

## **Maqu: Interview with a Tibetan & Horse Racing (8/15/2007)**

From the small Tibetan town of Langmusi seven of us from the hostel I was staying at headed over to the nearby town of Maqu for another horse racing festival. Unlike the races at Litang and Yushu, they had a circular 1 km long track at Maqu. There was only one race in the afternoon a 5 km contest jockeyed by children. While we were waiting for the race to begin a few of us ran into a Tibetan woman anxious to practice her English with us. As it turned out, she had learned her English in India, which is almost always the case with every Tibetan that can speak English with any level of proficiency. Of course, when Tibetans go to India it involves, as in her case, a month long trek over the Himalayas to get there. A journey which she did twice, going and then returning after 11 years in India to be with her aging parents. She now teaches English at a Tibetan school. She spoke remarkably freely with us although she mentioned later that every time she talks with foreigners the police come and interrogate her about what she was saying. She says, they know that she has been to India, they know when she left when she came back and now the police search her house routinely. When asked whether this was China or Tibet she replied, "For me it will always be Tibet." A small crowd of Tibetans had gathered around us as we talked curious about this conversation in a foreign language. She was asked to ask some of them whether they thought this was China or Tibet. One of them replied it was Tibet now it's China. The follow up of why is it not Tibet anymore, earned the response because the Dali Lama is not here. Why the Dali Lama was not here was a question they could not answer. The woman spoke for them saying they do not know and they do not understand the situation. She said the younger generation is not learning about what happened to the Tibetan people and those that go to Chinese schools get the Chinese version of history where China was the great liberator and has done so many great things for the Tibetans. She sees the lack of education as the greatest threat to the Tibetan people.



**Woman who had been to India and who we talked with for a while.**



**Child jockeys getting lined up and getting ready to race.**



**Child jockey wearing American flag on his head.**



**Tibetan woman.**



**A man and his horse, preparing for the race, Maqu.**



**The race is on, the paper in the air is called “wind horses” which is supposed to bring good fortune and luck.**



**Horse race, Maqu.**



**Crowd rushes in after the race and police come in to intercept, Maqu.**



**Police presence at the horse races in Maqu.**



**Tibetan men lined up at the China Telecom cell phone tent, festival in Maqu.**



**Woman selling material.**



**Woman at the festival in Maqu.**



**Road between Maqu and Langmusi.**