

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #14C – Lobsang Thardo
July 8, 2013

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #14C
2. Interviewee: Lobsang Thardo
3. Age: 78
4. Date of Birth: 1935
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Minbuk, Lhasa
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: July 8, 2013
10. Place of Interview: Tibetan Community Center of Portland, Oregon, USA
11. Length of Interview: 2 hr 09 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen (of Portland)
14. Videographer: Jeddadiah Emanuel
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen (of Bylakuppe)

Biographical Information:

Lobsang Thardho was born in Minbuk in Banashol, Lhasa. His father was a government secretary. At the age of 5-6 he began school at the Potala Palace under his maternal uncle, who was also an opera singer. He learned to read and write, but was allowed to play games and singing opera songs too. His father established a school in Dechen District on the order of the 13th Dalai Lama to improve education, so Lobsang Thardho began studying at home instead.

Lobsang Thardho became a monk at the age of 13 and explains his studies and daily routine at Gaden Monastery. At age 19-20 his teacher passed away and he was appointed as an office member due to his writing skills. He was also appointed as an attendant to His Holiness the Dalai Lama who stayed temporarily at Gaden while taking his exams.

A large influx of Chinese began coming in vehicles to Lhasa. Lobsang Thardho's father and many others formed the Tibetan People's Organization to resist the Chinese' Liberation. He and many other monks gave up their vows to join the Defend Tibet Volunteer Force. He describes in detail a risky assignment to deliver a message back to Gaden Monastery. The situation became chaotic as many Tibetans fled from Lhasa and Lobsang Thardho was tasked with redirecting those with weapons to join the resistance. He himself finally ended up in battle but the untrained fighters were no match for the Chinese and fled to India.

Topics Discussed:

Utsang, childhood memories, education, customs/traditions, monastic life, first appearance of Chinese, government/administration, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas, escape experiences.

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Interview #14C

Interviewee: Lobsang Thardo

Age: 78, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: July 8, 2013

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:13

Interviewee #14C: My name is Lobsang Thardo.

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record your experiences, so that we can share your memories with many generations of Tibetans, the Chinese and the rest of the world. Your memories will help us to document the true history, culture and beliefs of the Tibetan people. Do you give your permission for the Tibet Oral History Project to use this interview?

#14C: Yes.

Q: During this interview if you wish to take a break or stop at any time, please let me know. If you do not wish to answer a question or talk about something, let me know.

#14C: Okay.

Q: If this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

00:01:54

#14C: There will no longer be any problems because [my] father passed away at that time soon after coming out of Chinese prison. I was able to escort [my] mother to India. She lived for three years and passed away.

Q: We are honored to record your story and appreciate your participation in this project.

#14C: Thank you. I wish to say thank you to you for doing so much and working so hard for us, for the cause of the Tibetans.

Q: Thank you. Lobsang Thardo-*la*, can you please tell me where you were born and when you were born, what year?

#14C: I was born on the 15th day of the 4th lunar month in 1935.

Q: Is it the 15th day?

#14C: Yes.

Q: Is it the 15th day of the 9th month?

#14C: No, the 4th. I was born in the 4th month of *Sakadawa* ‘4th month of the Tibetan lunar calendar during which the Buddha was born, died and attained nirvana.’

Q: Where were you born?

#14C: I was born in Minbuk in Banashol in Lhasa. Banashol [is also] called Danashol.

Q: Is that near the center of Lhasa or way out?

00:03:55

#14C: It is right within the *lingkor* ‘circuit.’

Q: What kind of work did your parents do?

#14C: My father was earlier the secretary of the Namgyal Monastery and later went to Dechen in Mindubuk where there was a *phashi* ‘estate.’

Q: What’s *phashi*?

#14C: *Phashi* means land and house. [He] then went to Dechen and became the secretary of the Dechen Zong ‘District [Office].’

[Interpreter interprets as: My father was an accountant at Namgyal Monastery and after that they went to Dechen Zong because they have land over there and so he worked in Dechen Zong.]

Q: Where is Dechen Zong?

#14C: It is at a distance of 15 kilometers from Lhasa.

Q: And he worked on the land as a farmer?

#14C: Yes, a farmer. There was no one in Lhasa with more lands than us. We were farmers in Lhasa. There were *dzo* ‘animal bred between a yak and a cow,’ ...[not discernible], everything in Lhasa.

Q: You were the biggest farmers in Lhasa. How many generations had your family owned land in Lhasa?

00:05:40

#14C: Well...I have never seen my grandfathers. There were six sons and six daughters born in our family and I am the child of the youngest daughter.

Q: It sounds like your family for generations was a very successful family and very affluent. Is that correct?

#14C: Not exactly financially well off but owned vast tracts of land and basically, was an old family. Being an old family, it was considered a good family in Banashol in Lhasa.

Q: In your own family, how many children did your parents have?

#14C: We were two sons.

Q: Where were you in the lineup?

#14C: I am the younger one. My older brother passed away this year.

Q: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

00:07:34

#14C: However, last year during the Kalachakra I called him to Nepal and had [his] eyes corrected as [he] had become blind. Then [he] received the Kalachakra empowerment and passed away upon returning.

Q: Did [he] return to Tibet?

#14C: Yes.

Q: He died in Tibet?

#14C: Yes.

Q: Was it easy for him to get into Tibet and where did he go when he got there?

#14C: [He returned] to Dechen.

Q: Do you know what conditions were like there from him? Did you have any information?

#14C: [He] did not have anything to say in particular. Besides, he was a person that did not talk much.

Q: *Pa-la* 'respectful term for father,' can you please tell us then what is your childhood like? What do you do with your days from the time maybe you are 3, 4, 5 to 8 years old?

00:09:10

#14C: Perhaps I was 5-6 years old then. I had an uncle that worked as a head clerk at the Potala Palace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He was living there at the Potala, so I was left there to learn the alphabet.

Q: At 5 or 6 you went to the Potala Palace to study under an uncle?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...with an uncle.

Q: ...with an uncle who was an accountant?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes.

Q: Is that not a very young age to send a child to learn accounting?

#14C: [I] faced a lot of difficulties then. As the sun set in the evening I missed mother and I used to cry loudly. It was forbidden for children to cry at the Potala. The *yokpo* carried [me] over the neck.

Q: What does *yokpo* mean?

#14C: *Yokpo* means attendant. There was an attendant called Shangpo Shatuk who was a grand looking *dhopdhop* ‘obstinate monk’ with a beard. He carried [me] over the neck to Lhasa. [We] went to a Nepalese shop in Lhasa, bought candies and then [I] was taken to mother. Then in the morning someone carried [me] over the neck to the Potala. It continued like that.

Q: Were you able to go home every night after studying?

00:11:32

#14C: Yes. There was a table in the verandah. If you looked from atop the table like this [stands up], you could see the smoke from my home in Lhasa. You could see the whole of Lhasa from the Potala Palace. As [I] saw the smoke [I] missed mother. [Laughs]

Q: How long did you stay getting your lessons in the Potala Palace? How many years?

#14C: [I] was there for 2-3 years.

Q: Can you describe any memories you have of the Potala Palace? Were there many people around? Was it a very quiet place or very exciting or a happy place? You know, can you talk about that?

#14C: It was quiet but while Kungo ‘Your Presence’ [title of address for government officials] was there, until he left for office, [he] taught us—there were me and another boy. [He] taught us. After Kungo left for office, we used to run up and down the stairs of the Potala and play all the time.

Q: The Kungo was your uncle, right?

#14C: Maternal uncle.

00:13:35

It was very enjoyable in the morning. Kungo recited prayers in the morning after which [he] did this with the hands [claps twice]. And then the two of us had to go there. My

colleague would enact a Gyangkara [artiste]—there were the *lhamo* ‘opera’ called Gyangkara and Kyormolungwa [famous troupes in Lhasa]. [We] would act as *ngonpa* ‘hunter or fisherman character in opening scene of opera’ with him as a Gyangkara actor and I [as an artiste] from Kyormolungwa. Kungo would go *dheng, dheng, dheng* [taps rhythmically on table] and we would perform [raises arms in dance motion].

After that performance, one [of us] would be Lhasa Shoepa [artiste]—Shoepa Shayma and Lhasa Shayma were two dance troupes. I would dance as an actor of Lhasa Shayma and he, my colleague would dance as a Shoepa Shayma actor. Then [we] danced *shig, shig, shig, shig, shig* [repeats rhythmically]. Kungo was very jovial. [He] was the best *namthar* ‘aria’ singer in Tibet, [my] maternal uncle. Presently the Kundeling monk says, “I learned my *namthar* mainly from Mindubuk Tsecha.” He is that person. He was very good with the *namthar*.

00:15:23

You could not raise your voice in the Potala, so [we] had to sing in a soft voice. [Laughs]

Q: Your uncle was also there to teach you accounting but he had a second love and that was the opera?

#14C: [He] was a monk. Yes, and [he] was the supervisor of all the opera [troupes]. He was the one that directed the opera [performers].

Q: I see. The opera performers...

#14C: One must supervise all the opera [performers] prior to the *shoton* ‘annual opera festival’ performance in Lhasa. Kungo was the one that took charge.

Q: What was his full name, please?

#14C: Thupten Gyalpo.

Q: What kind of personality was he?

#14C: [He] was considered as a gentle and polite person. There were the *Dungkhor Yarkyi* and *Tsidung Yarkyi* that were different picnics. During such times it was Kungo that sang the *namthar*.

00:17:06

Besides, during the picnics there would be the *yokpo* that escorted the many Kungo. [To interpreter] You understand *yokpo*, attendants, right?

Q: Yes.

#14C: All the 8-9 year old children of Mindubuk could sing the aria spontaneously, all the boys and girls of all the families.

Q: Your family?

#14C: Yes.

It was strange at that time. Normally servants must sit outside and not come inside where the aristocrats, the leaders sat. When we came as attendants, [we] were called inside. [We] would go in immediately and sing the aria for them. [Laughs]

Q: The attendants also sang!

00:17:48

#14C: Yes, [we] sang very well, both males and females. The girls sang and the boys sang. [They] sang the aria very well.

Q: Did your uncle's teaching you some of the dances and the songs, did that in any way influence your wanting to become a *cham* 'religious dance performance by monks' dancer or opera dancer?

#14C: No, [I] did not have any inclination. However, even as a child I used to sing the aria right away at any party or wedding or any occasion.

Q: Maybe we'll have you sing a little bit later. Oh, can you think of any songs right now? Could you sing us something?

#14C: [I] do remember.

[Asks someone off camera] Was it last evening or yesterday?

[?]: It was on Saturday.

#14C: It was on the day of the birthday.

[?]: His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday.

#14C: I sang on His Holiness' birthday. Usually [my] voice is lacking but when [I] sang on the day of [His Holiness'] birthday [my] voice was good. The voice is still good.

[Points to someone off camera] He and I sang together.

Q: Could you try to sing for us one song now, please?

00:19:51

#14C: I can sing a short aria. Is it okay to sing now? There is no need for a loudspeaker?

Q: It's not necessary. It's attached there.

#14C: [Sings]

Chukpo pelkyi
Leksang la genchen
Mayi drangsang
Dhakla la ni
Tsuru sennang

This is called the *drangsang* ‘hermit saint’ *namthar*. [Laughs]

Q: Please translate what it means.

#14C: The meaning is that the *drangsang* is singing this to two elderly patrons.

Chukpo pelkyi leksang genchennyi
You rich elderly generous ones

Drangsang means the lama.

Mayi drangsang dhak la tsusennang
Please listen to this hermit saint

Q: And what follows?

#14C: [I] cannot remember what it is...

[?]: Perhaps it is “Listen to me and I shall sing an aria.”

#14C: It must be something like teaching the dharma. *Mayi drangsang dhak la tsusennang*. I cannot recall what follows this.

Q: Thank you.

#14C: [Laughs]

Q: So tell us since you don’t become a famous opera star, what happens in your life next?

00:22:45

#14C: As it was problematic to send me to the Potala Palace and since my father was the secretary of Dechen District where a school was established to teach Tibetan, I was taken to Dechen. [I] studied in Dechen.

Q: Wasn’t your father a farmer?

#14C: [He] was a farmer.

Q: Was [he] a farmer and a secretary?

#14C: Yes, [he] was a secretary.

Q: What did you study in the school?

#14C: [I] studied the Tibetan alphabets and writing.

Q: Was it writing?

#14C: Yes. It was both writing and reading.

Q: Tell us more about what happened? Were you happy in that school and were there other Tibetan children from families that must have been a little bit well off to afford this school or was it a free school?

00:24:22

#14C: Anybody could join. Father taught any children that were sent. There was no need for payment of money or anything else.

Q: Who was the teacher?

#14C: My father was the teacher. Father was very well educated. Therefore, [he] established the school. The main reason for establishing the school was the order passed by His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama to all districts to establish schools. Some districts started schools and some did not. Therefore, later my father began the school.

Q: Can you tell us more about why the 13th Dalai Lama wanted there to be schools in all the districts?

#14C: His Holiness the 12th Dalai Lama had traveled to India, to Mongolia, to China and witnessed many things. Having understood the importance of education [His Holiness] passed an order to all the districts to establish schools.

Q: [His Holiness] passed an order?

#14C: [His Holiness] passed an order.

Q: How long were you in that school and were you a good student?

00:26:18

#14C: I used to stand second but not first.

Q: How many years were you in the school?

#14C: [I] think I was made a monk at Gaden [Monastery] at the age of 13. [I] was there until 12 or 13. [I] became accomplished enough to write correspondences.

Q: How did you feel about being sent to Gaden Monastery at around age 13?

#14C: [I] went there happy to become a monk then. [I] did not have much understanding. At that time becoming a monk was considered good by everyone, which was why [I] became one.

Q: So that was about...if you were 13 that would have been in about 1948 that you went to Gaden Monastery. This must have been a very big change from a small family to Gaden. Can you tell us what that was like for you?

00:28:09

#14C: [I] did not face that much of a problem. A senior accompanied you when you attended prayer assemblies and such. The living quarter I was assigned was one of the larger ones.

Q: Do you know why your family selected Gaden as the monastery to which they wanted you to go?

#14C: My teacher at Gaden had earlier been an administrator of Dechen District.

Q: Was [he] from Dechen District?

#14C: [He] had been [an administrator] of Dechen District. The [administrators of] Dechen District came from Gaden. There were two administrators, one from Shartse and another from Jangtse [the two divisions of Gaden Monastery]. The one from Jangtse was my teacher who said [to my father], “Make your child a monk in my care.” So my father left [me] with him as a monk.

Q: Perhaps you could describe a little bit about how when monks went to such a large monastery how they were organized by houses? Was that from neighborhood districts or was that, you know, something within the monastery that organized them?

00:30:14

#14C: You joined whichever [house] you desired. However, one from Lithang joined the Lithang Khangtsen ‘a smaller community within a monastery, in which monks of one geographical area live’; one from Bathang joined the Bapa Khangtsen; one from Lhoka joined the Lhoka Khangtsen and one from Thoepa had to join the Thoepa Khangtsen. However, you could join whichever [*khangtsen*] you wished. One from Tsang joined the Tsangpa Khangtsen.

Q: And how many monks do you think were in the monastery at that time when you became a monk?

#14C: It is said to be 3,300 but there were around 5,000.

Q: How did the monks get their food and nourishment?

#14C: In the morning the *mangja* or tea was served during the *tsokchen*, which is the joint prayer assembly of both Shartse and Jangtse [monks]. Sometimes during the tea, *thukpa* ‘noodle soup’ was also served.

Q: *Thukpa*?

00:31:40

#14C: Yes, that and then during noontime the respective *datsang* ‘division of large monastery’ served the *daja* consisting of tea and *thukpa*.

Q: The noon [meal] is served by the respective *datsang*?

#14C: Yes.

Q: The Jangtse and Shartse together?

#14C: Separately. The *datsang* served separately. You took your own *tsampa* ‘flour made from roasted barley’ from your quarters. There is also a practice of distributing a bowlful of *tsampa* to each monk from the monastery at times.

Q: Where did the food come from?

#14C: During the Gunchoe Chenmo ‘Great Winter Prayers’ and such, the [food] served by the *datsang* was sufficient. Normally [we] cooked a little in the quarters.

Q: But what I meant was who supplied the food to the monasteries if the monks were busy studying scripture and doing ceremonies? Was there farming as part of the monastery or did the farmers supply the food?

00:33:24

#14C: The *datsang* and the *tseso* owned their individual estates. There was one called Tidhokhang at Gaden where I was an office member. During the lifetime of Je Rinpoche [Tsongkhapa, founder of Gelug tradition], the people had donated great expanse of lands around Metogonkar and Dechen.

Let’s say you donated that land to me. [I] give it back to you [for cultivation] and [you] paid a *boma* meaning one, two or three *bo* ‘measurement’ of grains annually depending upon the size of the land. That is called the *boma*. These were collected and the grains distributed among the monks.

Q: When the Chinese invaded Tibet they claimed that they were trying to change the oppression of the monasteries over the people. Did the people feel that they were oppressed by the monasteries from your point of view inside the monastery?

#14C: The public did not have any such feelings, as the leaders treated [them] well. However, there were a few bad leaders. The few bad ones and [their] bad servants could

have oppressed the people, but in general such things were not allowed because there was the law.

00:36:20

For example, the reason for the Chinese to claim this at that time was to occupy Tibet through deceptive means. The Tibetans were not well educated. It was the most backward in education in the world with the least experience. We have been adversely affected by living in an isolated country. Therefore, in order to deceive [the people, the Chinese said], “The three great *ngadak* ‘[types of] persons holding leadership positions’ have oppressed and despised [you]. We will liberate [you] from oppression. Earlier you were being labeled as living in the country of darkness, savages and barbarians.” [The Chinese] said such to deceive the people.

For instance, you know Ngabo Jigme-*la*? Ngabo Jigme-*la* said [he] used to attend college in China in the bygone days. A friend said, “Jigme, I have something to ask you.” “Yes, what is it? Speak up.” He asked, “Does the sun shine in your country?” The youngster [thought the sun did not] because of the term “country of darkness” that had so strongly been publicized. [The terms used were] “country of darkness,” savages and barbarians. [The Chinese] said that the Tibetans were barbarians, savages and lived in darkness. So thinking that the sun did not shine, the question was asked. The Chinese publicized such in order to occupy Tibet.

Q: So the Chinese were telling their own people that the sun never shines in Tibet. It was a dark country.

00:38:50

#14C: When we were in Tibet [the Chinese] said, [joins palms] “We have come to serve the people. We have come to serve you.” As though [they] were serving [us] a great deal. [The Chinese] did not know how to harvest with a sickle. [They] could not harvest but even so 10, 15, 20 of [them] arrived and similar to children playing, [they] harvested as a show of helping [us]. [The Chinese] flattered [the Tibetans] in such ways. “We are here to serve you.”

Q: Before we get to that let us see... You enter the monastery at 13 and then what are you doing during those years? What are you doing when you join the monastery? What’s your daily life like?

#14C: The *mangja* or the main prayer assembly started before daybreak. One must attend this assembly and after it gets over, there was the one called *choera* ‘debate session’ in the *datsang*. No tea or *thukpa* were provided during this session but [we] debated. It was for debating. That is the morning session. At noon there was the *daja* where the respective *datsang* served tea; tea, *thukpa* or whatever was available. Once this session got over, there was the noon *choera* for debates. In the evening there was the *doldhon* and during this gathering [we] chanted the praises to the 21 Taras and such. There were these five assemblies in a day.

Q: You were learning debate at 14, 15, 16 years of age? Debating took place during the *choera*?

00:42:12

#14C: Debate sessions went on, but I was not selected among the debaters because I was good in Tibetan writing. Because of [my] being fluent in Tibetan writing [I] was asked to be an office member. [I] was not selected among the debaters. My elder brother was.

Q: Continue your story. Tell us...I guess first I want to understand...Did you begin to have any kind of deeper understanding of the dharma?

#14C: One had to memorize the prayers that were read during the assemblies. There were certain prayers that must be memorized. Except for these, I did not get to study the debates much. However, my elder brother would be learning the Ngonthokgyen ‘Abhisamaya/Ornament of Realization’ and Uma Jugpa ‘Madhyamakara/Introduction to the Middle Way’ and others found in the debate scriptures. I learned them while he was studying and so I could chant these along during the assemblies.

Q: Were these chants?

#14C: These were chanted and studied for the debates as well, the Ngonthokgyen and Uma Jugpa.

Q: How did your life begin to change or when does it change in the monastery?

00:44:28

#14C: At around the age of 18, my teacher left for China on a tour. After [he] left I had to take full responsibility of the house. From then on I became responsible like an adult.

Q: What was the reason why your teacher went into China to visit?

#14C: On a tour.

Q: Just on a holiday?

#14C: [He] was invited by the Chinese. Liwusha Thupten Tharpa was the representative of the Tibetan Government. There were Thupten Tharpa and a sizable number of aristocrats, and two representatives each from Sera, Drepung and Gaden [Monasteries]. A representative each from the *datsang* of Shartse and Jangtse and likewise from Sera [Monastery] where there were [the *datsang* of] Mey and Jey. So [they] were the representatives invited on a tour by the Chinese.

Q: Did you have at that time any understanding of why the Chinese would want representatives from the government and the monasteries to visit China?

#14C: The aim was to deceive, and [the Chinese] treated them well, providing them good clothes, good food and displayed their [the Chinese] might. It was with an aim to deceive.

Q: Do you remember what year that was and did His Holiness go with that group?

00:46:53

#14C: His Holiness did not go. It was a cabinet minister called Liwusha Thupten Tharpa [who represented the Tibetan Government].

Q: Do you remember what year it was?

#14C: [I] think I was 18 years old.

Q: You were 18 years old?

#14C: Yes.

Q: Did you hear any interesting accounts when they returned from China?

#14C: [They] said that a parade was held. Just like it is done in India on the 26th of January [Indian Republic Day]. A parade similar to that was carried out with soldiers and guns, and showing them off. It was to show that they were very powerful and the group was taken to visit various places. The main purpose was to display [their] might and to intimidate.

Q: And then tell us what continues then after you are 18? What are some of the next significant events in your life?

00:48:18

#14C: After the age of 18...I was 19 or 20 when my teacher passed away. I was appointed an office member of the Gaden Tidhokhang.

Q: Which committee was that?

#14C: Gaden Tidhokhang is like the *ladang* of Je Rinpoche. Earlier [I] told you about the grain collection.

Q: What was it like for you when your teacher passed away?

#14C: My father passed away in...

Q: Not father, teacher.

#14C: When [my] teacher passed away, it happened in our home.

His sibling was at the place called Lamo. I rode a horse the whole night to relay the message of his passing away to the sibling. I was scared and was in great panic.

Q: Did you go?

#14C: I did. [I] was terrified. I went crying and was grief-stricken then.

Q: Can you tell us what were the reasons for your great sadness?

00:50:28

#14C: [I] do not know but [I] was particularly sad and grief-stricken. [I] had to travel in the night and in Tibet the routes are hilly and lonely. There was also the danger of thieves and robbers. However, I continued in desperation.

Q: Did you go alone?

#14C: I was alone.

Q: *Pa-la* ‘respectful term for father,’ can you please tell us what was the name of your teacher and how many years had he been your teacher?

#14C: Perhaps for around six years. His name was Thondup Gyalpo.

Q: When a teacher dies, what kinds of ways did they deal with the remains of the teacher? What is the ceremony or where did they put the remains of anyone in the monastery?

#14C: The body was cremated.

Q: Was your teacher’s body cremated?

#14C: Yes.

Q: Is there anything done with the remains, the ashes?

00:52:37

#14C: Some make *tsatsa* ‘miniature conical figures molded of clay and used as offerings’ [out of the ashes] while some do not. If they were lamas or revered ones, *tsatsa* were made from the ashes. Some throw the ashes into the river.

Q: Can you please tell us what next happens in your life? Your teacher dies, you become...have more responsibilities now and then what is the situation like in Lhasa and in your monastery in the next few years?

#14C: Organizations were being formed in Lhasa at that time. Tibet, Tibet...what was the organization called? There was one organization in which my father was a member.

Q: What kind of an organization was it?

#14C: For the cause of freedom. It was an organization for the cause of freedom. What was the organization’s name? [I] have forgotten the name...What was the organization called? I have forgotten the name of the organization.

Q: That’s okay.

00:54:17

#14C: The organization had a name. They used to meet in the house of one called Tsathor. After the meeting [they] used to go to all the temples to make offerings for the butter lamps. I have helped them carry butter lamps.

[I] think it was called Tibetan People's Organization.

Q: What was causing the people to form these kinds of groups for the Tibetan cause?

#14C: The Chinese were saying, "Liberation must be implemented. Liberation must be implemented." Hence, it was to say that [we] will not have liberation implemented. For instance, at that time after the loss of Chamdo, they [the Chinese] advanced. [They] did not attack beyond Chamdo then. The Chinese came and settled as Chinese and the Tibetans lived among themselves. Tibetans managed their offices and the Chinese managed theirs. Tibet was managed autonomously.

Q: When did you personally first notice that there were Chinese coming into Lhasa in unusual numbers? How old were you and what did you see happening?

00:56:38

#14C: The Chinese numbers increased after the coming of vehicles. Before the vehicles came, there was not a large number. Once the vehicles rolled in, their number became overwhelming.

Q: How old were you then?

#14C: [I] was around 18-19 then because when the vehicles came, a friend of mine owned a gun, a pistol...

Q: A toy gun or a real one?

#14C: A real one. One night the vehicles rolled in, lights burning and the sound of *dhing, dhing, dhing* that could be heard 4-5 kilometers away because there were no such sounds in Tibet. [The vehicles] drove in *dhing, dhing, dhing*. [We] took the gun and...we were in a field. At that time I had come home. Crops had been stacked in the field and we used to sleep in the stack. As [we] slept there the vehicles came. [I] did not know how to shoot but took aim. [I] did not know if there was a bullet or not but thinking the trigger must be pulled, [I] did it. It did not work. There was no sound. So we composed a song for my companion. The gun just made a ticktack sound and nothing else.

*Ticktack is the sound of a gun
The gun that belongs to Shangpo Payray*

The man's nickname was Payray. [Laughs] Such a thing happened. Fortunately, [the gun] did not work. Otherwise, [we] were going to shoot. I must have been 18 or 19 then.

Q: You were really guarding your field with a gun that had no bullets.

00:59:33

#14C: [Laughs] My friend had brought along the gun.

Q: If you were 18 at that time, that was about 1953 when you saw the Chinese coming in trucks, but when you were a monk, when did you first notice that there were Chinese in Lhasa? What did you see with your own eyes?

#14C: [I] did not notice anything important as such. The important issues were being discussed government to government. The Tibetan Government was functioning [then]. The Chinese were living by themselves. What the Chinese did then was to buy the mansions located around the Bakor ‘Square’ in Lhasa by paying money. [They] were doing such things and constructing many houses.

However, [I] am not certain about the year but initially the Chinese built houses, but they were not proper houses and had tin roofing and simple walls. Once the automobiles rolled in, they constructed proper houses with upper floors.

Q: Your father and other Tibetans were forming these groups to oppose the Chinese. Did you become a member or any of the monks become a member of these groups?

01:02:08

#14C: No, I went to help father carry the butter lamps. [I] went to help carry them.

Q: Where did you have to take the butter lamps?

#14C: There are four temples in the four directions of Lhasa. They went to make offerings of butter for the lamps there. [I] do not know what their intention was. The organization was called People’s Organization.

Q: How did your life change after that?

#14C: Then after that...[I] cannot remember well. As part of my duty at the monastery, [I] went to Metagongkar and Dechen on work. I continued to work for the monastery for 2-3 years. [I] think I was 23 years old when His Holiness the Dalai Lama came to Gaden [Monastery] to give the debate examination. His Holiness came to take his *geshe* ‘degree in Buddhist philosophy’ examination. At that time, the Tidhokhang appointed me to take care of His Holiness’ wardrobe, folding the robes and taking the fresh sets [to him]. I was a staff member of the Tidhokhang and His Holiness stayed at the Tidhokhang during his time at Gaden [Monastery].

Q: Tell us more.

01:04:30

#14C: His Holiness went to Shartse and Jangtse [*dratsang*] and I had to carry a change of clothing in a yellow bag on my back. [His Holiness] went wherever the ceremony was

taking place, whether it was at Shartse, Jangtse or the Debate sessions. I was the one serving [him] then. At times His Holiness went to visit temples and I was in charge of lighting the lamp at night. One day I was a little bit late. I was late in lighting the lamp and His Holiness was arriving. I pumped hard and His Holiness said, “Do not pump so hard. There is the danger of the mantle falling down.” [Laughs]

Q: What was His Holiness like in those days? He was a much younger man. Can you tell us what his personality was like?

#14C: We are of the same age. I was [born] 20 days earlier. I am older by 20 days. His Holiness was born on the 5th [day] of the 5th [month]. I was [born] on the 15th [day] of the 4th [month].

Q: You are 20 days older?

#14C: Yes.

Q: What was His Holiness’ personality like then? [He] was younger.

01:06:44

#14C: [He] was young and did not act superior. [His Holiness] used to come where we were working, patted [us] on the back and spoke [to us].

I would be folding the robes and the many *jedhar* ‘respectful term for ceremonial scarf’ that were offered. [His Holiness] came sometimes and patted [me] on the back.

Q: Very nice kind of blessing.

#14C: Yes.

Q: We’re now talking about 1958. Did you actually see the Dalai Lama go through his examination?

#14C: Yes.

Q: Can you describe it a little bit? How long was it? Could you understand it, the questions and his answers?

#14C: I was at a distance then and could not hear well but the way [His Holiness] performed well. Whenever a mistake is made, the practice is to make a *tsa* [claps with palms facing up] but that did not happen. [I] think [His Holiness] was giving good answers. There were some *geshe* ‘monk with Buddhist philosophy degree’ who said that [His Holiness] was giving very good answers.

Q: So we’re now in 1958 because you are at Gaden when His Holiness came. What happens next in your life story?

01:09:08

#14C: At around that time the Commander of Tensung Dhanglang Maga ‘Defend Tibet Volunteer Force,’ Andrug Jindha [Gonpo Tashi] and Ratuk Ngawang went to Shang Gaden Chokhor [Monastery] in Nyenmo to get weapons from the armory of the Tibetan Government. On the way the Chinese attacked and Andrug Jindha and some of them left through the north towards Drikung. Ratuk Ngawang arrived at Gaden [Monastery] through Phenpo. A notice was put up on the gate of Gaden, “The Tensung Dhanglang Maga has no shortage of weapons. What we lack are men. Therefore, red monks, please do not just watch because the Buddha dharma is at stake. Red monks, do not just watch but come on!”

Ratuk Ngawang put up such a notice. After that those of us who were 18, 19 and in the 20’s became excited. Everybody was encouraged thinking, “If there are weapons available, let’s show [the Chinese] what [we] can do!” There were no meetings or formation of committees but word went around from person to person. When we gathered at the center of the monastery to give back [our] vows and prostrate, there were around 200 men. And then we set off for Lhoka.

Q: Andrug?

#14C: Andrug Gonpo Tashi.

Q: Andrug Gonpo Tashi?

#14C: Yes, it was Gonpo Tashi.

Q: Andrug Gonpo Tashi and what’s the name of the other?

#14C: Ratuk Ngawang.

Q: Ratuk Ngawang?

#14C: Yes.

Q: Where did they go to get the weapons?

#14C: From Shang Gaden Chokhor.

Q: Where’s that? In Lhasa?

#14C: In the region of Tsang.

Q: In the region of Tsang?

#14C: Yes.

01:12:31

#14C: It was very sad because [we] had to give back the vows and leave the monastery.

Q: Yes, it was a very sad time. The first, when they were attacked by the Chinese, they were getting guns from the Potala Palace?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Not the Potala Palace, from somewhere in Tsang.

#14C: Shang Gaden...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Shang Gaden Chokhor is the name of the place but it's a region in Tsang.

Q: Outside of Lhasa?

#14C: From Lhasa towards the direction of India.

Q: How far is it?

Q: How far is it on horseback?

#14C: It must be 3-4days on horseback from Lhasa.

Q: Three days away? So the *Chushi Gangdrug* 'Defend Tibet Volunteer Force' was trying to get...was that the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

01:13:34

#14C: It was called Tensung Dhanglang Maga then.

Q: Was it actually the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

#14C: Yes, yes.

Q: When they tried to get the guns they were attacked by the Chinese and one escaped and came to Gaden.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Both of them escaped but I'm trying to figure out which one.

Q: Where was Andrug Gonpo Tashi?

#14C: He went through Drikung. [Draws route on palm] He went through Drikung and Ratuk came directly to Gaden through Phenpo.

Q: And they came to the monastery and they said, "We have guns but we have no help."

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes.

Q: Where were the extra guns?

#14C: [They] did not succeed in getting the guns [from Shang Gaden Chokhor] but a small quantity of guns was dropped from planes. There were talks that weapons had been dropped from planes at Diguthang. A type of guns called M1 was dropped but not many.

Q: Did Ratuk Ngawang come to Gaden with guns?

01:14:57

#14C: No. He came on purpose to put up the notice, to call us.

Q: Did [he] come just to put up the notice?

#14C: Yes, yes.

Q: What did you do?

#14C: [I] decided, “If weapons are available, [I am young] in age and must fight the Chinese. [I] can never live under the Chinese.” My parents did not know about it; my sibling did not know about it; nobody knew. I made my own decision. Among [those joining the force], we, the officer bearers were better off as we owned horses and carried small guns. The ordinary monks had nothing; they did not even own kitchen knives for their work was studying the scriptures.

In Tibet there were the deity temples in which were swords and guns that were used in the bygone eras. The guns were Tibetan-made ones and the swords huge [stretches out arms] that were used in battles of the past. [The monks] carried [their] stuff on the back with the sword upon it and set off to fight. [They] did not own horses. Oh my God, it was heartbreaking. [We] were going with the hope of finding wonderful weapons there.

Q: And where were you going?

01:17:16

#14C: We were going from Gaden to Lhoka where the Tensung Dhanglang Maga was based.

Q: What happened on the way?

#14C: [We] had to cross over mountain passes along the route. Some of us rode while the majority did not have horses. And then we reached the place called A-Rong Dukha [*dukha*, a quay] where the Tensung Dhanglang Maga camp was. The rivers of U and Tsang merged and flowed through Lhoka. The river of U passed through Gaden and Lhasa and flowed until Chushul. The river of Tsang flowed to Chushul and these two rivers merged and flowed through Lhoka.

Q: Did you go along the banks of this river?

#14C: Yes, along the river and then crossed over to the other side. We reached Rong Dukha, Ronglukhang Dukha.

Q: Were you stopped by or shot at by the Chinese anywhere along the way?

01:18:57

#14C: [We] did not encounter any. We left in the night and reached the place where the Chinese motor roads was located in the night at around...if we left Gaden at around 7 o'clock, by 12 o'clock you were in the mountains where there were no Chinese roads.

Q: The Chinese were in Lhasa.

#14C: The Chinese were in Lhasa, in Dechen and everywhere in groups along the way.

Q: Was there any attack on the summer palace or Potala Palace at that time?

#14C: No, there was not.

Q: Do you remember the exact year and maybe the month of this?

#14C: Was it 1958? [We] left in '58. [I] think it was the 9th or 10th month of '58 that we left.

Q: If you said '58, so this was a year before Lhasa was attacked?

#14C: Yes.

Q: In your group was it only monks from Gaden or were there other groups that joined you?

01:21:30

#14C: We were mostly from Gaden but there were one or two laymen. Otherwise, most were monks. There were a few laymen.

Q: What was the intention in your heart to go take off your robes and go and confront or stop the Chinese? What was the purpose behind your doing that?

#14C: At that time [we] felt, "Should there be good weapons, [we] will fight and show them." Among those leaving from Gaden was the incumbent Secretary. [He] was the incumbent senior Secretary of the entire Gaden [Monastery]. Then there were two lamas called Dhokhang Khentul and Nyangre Titul; and then there were *shesur*, past *gekoe* 'disciplinarians,' past *chanzo* 'treasurer/business manager' and many aristocrats among us.

Q: What's *shesur*?

#14C: Past *shelngo*.

Q: Does *shelngo* mean leader?

01:22:44

#14C: The *shelngo* in Gaden is like a judge. There were many past such [officer bearers] among us. Then all of us reached the place called Rong Dukha. There was a [building?] called Rong Phokhang and then the leaders of the Tensung Dhanglang Maga came. The leaders came and said, “It is incredibly good that you have come. Please go and join your respective groups.” Joining respective groups meant that those from Lithang join the Lithang group and those from Chating, the Chating group. That is what it meant. So the senior ones among us said, “We have not come to seek respective groups but to try to counter the Communist Chinese. If you do not let us form our own group, we will fight separately.”

Q: All the monks of Gaden Monastery wished to stay together?

#14C: Yes.

Q: And then?

#14C: I forgot to mention this. We needed a flag but the monks had nothing. At the time of His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s visit to China, he had presented Dhamchen Chogyal and Shidak Genyen Chenmo, the deities of Je Rinpoche with a banner/flag each called Tendhur that looked like a flag. We requested to be presented one of these.

Q: Was it presented by His Holiness?

01:25:24

#14C: His Holiness presented these to the deities of Gaden, Shidhak Genyen Chenmo and Dhamchen Chogyal. We requested to be given a flag as we were going to war. We carried it with us. Then we left Gaden and proceeded along the way. Then it became daylight and two crows circled over it [the flag]. The crows alternately circled it while the other rested and in this way the two crows spent the whole day with us until [the place called] Won.

Q: Circled over the flag?

#14C: Yes, two crows circled over the flag.

It was very strange. Poor thing, the man that carried the flag, the weather was so cold but [he] held the flag with naked hands. He was proud of it.

Q: How far was it to get to Rong? They were coming from Lhasa to Rong?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: From Gaden to Rong.

Q: At Rong when they said, “You have to join your regions,” then you said, “No, we want to stay together.” Was that approved and you did stay together?

[Interpreter interprets as: How far was it from Gaden to Rong?]

01:27:37

#14C: It took four days.

Q: And then were you allowed to stay as a group?

#14C: It was approved. [The leaders said], “Okay, your group will be known as Tensung Dalha Maga.”

Q: Dalha Maga?

#14C: Tensung Dalha Maga meaning force [consisting of] *dapa* ‘monks’ and *lha* ‘deities’. Our flag had the words Tensung Dalha Maga written on it.

Q: Good allies.

#14C: [Laughs]

Q: And so there you are. Is this Rong place where all the Tibetans were gathering including the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

01:28:54

#14C: No, no. It was a branch. The main base was at Diguthang. This was a branch.

Q: Please continue. Tell us what happens to your group and to you?

#14C: Then they said, “We need around 60 men as clerks. Those of you who know reading and writing must act as clerks.”

Among us that knew to read and write were the incumbent secretary, and four officials of the Tidhokhang including me. Except for these, there were not many that knew reading and writing well. We were assigned to various offices. I and another official of the Tidhokhang were assigned at the Phokhang ‘House of Rations.’ [We] were clerks at Phokhang in Rong that distributed provisions to the soldiers.

A group of soldiers were deployed at Tsethang where there was a Chinese military camp. [They] were sent on the mountain there. Half of the monks were deployed to capture the mountain while another group was dispatched to A to patrol the area. So groups like these were created.

Q: What happened to you next?

01:31:12

#14C: In charge of the Rong Phokhang were Shisi Wangden and one from Dhargye Gonpa called...what is his name? Wangden and Dolma Gyawu. There were the two of them. They said, “This is top secret. Now we have to go to U. Since [we] must go to U...” No, this is not it. Wait, I am getting mixed up. What happened next?...Our Phokhang...

Okay. “This is a secret. You are to go to Gaden Lachi.” Gaden Lachi is the main office of both [the Shartse and Jangtse *datsang*]. “Go there. We are going to move towards Gaden in U. Go and tell them to get feed for the horses and food for the men ready.” I was sent in secret. [I] was told not to reveal this to anybody. And then I set off to Lhasa.

01:33:28

When I reached Gaden, all the monks had left for Lhasa for the Monlam ‘Great Prayer Festival,’ to attend the Monlam in Lhasa. So I went to Lhasa but before reaching Lhasa, [I] went home for the night.

Oh, no. [I] have missed some parts of the story. I crossed the mountain pass in Lhoka and arrived in U. Now [I] was on Chinese motor road. Just before reaching Woesergya, I had crossed the mountain pass like this [stands up to draw route taken] and here is the mountainside.

Moving a little further away was a small village called Woesergya. I was coming down and halfway along the road was a man in white leading a white horse that asked, “Where are you going?” [I] replied, “I am going to Gaden.” “Do not go. Turn back.” “I have to go to the monastery,” [I] said. “Can you not see down there?” [He] asked.

[I] looked down and saw that there were Chinese tanks like this [spreads out fingers]. [I] became scared. [I] got really scared. “Go back,” [the man] said. [I] went back but did not dare look again due to fear until [I] reached the mountainside. Then when [I] looked back the man in white and the white horse had disappeared. Oh, my God. And then [I] was terrified. There was a big river flowing nearby and [I] walked on, and then looking up [I] saw a small monastery. I went to the monastery.

Q: It was a Western white man?

#14C: [He] was dressed in white, in white *chupa* ‘traditional coat.’ [Laughs]

Q: A Tibetan man dressed in white?

#14C: Yes.

Q: What do you think that was?

01:36:37

#14C: I did not recall this until a few years back. As I think over it, the protective deity of Je Rinpoche, Shidhak Genyen Chenmo is a man in white, with a white hat, a white *chupa* and also a white horse.

[Interviewee leaves chair]

Q: Whose protective deity?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Je Rinpoche's.

Q: And Je Rinpoche is?

Interpreter: Tsongkhapa.

Q: Is Je Rinpoche Tsongkhapa?

01:37:36

[Returns to chair]

#14C: Yes.

The deity was together with Tsongkhapa when [he] came from the village.

Q: Did Tsongkhapa establish Gaden?

#14C: Yes.

Q: What's the name of the protective deity?

#14C: Shidhak Genyen Chenmo

Q: He was Je Rinpoche's protective deity and then what happened?

#14C: Then I went to that monastery. The abbot of the monastery happened to belong to the same *khangtsen* as me. [I] spent a day or two with him. But I was filled with anxiety because the message must be relayed speedily. [I] kept looking out from the roof top and it was snowing. There was ice formed on the river.

Two days later a horse cart came by. The horse was finding it very difficult to pull the cart over the ice. My horse could pull a cart. I ran down saying, "Good bye, *rinpoche*. There is someone going and I'll seek their help." Travelling with them would not raise suspicion over me. I entered the cart, overturned the saddle covers on the horse, hitched the horse to the cart and then set off.

01:39:32

[We] went on and on. In every valley the rivers were frozen and the horse found it extremely difficult to pull. [We] pushed and did everything [we] could. Finally just around sunset, [we] arrived at the very place where the Chinese were. Oh, my God. At that time we had raised our [long coats], so we pulled them down and wore the caps properly. [I] got down fast, looked for three pieces of rocks, made a fireplace and boiled tea. Then the other people got down. It was right in front of the Chinese. [We] camped there.

And then three Chinese came along and said, "Hey, are there any not rebels among you?" In our cart was an old man from Paksho who was very famous but totally blind. He was

famed for [his] glib speech. “What? We have no rebels among us. We are on pilgrimage, on the way to see Lhasa.” He answered back arrogantly. [Laughs]

01:42:47

#14C: The old man was a very glib talker. We were travelling in the horse cart and [he] asked, “*Gen* ‘teacher,’ where are you going?” “I’m going to Gaden,” [I] said. Then [he] was quiet. After a short distance he asked, “*Gen*, where are you going? Are you not among those many monks of Gaden that went to join the army at Lhoka?” [I] thought, “It will not be good to keep this a secret.” So I said, “Yes, I am among them. I will be grateful if you help me today. In case you do not, I have given up on my life the day [I] left Gaden and [I] do not care.” “*Gen*, you can depend on [me]. Do not worry,” said the old man. [Laughs]

Q: Did that make you feel relieved as some kind of a fortune telling?

#14C: Yes, [I] was relieved. Otherwise, there was suspicion. He was suspicious and I was not comfortable.

Then I made tea. We drank the tea and ate *pa* ‘dough made from roasted barley flour and tea’ when once again three Chinese—a leader and three other Chinese arrived and said, “Hey, are there not any rebels among you?” “What? There are no rebels among us,” he talked back smartly. The old man was a very glib talker. “You cannot get up in the night. If you do, we will shoot you dead. You cannot leave until daylight tomorrow,” [the Chinese] said.

Q: When was this? Was it the same evening that the Chinese came earlier?

01:45:29

#14C: That was the same night. [The Chinese] came a second time. [They] came twice, once as soon as we arrived and the second time when we were about to sleep. [They] came twice.

Then dawn broke the next day. There was a man with us who carried a load on [his] back.

Q: Kongpo?

#14C: Kongpo, yes. [He] was dressed in Kongpo attire that you see being worn by the dance groups these days. Early the next morning, I saddled the horse with the saddle covers upturned and asked him to lead it, “Please walk a little distance ahead.” I tied my coat like a woman’s and walked slowly. And then [we] reached a mountainside. At the mountainside, [I] raised my coat, overturned the saddle covers, rode the horse and sped away!

Q: And then where did you go?

01:47:17

#14C: Starting out that morning, I reached home around midnight where mother was. Usually there were Chinese staying in our house. Fearing that I climbed over the wall and

went upstairs but there were no Chinese then. I knocked on the door and mother called out, “Who is there?” “It is me,” [I] replied. “Oh, is it [my] son?” and she started crying. Mother had lost [me] because she had no idea where I had gone. “Is it [my] son?” [she] asked. “Yes,” [I] replied. And poor thing, [she] started crying. Then [I] went in.

“Where have you been until now?” [she] asked. I told [her] that I had been working on behalf of the Gaden Tidhokhang. Our maidservant who opened the outer door was a very smart one. [She] said, “Mother does not know anything yet. So please be careful what you say.” The maidservant instructed me such. So I told mother that I had been to work for Gaden and this and that. And then mother became relaxed.

01:49:16

The next day I left for Lhasa. [I] approached the Gaden main office saying, “I have come from Lhoka and was sent by the Tensung Dhanglang Maga. Please keep ready provisions and fodder and feed for the horses for they are planning to come towards U.” [I] gave this message. “Of course,” [they] said. The two senior-most members of the main office were Tsawa Yonten-*la* and Lhopa Lobsang Tsering-*la* and there were 4-6 *chanzo*. I relayed the message when they were in a meeting.

Q: They were in Lhasa?

#14C: Yes, they were in Lhasa to attend the Monlam.

[The office bearers] said, “You should not remain in Lhasa. It is very dangerous. The administration of Dechen District is changing hands. Go to Dechen as a clerk.”

01:50:52

When [I] went to Dechen District for the change in administration, there was a small estate at Dhen where we went for the administration change. Before that took place, there was a lady oracle of the Potala Palace at Dhen. The oracle sat there [points to a distance with left hand], and nearby sat the aristocrats and important people like the *chanzo* and representatives of the abbots. I was sitting near the door. Being the least [important] one, I sat near the door.

The oracle went into trance and said, “Come in” gesturing towards the door. I turned back but there was no one behind me. [I] thought, “How strange! What could it be?” I was oblivious. Even my parents did not know where I was! [Laughs]

There was a pockmarked assistant to the oracle. He was told something and he came towards me and said, “The oracle is asking you to come there.” [I] went and the assistant was instructed to bring a *khata* ‘ceremonial scarf.’ He handed over an ugly, darkish *khata*. “Not this one. Bring a better one.” [He] brought forth an *ashi* ‘good quality *khata*.’ [The oracle] rubbed the *ashi*, made several knots and put it over my neck saying, “Leave instantly. That is [your] destiny. Leave instantly.” Oh, my God! The medium [said that]! My parents had no knowledge where I was! The oracle said that!

Q: Was this at Dechen Zong?

#14C: Yes, at Dechen. It was at Dhen, close to Dechen where the oracle went into trance.

Q: What did you think that meant?

01:53:56

#14C: “Leave instantly. That is [your] destiny.” “That is [your] destiny. Leave instantly,” [the oracle] said.

Q: Why did [the oracle] say that?

#14C: [The oracle] could foresee. Had [I] remained, perhaps there was the risk of being captured by the Chinese.

Q: What place are we in at that point?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: I was working as a clerk at Dechen Zong but this particular incident took place at Dhen, which is very close to Dechen Zong.

Q: Could you tell us when you go to Lhoka from here and what you saw happen in Lhoka?

[Interpreter explains to interviewee about the lack of time and having to stop the interview at 12 o'clock for the next one but not wishing to miss the important parts of the story].

Q: You returned to Lhoka from here.

#14C: Yes.

Q: What happened in Lhoka after [you] returned to Lhoka?

01:55:08

#14C: I returned to Lhoka and gave a report to Dolma Gyawu and Wangden, those in charge of the provisions. And then we...Yeah when I was coming from the direction of Lhasa towards Lhoka, as [I] reached the top of a mountain pass, [I] heard the sound of guns being fired *ding, dhing* in Lhasa. Before that I had gone to the rear of the Potala Palace to fetch guns but have forgotten to mention it.

Q: That's okay; you can relate it.

#14C: Prior to that the Gaden Lachi said that [I] must to go to fetch guns. “[You] must go to fetch guns. *Gen So-and-So* from Shartse [*datsang*] is going and you must be the one from Jangtse [*datsang*].” “Okay,” [I] replied. “[They] have asked to send monks but that is very risky for [they] must ford the river. What is the solution?” [I was] asked.

I replied, “Do not do it that way. There are many horse carts in Dechen. The people of Dechen transport their manure supply from Lhasa. So [they] can be asked to bring eight [empty] sacks in the carts. Four sacks can be spread [in the cart] upon which you place the

guns. You cover it with the other four sacks and then fill manure over it. The Chinese will never know.” The reason being that the bridge must be crossed and there were Chinese guards at the bridge. “This is a good idea. Do it this way,” [it was] said.

01:56:38

Then I and *Gen So-and-So* went to the *langang*; *langang* is the elephant shed. There is manure in the elephant shed that [we] dug and kept ready for packing. It was planned that representatives of Gaden would come from the Potala. In the afternoon the representatives came and told [us] that the Tibetan Government said it could not risk guns being transported in carts and insisted that monks be sent to take them.

“[We] will not get any guns now,” [I] spoke angrily. Then, “Yeah, that is right. [The Tibetan Government] cannot take the risk of our transporting [the guns] but who is going to be responsible for the lives of the monks? If 100 monks are sent, who is going to be responsible for them?” [I] argued with the representatives, [I] swear. Then [we] left empty-handed.

Q: [You] didn’t get the guns?

#14C: [We] did not get the guns and left empty-handed. [We] were empty-handed and then I left directly. [The representatives] said that guns would not be given unless the monks came. And then monks were sent to get [the guns]. I left directly for Lhoka and gave my report at Lhoka. “That is right. Now let’s go to Phodang.” Phodang in Yarlung was where the main office was located. Then we went to Yarlung. While at Yarlung, refugees started streaming out from Gaden and Lhasa. And then...No, before that...that is not it. [I] came here from Lhoka.

01:58:12

While at Rong Dukha,[I] was responsible for issuing passes for the refugees. The order was that those with arms should be stopped and those without be allowed to go through. I was the one issuing passes sitting by the mooring. And then Bashi Jidung-*la* and Serchung Donkhang’s Yeshi Tharchin-*la* arrived. They had with them four or five servants and carried a machine gun and three or four English-made short barrel rifles. “You have weapons and must stay back, as that is the order,” they were told. “We will not stay back. We are going to prepare for His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s journey. We are going,” [they] said.

[Interpreter to interviewee]: We have to wind up, as there’s no time. First I’ll interpret and then later we’ll wind up.

Q: Difficult duty.

#14C: [Laughs] The Kungo Bashi was a Tibetan Government aristocrat. [To interpreter] You know Bashi Jedung-*la*; sometimes he speaks on the radio these days. Yeshi Tharchin-*la* was Deputy Secretary of the Home Department [in Dharamsala] and has passed away. They carried weapons. Therefore, I was told to go to Lhoka to relay this information and to seek permission whether to let them through or not. I was sent to...What’s the name of the

place where the speaking Dolma [statue of Goddess Tara] is located? What is it called? Tandu. [I] was sent to Tandu.

At Tandu, Minister of Home Affairs Wangdu Dorjee-*la* was sitting facing Tsona Ledung and acting as clerks. There was Atuk Lama who was Kungo and the senior person. I informed [them], “Lhasa is lost and there are two Kungo that have escaped. [They] are asking to be let through. Should [they] be let through or not. What is to be done?” [I] am here to seek permission.

02:01:30

[The officials] moved here and there. Then [they] decided that Kungo approach Namseling. [He] returned from there and said that it was fine. I was given a letter and told, “You should stay here for the night.” “Please, I am not staying back. On the way here, three or four shells were fired at me at Tsethang. Thank God, the shells did not explode.” The shells fell in the sand, rotated but did not explode. So I went back that night.

I will speak briefly. And then we were told to hand over the Phokhang and set off for U, which we did. [We] set off from Lhoka and reached the place called Won. It was around dusk when [we] reached Won. Halfway on the road people could be heard screaming and squealing like pigs, “The Chinese have come. The Chinese have come.” So we searched for a place to prepare to fight. There was a military camp then called... There was a division and though we of the Phokhang were not fighters, we joined them stylishly.

02:03:08

Kungo...I forget the names; the two Kungo I told you about who was to be let through or not. They had a machine gun that [they] gave me. So I had the machine gun and thought, “Let me do something today!” [I] knotted [my] shoelaces 3-4 times and waist band 2-3 times. I positioned on a hillock while the Chinese were below beside a river. We were trying to block [the Chinese].

There was an encounter but it was a fight without any training. The people joined in the fight and some went up there while others down there! Nobody knew anything since [they] had had no training. The Chinese fired artillery shells and our guns were useless. Whichever directions gunshots came from, [the Chinese] fired three, four, five, six shells like rainfall. Men were injured, killed or took flight. Then we fled. We stopped [the Chinese] until around 3 o'clock in the afternoon and then we fled.

Q: Which is this place?

#14C: It is the one called Won.

Q: And so what happened to you?

#14C: From there most of the people were running away. [We] heard that Dhuwazong on the other side of Lhoka was lost and Tsethang was lost and everywhere else. The Chinese were pursuing like this [stretches out both arms]. Then we continued and reached the border.

02:05:45

[We] were stopped at the border for seven days. [We] inquired, “Why are [we] being stopped?” The Indian Government will not allow [you] to proceed. Then one day, “You can go. The Dalai Lama has arrived in Delhi. You are allowed to go now. [His Holiness] has met with Nehru [former Indian Prime Minister]. You can go now.” Then only were we allowed to leave. Otherwise, the Indians did not let us through Mangola.

Q: How did that feel to be leaving Tibet?

#14C: It was very strange. [Our] food stock was exhausted. Earlier when leaving Tibet I had a pair of footwear but gave them to [my] sibling who had joined the army as his was too small. [I] gave my footwear [to my brother] and he had been wearing one with fabric soles [that I wore]. One sole fell off while crossing a pass and the other on another pass and by the time [I] reached Mon Tawang, there was only the upper part of the boot left. And most of the time [we] had been hungry.

Where will food come from? You had to fight as well as cook your food and there was no time to cook! [We] were just trying to flee and fight. So when I arrived in Mumbai I weighed 30 kilograms. [Laughs]

Q: Your shoes were thin but your spirit was strong.

#14C: [Laughs and joins palms]

Q: *Pa-la*, thank you for this wonderful and very important account of your life story and the story of Tibet. We deeply appreciate your sharing it with us.

02:08:37

#14C: [Joins palms] Thank you. I would like to thank you for volunteering for the Tibetan cause and doing so much.

For us it is our duty to speak and share, which is important. But what your doing so much voluntary, it is very good. Thank you.

Q: Well, we are learning a lot from the Tibetans, especially about the dharma and the courage of practicing the dharma as Tibetans.

#14C: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW