön](#) one night. [Trimön](#) was welcomed and invited by the head of Dakpo Kurab Namgye Dzong [tib. sku rab rnam rgyal]. They had made all the arrangements for [Trimön](#).

Q

Did [Trimön](#) visit all the places in the Tsari area?

A

He went on the middle circumambulation route [tib. bar skor]. He did not go on the lower circumambulation [tib. rong skor].

Q

Did you have any trouble with the tribal people called Lopa [tib. klo pa]?

A

There were tribal people, but they did not threaten or harm us. These tribal people were like any other people. They ambushed and killed travelers only because they were made to suffer and they were scared of us. They did not trust us since our people have been so unfair and cruel to them and forced them to swear allegiance. They attacked only in retaliation because we pushed them too far without caring about their sentiments.

These tribal people felt that the government was not being fair with them by making them swear to accept certain conditions against their will. The Lopas were thinking that the

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government would give them their share of things, but the government just gave them some inferior kind of rugs, [tsamba](#) and barley. I met many of these tribal people and took a few pictures of them and they didn't do anything to us. We didn't need to be afraid of them. They would come to Chösom around the camp and bring firewood for us and in return ask for food. They would sleep around the camps. If we left them alone, they never gave us any trouble.

First we reached a place called Buda Sumbum, then to Chösom, and then onward to Domtsen and then Jickjar and finally we crossed the Drolma La [tib. sgrol ma la] mountain pass.

Q

Is Jickjar the name of the place?

A

Yes, it is the name of a place. There was a beautiful statue of Dorje Phagmo [tib. rdo rje phag mo] there. The next day we crossed the Dignala [tib. sdig pa la] mountain pass. There was another place whose name I have forgotten. There they had a place where pilgrims could rest, eat and sleep. It was arranged by the Doring [tib. rdo ring] family. The next day we reached Phodrang Yutso [tib. pho brang g.yu mtsho] where similar facilities were available. [Trimön](#) had a lot of people accompanying him from Dakpo.

The next day, we went to Dakpo Mendrelgang [tib. man dral sgang]. From Mandrelgang you get a panoramic view of Dakpo Shelri [tib. dwag po shel ri] (Crystal mountain). When we reached this mountain, people told me that if you take its photograph, some harm will come to your eyes and some say it will not appear in the photo. Anyway, I closed my eyes and took two photos. The results contradicted my companion's foreboding advice. One picture was not very clear, it looked blurred because of the fog, but the other showed a clear and beautiful picture of Crystal mountain. From there we went to a place called Khandro Dora [tib. mkha' 'gro'i do ra] and from there we went to place called Taktsangrong [tib. stag tshang rong] and then to Thomtshang [tib. dom tshang]. After crossing a very dangerous swinging bridge, we reached a tiny place called Phara Jagthag Trang [tib. pha ra lcags thag 'phrang] and Gyare Kubtsug Trang [tib. rgya ras rkub btsugs 'phrang]. It was said that when the sage [Tsangpa](#) Gyare [tib. gtsang pa rgya ral] passed this passage, he put his rear end down there. From there we went back to Chösom. It took about 5 or 6 days.

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Q

This was the middle circumambulation route of the Tsari, right?

A

Yes.

Q

Normally Tsari was divided into 3 parts - the lower circumambulation route, the middle circumambulation route and also the top circumambulation route [tib. rtse skor]. Is this correct?

A

Yes, the upper one was the shortest.

Q

When Tsarong [Sawangchemmo](#) went to Tsari, wasn't there some trouble and some people were killed?

A

Yes, that was the lower circumambulation route and there was some problem. When Tsarong went there, he went with great pomp and show. He said that they are nothing but savages. They fired a few rounds of shots and caught a few of them and beat them up. The Lopa retaliated by setting traps and ambushes on their way. Later on, when another government representative was sent to give them gifts and when the Lopas were reluctant to come out, they also caught them and treated them with brutality and beat them with wooden switches. They stopped them from going from one place to another and forcibly made them swear allegiance.

The Lopa didn't have any idea about the law and they retaliated by ambushing innocent pilgrims, killing them and robbing them. We had been looking down on them as savages and ignored them and spoiled them. They were given the name Lopa which mean "barbarian." But the Lopa were very clever and most of them were very handsome and pretty. I took a lot of photographs of them. Some of their women were really beautiful. They fold their hair with bamboo and placed ornaments around their neck and waist. The

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men wore a kind of underpants and animal teeth and claws around their neck. They were armed with knives, swords, bow and arrows and spears.

When we reached the place called Yümai [tib. yul smad], we found the Lopas were just human beings [like us]. They smoked tobacco in pipes made out of bamboo. When we got to the lower parts, we saw a lot of them. If you did not bother them they just watched us and left us alone. Here we made offerings of a thousand [tsog](#). The Lopa would come to beg for these [tsog](#). When we did the [tsog](#) offerings, all the local people of the area came and [sang](#) and danced. Even the Lopa came and built a big fire and watched the whole proceedings. The local people told us that if you leave them alone, they do not harm you at all. Sometimes they bartered with them.

Q

Where did these Lopa live?

A

I think they lived in the same area in the forests.

Q

Was Tsari located in the northern part of the river which belonged to Tibet?

A

[Shakapa did not give any comment - silence] After that Reting Rinpoche went to Dakla Gampo after staying for 10 days at his village. There he worshipped the deities of his birthplace (Trungsöl [tib. 'khrung gsol]).

Q

What does Trungsöl mean?

A

Trungsöl means making offerings and prayers to the protector deity of the place where one was born.

Q

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Earlier you mentioned that Reting Rinpoche gave official audiences to his relatives. Didn't he give any private audience to any of his relatives? Didn't he call any of them to his private chamber to talk with them?

A

I do not know about that, but during the [trungja](#), he met them. Then he went to Wölga, where we went to Chölung Gyaltsog Lhading [tib. rgyal tshogs lha lding], but we didn't see that. After that, we went to Sangri Khangmar. [tib. zangs ri khang dmar]. In that place arrangements were made by Samdrup Phodrang [tib. bsam grub pho brang] at a place called [Norbulinga](#). He was staying there. By this time, [Sawang](#) Trimön had completed his tour of Tsari and he came through Dakpo to Yartö Drakla [tib. yar stod brag la] and then through Yarlung he came down.

Q

While coming from Tsari through Yarlung, did he come across E chundo kyang [tib. e [qu](#) mdo kyang]? Did he go to Nyal [tib. gnyal]?

A

He wouldn't have reached Nyal. From Tsari he went to Dakpo at a place called Lhakok [tib. lha khog] which is a part of the Lhagyari [tib. lha rgya ri] estate and finally reached Sangri Khangmar where Reting was camped.