

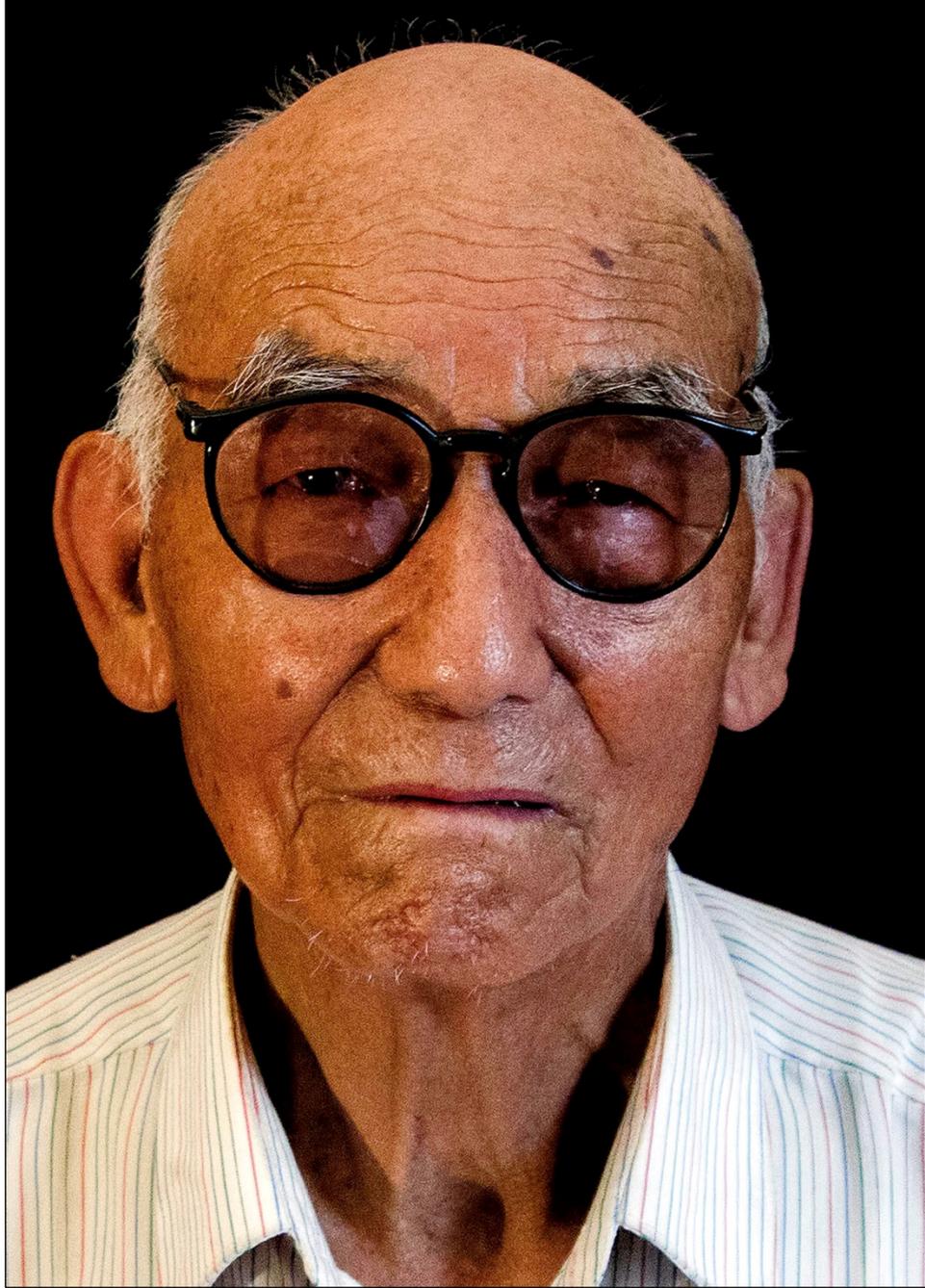
Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #62D – Norbugya
May 14, 2012

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #62D
2. Interviewee: Norbugya
3. Age: 84
4. Date of Birth: 1928
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Dhongku
7. Province: Dhoday (Amdo)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: May 14, 2012
10. Place of Interview: Hotel Tibet, Mcleod Ganj, Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 34 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Pema Tashi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Norbugya was born in Dhongku in Amdo Province but grew up in Nangra. He recalls sadly that his father and elder sister passed away from an illness when he was 11 years old and later his grief stricken mother became blind. Norbugya grew up as a farmer and explains the types of crops he grew and how the neighbors assisted his mother with fieldwork. There were many monasteries nearby and Norbugya explains the circumstances when monks were requested to do prayers for the villagers.

Norbugya remembers that Chinese troops first appeared at Gangdu and the people of his region moved to the border to stop the Chinese. An armed unit consisting of men above the age of 18 and below the age of 60 was formed to resist the Chinese under the leadership of Khambu Wangchen. Norbugya recalls that they managed to stall the advancing Chinese for three years until supposedly 80,000 Chinese troops came and forced the Tibetans to surrender. The Chinese made Khambu Wangchen a leader and coerced him to subjugate the Tibetan people.

To escape further persecution after having all of his grain supply taken away by the Chinese, Norbugya fled to Lhasa without informing his wife and two sons, whom he later learned died from starvation. Many others starved to death as well and there were several suicides in his region. In Lhasa Norbugya joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* Defend Tibet Volunteer Force.

Topics Discussed:

Amdo, farm life, first appearance of Chinese, invasion by Chinese army, resistance, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas.

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Interview #62D

Interviewee: Norbugya

Age: 84, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: May 14, 2012

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:12

Interviewee #62D: I am called Norbugya.

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?

#62D: Yes, I have come here to speak.

Q: Thank you for offering to share your story with us.

#62D: Okay.

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.

#62D: Okay.

Q: If this interview was shown in Tibet or China or anywhere else around the world, would this be a problem for you?

00:02:21

#62D: No, no, why would there be problems? I am living in India.

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

#62D: [Nods]

Q: Can you begin, *aku-la* ‘respectful term for paternal uncle,’ by telling me where were you born in Tibet, in what village and what province?

#62D: [The place] I was born is called Dhongku. Mother came there as a bride. [I] was born in Dhongku. It is called Dhongku.

Q: Dhongku?

#62D: Yes, it is called Dhongku.

Q: Born in Dhongku?

00:03:29

#62D: Yes, it was Dhongku. My mother did not live here but moved to Nangra. Then we were in Nangra.

Q: Moved to Nangra after birth?

#62D: Yes, moved to Nangra. It was from Nangra that I fled.

Q: Which province?

#62D: The province is Chandha.

Q: Kham, Utsang...Dhotoe [Kham], Dhomay [Amdo] or Utsang, which was it?

#62D: It was in Tsongon under Dhomay. Tsongon, Chandha and Nangra.

Q: Who was in your family when you were growing up?

#62D: When I was small both the parents were there. I had an older sister. She passed away. There is a sister younger to me and she still survives.

Q: What kind of work did your mother and father do in Tibet?

00:05:17

#62D: [They] worked in the fields.

Q: Can you describe what was it like growing up in Tibet? Give me a description of your life and activities as a child.

#62D: Our family worked in the fields. My parents passed away when I was small, around 10-11 years old. I was around 11 or 12 years old. Everyone passed away. Mother became blind. I have undergone great difficulties.

Q: [You] mean many people in the village died then?

#62D: All my family members passed away from a grave illness. Mother became blind from anguish.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: But his mother and father had passed away.

Q: So your mother became blind and then she died?

00:07:13

#62D: Then mother passed away. She passed away when I was 29 years old.

Q: When you were a child before you were 11 or 12, what were your activities like during the day?

#62D: We worked in the fields. It was just farming and there were no schools.

Q: Do you know what kind of illness destroyed your father?

#62D: The illness was fever. It was a bad fever that killed everybody.

Q: By everybody do [you] mean many people of the village?

#62D: Not people of the village, but members of our family. My father passed away, my older sister passed away; only mother and I were left. Mother grieved and became blind.

Q: Father and older sister passed away but you had a younger sister.

#62D: The younger sister still survives.

Q: *Aku-la*, what kind of a little boy were you? How would you describe yourself as a little boy?

00:09:16

#62D: It was said that I was very beautiful as a small boy. [Laughs] I am speaking the truth. It was said that I was incredibly beautiful. Mother said that when I was a small child people used to ask, "How beautiful! Can [I] hold him? Can [I] touch him?"

Q: What are some of your fondest memories when you were a child?

#62D: I was incredibly happy from the age of 6, 7 or 4 until 11. Father was there, mother was there and the family had enough resources. I was extremely happy until the age of 11. And then everyone passed away.

Q: What happened to the family when your father passed away? How did the family support itself?

#62D: Even after father passed away, we had the field and continued to do fieldwork. [We] did fieldwork.

Q: Was your mother able to remarry and have another husband?

00:11:28

#62D: [She] did not.

Q: It was your mother, sister and you? How large was your field or your farm?

#62D: The field was large. Well, it was fairly large. It was irrigated land.

Q: Did somebody help you farm the land and who did that?

#62D: There were our neighbors to lend help. The neighbors helped each other. We did that. I would help you and you would help me. All the families helped each other in that way.

Q: Can you describe the village? What size was it? How many families lived there? What did it look like?

#62D: I was born in Dhungku where my mother's home was and she came to Nangra. There were around 300 families in our region.

Q: [You] mean in Nangra?

00:13:39

#62D: Yes, Nangra, Nangra. There were around 300 families, around 300 families. In our village called Zogja were 15-20 families.

Q: What kind of crops did you raise? What kind of vegetables did you raise?

#62D: [We] grew wheat, barley, *sowa*...

Q: Yes?

#62D: [We] grew *sowa* 'barley with its husk.'

Q: *Tsowa*?

#62D: Yes, *sowa*, the one called *sowa*.

Q: *Sowa*.

#62D: [We] grew lentils.

Q: Yes?

#62D: Lentils, lentils.

Q: Lentils.

#62D: Yes, that is it. And potatoes.

Q: Was there a monastery near those 15 or 20 families and can you describe how large it was and if you went there very often?

00:15:14

#62D: Yes, there was a monastery.

Q: What was the size?

#62D: There was a monastery called Lamo Dechen.

Q: How large was it?

#62D: There was said to be 500 monks.

Q: Have you been there?

#62D: Yes, it was close to us. There were said to be 45 lamas. There was another monastery called Charthing where there were around 80 monks. Then there was one called Ngawa. There were around 30 monks in Ngawa. Then there was one called Gur. Gur, Gur. In it were around a hundred monks. Those were the monasteries. There were not any more.

Q: That sounds like quite a few monasteries. Was your family...Did they go to the monasteries and have regular rituals at home or at the monasteries?

00:16:59

#62D: Yes, we did. [People of] our region were spiritual. Our region was highly spiritual. [We] practiced the dharma with great diligence.

Q: What was the relationship between your farming community and the monasteries? Was there any kind of economic relationship?

#62D: The monasteries did not lend any economic assistance to the people. We did not take from the monasteries. The villagers depended upon their farms for survival. Taking from the monastery was not considered good.

Q: But how about by the villagers to the monasteries?

#62D: It was considered good if the villagers made offerings to the monasteries. Each family had around two members living in the monastery. For instance, if we were two brothers, one became a monk. The family had to take food for him at the monastery. *Tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley,' wheat flour, butter everything was taken to the monastery.

Q: How did the monastery with all these monks, how did they survive?

00:19:44

#62D: For one, the families brought the food. They [the monks] also visited [homes] to read prayers similar to how it is done here. [They] went everywhere to read prayers.

Q: And if they came to recite prayers, were they given gifts or contributions of money?

#62D: The family prepared food for [the monks] that recited prayers. A *dhayen* ‘Chinese silver coin’ or two was offered a day to the monks. A huge bread of this size [forms a circle with arms] used to be baked in our region, one of which would be offered. Huge breads were baked.

Q: Can you talk about why did the people like the monasteries in their...

#62D: [Interrupts] To be honest, such a bread of our region could be eaten for 5-6 days.

Q: Big piece of bread.

#62D: [Nods and circles arms to show size of bread]

Q: Did the people value the monasteries and why?

00:22:08

#62D: Of course, one would consider [the monasteries] valuable. It is the Buddha dharma that we take refuge in this life; take refuge in God and it is so when we die. We must all die for that is the only way.

Q: Can you please help me understand what do you mean when you say the Buddha dharma? What did you believe in?

#62D: [Laughs] The Buddha dharma is the dharma of the Buddha just as His Holiness the Dalai Lama teaches. It was so in the past and it is so now. That is it. Yes, is it not? The Buddha Dharma is the Buddha’s dharma.

Q: Can you name one of the teachings of the Buddha that you like or you have lived by?

#62D: I am not in a position to talk about the Buddha dharma because I am not an expert. It is not like I do not have faith in the dharma but I cannot speak on the dharma. However, I take refuge in the Buddha and in the dharma but I cannot speak on the dharma.

Q: Okay. I have heard some reports that the Chinese said that the monasteries took advantage of the people. What is your opinion of these statements?

#62D: How?

Q: It’s been heard that the monasteries in Tibet took advantage of the people.

#62D: Of course, the Chinese harassed.

Q: Not about the Chinese harassing, but the Chinese have said that the monasteries were doing it to the people.

00:25:18

#62D: By the monasteries to the people?

Q: Yes.

#62D: No, monasteries did not harass the people.

Q: Not at all?

#62D: That is a lie. Monasteries would never harass the people.

Q: So it was a mutually beneficial relationship.

#62D: Exactly. That is it.

Q: How did the monasteries benefit the people and how did the people benefit the monasteries?

#62D: If someone died, the people approached the monastery and invited monks home. Wealthy families invited 21 monks for seven days. That is by a wealthy family. A middle class family invited 14 or 15 monks for seven days. A poor family invited seven monks for seven days. There were three types of families. Everyone observed the rituals.

That was when someone passed away. Similarly, lamas were invited home. A wealthy family invited a lama during the day and another at night. So two lamas were invited home. That was our tradition.

Q: *Aku-la*, you were very sad when your father died; I think it was around aged 12?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Eleven.

Q: Eleven. Was there any other man that came into your life that acted like a father figure to guide you?

00:28:20

#62D: No [shakes head]. There were no father-like figures.

Q: When was the next significant change in your life? Your father died, you worked on the farm and then what happened next? Was there any significant change?

#62D: When father passed away, I faced a lot of problems between the ages of 11 and 12 because [I] could not work. By age 15, 16 and by the time [I] reached the age of 18, my family became rich.

Q: Rich?

#62D: Yes, the family became rich. When I fled our family was rich and owned a large stock of grains all of which the Chinese seized. Following the seizure by the Chinese, I escaped.

Q: How did you go from being very poor to being very rich at age 18?

00:30:10

#62D: That was from working in the fields. [I] was able to work.

Q: You mentioned the Chinese. How old were you the first time that the Chinese came to your community?

#62D: When the Chinese initially appeared in our country, it was not in our region. The Chinese arrived at Gangdu. We went to resist the Chinese and stopped the Chinese for 10 days. The Chinese could not advance. I was 20 years old then.

Q: How did you do that?

#62D: Like in other countries, there were neither weapons nor a proper army in our region. Each of us carried what we owned, whether it was a sword, a spear or a gun and went to the border to restrict the Chinese. The Chinese could not come into our region. [We] resisted for around 10 days.

The name of the place was Thang Geri. We formed an armed unit there. We were above the age of 18 and below the age of 60 that formed the armed unit and resisted the Chinese from advancing. [We] did not let the Chinese advance.

Q: Everybody between the age of 16...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Eighteen and 60.

Q: Okay. Were these just men only?

00:33:03

#62D: Yes, only men. There were only men; women would not go. [Smiles]

Q: What kind of weapons? What was the plan and who was leading it? What was the plan and who was leading it and what did they take to the border?

#62D: There were no weapons supplied by the country's government in our region. Depending upon one's family background, one might possess a gun or a type of gun called *meru*, a sword or a spear that were carried. There were no weapons given to our region from the government.

Q: Who was the leader?

#62D: The leader was Nari Khombu Wangchen.

Q: Yes?

#62D: Khombu Wangchen.

Q: Khombu Rinchen?

#62D: Wangchen. Wangchen.

Q: Khombu? Khombu Wangchen?

#62D: Yes, Wangchen.

Q: He was the one.

#62D: He was the one.

Q: Who was Khombu Wangchen?

00:34:40

#62D: [He] was the leader of the region, leader of the region. There were around 1,000 families; 1,000 families. He was the leader.

Q: So he took about...how many men was it? Do we know?

#62D: We were on guard day and night. We surrounded all the four directions, not allowing even one Chinese to enter. Not just Chinese, we did not allow even Tibetans to come in. We did not allow even Tibetans to enter, beating and driving away everyone from the border. [We] drove them out at the border, not allowing [anyone] to enter. We did not let anyone enter Nangra at the border.

Q: How many men were there?

#62D: What?

Q: How many men were on guard?

#62D: Fifty to 60 men were at different points guarding the border day and night. And prevented [the Chinese] from advancing.

Q: So that border had 50-60 people all round it, so I guess maybe a total of a 1,000; he's saying many places, correct? They were protecting many villages or one village or 20 villages? How many?

00:36:56

#62D: There were not a thousand. There were around a thousand families.

Q: Were [you] guarding it?

#62D: [We] were guarding it.

Q: Were you guarding the entire village that consisted of a thousand families?

#62D: [We] guarded it and did not allow [anyone] to enter.

Q: Up until that time no Chinese had come in. You set up this barrier to prevent them from coming in because up until then none had come in?

#62D: None had been able to come in.

Q: How did you know about the Chinese that they were out there and they were coming towards you?

#62D: [We] did not hear that the Chinese were coming; the Chinese and we were living opposite each other. We were close by and went to stop the Chinese. If Siling was here [gestures off camera], we were here. The Chinese were there all around and we were surrounded. That was it.

Q: Had [the Chinese] arrived in Tibet?

00:38:19

#62D: [They] had already arrived.

Q: So what happened?

#62D: They were stopped for three years then. The Chinese were stopped for three years, stopped for three years. Then one day...I forget the name...a high-ranking Chinese leader...a Tibetan but a high-ranking Chinese leader, what was he called? Yes, Tashi Tushi. [He] was called Tashi Tushi. The one called Tashi Tushi arrived. He said [he] would make a settlement with Nangra; the name of our region was Nangra. [He] said that [he] would also make a settlement with the Chinese. Tashi Tushi arrived.

It was planned that things should settle after Tashi Tushi's [visit]. "The official is a Tibetan and it is better that things are settled. We will never be able to challenge the Chinese."

Q: Who said this?

#62D: Our leader Khombu Wangchen said this. "Tashi Tushi must be allowed to come to settle the dispute." That decision was reached. And then Tashi Tushi arrived. [He] arrived at the border. I was present there with the unit then. Tashi Tushi arrived. Tashi Tushi was accompanied by around 10 assistants. They arrived. Our leader said, "You must all say, 'Welcome, Tashi Tushi'." [He] said that we were to say "Welcome, Tashi Tushi." And then Tashi Tushi arrived. [The leaders] were seated and Tashi Tushi sat at the head, and then the talks began.

00:41:00

I kept staring. I was young then. Well, not exactly small as I was in the 20s, around 21 or 22 years old then. Tashi Tushi spoke and was shivering. He was shivering as I looked on. [He] was shivering. [I] kept staring. Then our [leader] spoke; Khombu Wangchen spoke, “We will go back home.” There was no intention of fighting. “We will go back as there is no use staying on.” Hence, [we] readied to return home. Tashi Tushi had a horse. Khombu Wangchen said, “Someone bring Tashi Tushi’s horse.” I nearly went to bring it but did not. I kept staring. He [Tashi Tushi] placed his foot and rode over the horse and then fled.

Q: Did Tashi Tushi take flight?

#62D: Yes, he fled. Tashi Tushi fled to a distance of 3-4 miles; Tashi Tushi and Lamo Shamo Karpo. Lamo Sharmo Karpo followed and assured [Tashi Tushi] that there was no need to do this [run away] but he [Tashi Tushi] said, “I am to be killed. Had I not been able to escape today, I was in the wolf’s mouth and would have been killed.” He lied and fled. Had he [negotiated] with Nangra, those numerous Chinese need not have died, as well as avoiding the deaths on our side. There was hope of a good outcome. However, he fled and lied to the Chinese. And then the 80,000 Chinese troops converged on our small region.

Q: 80,000?

#62D: Yes. [The Chinese] claimed there were 80,000 but nobody knows if that many arrived. They appeared not only on the same day but converged upon us at the same time. We were only 1,000 families while 80,000 [Chinese troops] arrived. [They] were armed and fired cannons and machine guns. [They appeared] not just on the same day but at the same time. We lost.

Q: During those three years of resistance, could you give me some understanding of how you had knives and spears, how did you resist the Chinese? They must have had guns. So how did you defend yourself from their coming in?

00:46:16

#62D: The Chinese did not appear in great numbers. It was not a huge number of Chinese that arrived. Small numbers of Chinese like 10, 15, 20 or 30 could not overcome us. It was not just knives and spears we had; there were many that owned guns. There were many that owned different types and [we] stopped the Chinese for three years.

Q: When the 80,000 Chinese troops came, what happened?

#62D: The Chinese claimed that they were 80,000. We could not withstand them. It was not even a day but we lost to the Chinese within a few minutes. Some were killed and some captured. There were casualties on both sides. Comparing the numbers killed on the two sides, it was more on their side because that was our region. The Chinese attacked early in the morning, before dawn.

Q: How did they come? On tanks, horseback, walking, how did they come?

#62D: There were no roads for vehicles. [They] had walked at night and surrounded all the four sides and then attacked all of a sudden. There were no motor roads.

Q: Just on foot and with guns.

#62D: Yes.

Q: You said a thousand families and maybe that would be like 5,000 people?

00:49:20

#62D: Yes, it could be. There must be around that many.

Q: 80,000 Chinese. How did you know it was that exact number?

#62D: The Chinese claimed that there were 80,000 Chinese.

Q: Can you remember the exact date that that invasion happened?

#62D: [I] cannot remember that. [They] came on the 14th day of the 4th Tibetan lunar month.

Q: Was that the day the 80,000 Chinese came?

#62D: Yes, it was the 14th day of the 4th Tibetan lunar month. That is the Tibetan lunar month.

Q: How old were you?

#62D: I might have been 21 then.

Q: Can you describe when that day happened what you saw with your own eyes? If it was early in the morning, were you still in bed and then what woke you up? What did you see with your own eyes?

#62D: I had been to irrigate the fields in the night. At dawn I returned home and went to sleep.

Q: Where?

00:51:25

#62D: [I] was sleeping at home. And then shots were fired. Gunshots rang out *phow, phow* everywhere. I rushed out and there was a Chinese Muslim that came running saying, "The Chinese have come. The Chinese have come. Let us go to the leader. Let us go to the leader."

Q: Yes?

#62D: [He] said [he] was going to the leader.

Q: That [he] was going to the leader?

#62D: Yes, going to the leader.

Q: Who was the Chinese Muslim?

#62D: The Muslim was a Chinese.

Q: Was [he] a resident of your region?

#62D: Yes. [He] was one that had fled [and settled] in our region.

Q: Okay.

#62D: There was an encounter when our soldiers went down and the Chinese army came up. Then [they] clashed. The Chinese could not overcome our soldiers. [Tibetan soldiers] killed or maimed the Chinese and chased them to quite a distance. Another group of Chinese appeared and our soldiers were sandwiched. [They] were in the middle.

Q: How?

00:52:41

#62D: The Chinese came up and our soldiers went down. The Chinese could not defeat our soldiers while our soldiers routed them. Then a woman screamed, “Run, run. If [you] do not, the Chinese are coming from behind.” And then we were sandwiched. However, we managed to flee from there. Not many of our soldiers were killed that day. [We] escaped.

Q: Do you have any understanding of how many Tibetans were killed or how many Chinese were killed?

#62D: Not many Tibetans were killed that day. Innumerable Chinese were killed that day; Chinese were killed. Really, countless numbers of Chinese were killed. Casualties from the Tibetans were perhaps two people or one.

Q: One or two?

#62D: That day countless numbers of Chinese were killed. All of us fled to the mountains. All the men fled to the mountains and all the women were smeared with blood [moves right hand on left shoulder] from shifting Chinese bodies. They told us later that [they] were smeared with blood [taps on left shoulder with right hand].

Q: Blood?

00:55:14

#62D: [They] carried the bodies. The women moved the bodies and underwent great difficulties. There are countless numbers of Chinese graves in our region. The Chinese carried away some [of the bodies]; transported to Siling.

Q: Fled?

#62D: No, the bodies were carted away.

Q: By them?

#62D: Yes, [the bodies] were taken to Siling. We were not in Siling but close by. It was said that bodies were transported to Siling.

Q: Did they take [the bodies] away?

#62D: They took them; it was not us.

Q: When they started shooting, can you describe what happened to you and your mother and your sister? What happened when this attack began?

00:56:56

#62D: They were inside the house then. They were inside. [They] were inside the house.

Q: Who?

#62D: Mother and sister were inside the house and did not come out.

Q: What did you do?

#62D: I was in the force.

Q: What did [you] do when the shooting began?

#62D: We fled to the mountains.

Q: Tell us about the next part of your story. What happens when you go to the hills?

#62D: It was not possible to challenge the Chinese and we fled to the mountains. Later [we] surrendered, to put it in words. [We] surrendered to the Chinese.

Q: Surrendered to the Chinese?

#62D: Yes, surrendered.

Q: And then?

#62D: What?

Q: And then what happened?

00:58:13

#62D: And then the Chinese stated that we were *khorta*. Stating that it was *khorta*, the Chinese left us in complete freedom for a few years.

Q: What does *khorta* mean?

#62D: *Khorta* meant that [we] could enjoy special status.

Q: Yes?

#62D: That [we] were given special status. The Chinese called it *khorta* and in Tibetan it is *migsal* ‘special.’ We could live as we wished. The Chinese gave us complete freedom for five or six years.

Q: *Khushi* [‘free’ in Hindi]?

#62D: Yes, *khushi*.

Q: Did they punish anybody for resisting them at that time?

#62D: There was no punishment then. There was no punishment. We had our leader who initially refused to surrender and escaped to the mountains. Men were sent after the leader to inform that there would be *khorta*, that it was *khushi*. Dhoyi Geshe Rinpoche. Have you heard of Dhoyi Geshe Rinpoche? You would not have. [He] was a most valued one. He acted as surety and the leader returned.

Q: The leader was called back?

#62D: Yes, called back.

Q: That means that he said that the leader would keep his promise and do what?

01:00:59

#62D: [Dhoyi Geshe Rinpoche] stood surety for the Chinese. Dhoyi Geshe Rinpoche was with the Chinese. [He] was not the Domo Geshe Rinpoche but Dhoyi Geshe Rinpoche.

Q: Yes?

#62D: [He] was called Dhoyi Geshe Rinpoche.

Q: Doyi?

#62D: Dhoyi, Dhoyi.

Q: Dhoyi?

#62D: Yes, Dhoyi.

Q: Dhoyi Geshe Rinpoche?

#62D: Yes, Dhoyi Geshe Rinpoche.

Q: He stood surety for the Chinese and the leader was called back?

#62D: Yes, [he] was called back.

Q: And that nothing would be done?

#62D: That nothing would be done.

Q: He was a Buddhist lama?

#62D: Dhoyi Geshe Rinpoche was a great lama; a most valued one among the three great monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Gaden. Then [our leader] surrendered.

Q: Yes?

01:02:13

#62D: [He] surrendered to the Chinese. Let me tell you about it. The leader surrendered and the Chinese conferred a big title on him. Gave a big title to the leader.

Q: To the leader?

#62D: Yes, to our leader that returned.

Q: To Wangchen?

#62D: Yes, to Wangchen. The title of *shendang*. The Chinese calls it *shendang*. [He] was awarded the *shendang*...for numerous years he...well, not numerous years but perhaps until the time I left. Khombu Wangchen was very famous in the region. Therefore, in order to subjugate the people, he was given a big title and taken everywhere to speak highly of the Communists. So the people obeyed and were brought under control, brought under control. Later the Chinese captured Khombu and imprisoned [him].

Q: Was the leader arrested?

#62D: The leader was arrested, put in prison and subjected to suffering. The kind of suffering [he] was subjected to was incredible. The Chinese had subjected [him] to incredible suffering. From time to time...bow his head...[not discernible] subjected to

suffering, not for one day or two days but made to suffer for years and months on end. Finally the Chinese executed [him].

Q: [He] was killed?

01:04:28

#62D: [He] was killed. The Chinese killed [him].

Q: Do you think that this leader when he was taken around to tell the people about the goodness of the Chinese, do you think he believed that or was he doing that under coercion?

#62D: [He] felt coerced into doing so. He was controlled by the Chinese and was forced to explain as to how good and gentle the Chinese were. We were aware of the Chinese policies.

Q: So the people didn't believe him?

#62D: [They] did not believe [him]. There was no belief. They knew it was a Chinese strategy; [they] would never believe the Chinese leaders. However, Khombu was forced to speak by the Chinese.

Q: Were they upset with him for being false and saying that?

#62D: Whatever it may be [that they felt], the people did not believe [the Chinese] one hundred percent.

Q: A hundred percent?

01:07:45

#62D: [They] did not believe [the Chinese] one hundred per cent. [They] did not believe in the Chinese one hundred per cent. One knew it. For instance, the Chinese thought that once our generation was gone, once our generation [points to himself] was gone, it would be easy to handle the younger generation who would turn into Chinese. [The Chinese] claimed that [the younger generation] would become Chinese. [They] thought [the youngsters] would become Chinese.

However, these days it is the younger generation that is the worst [affected]. The youngsters are immolating themselves. What is happening in Tibet? Our generation is gone but the youngsters are turning out to be excellent. You can hear what is happening in Amdo Ngaba, Amdo Tsongon, Ganze, Tawu. Everywhere it is the youngsters that are rising up against the oppressors.

Q: Since you brought up the immolations, can you please tell us what are your thoughts and your feelings about these kinds of actions by these young Tibetans?

#62D: I do not have an opinion as such. Neither would you nor I would have anything to say. Nobody would have anything to say. The persistent suffering has driven the people to desperation. They are immolating themselves due to desperation. You and I cannot

describe the suffering. People are desperate on account of which they are immolating themselves.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So he had no opinion about it?

Q: What do you think about it? What's your opinion?

01:10:44

#62D: I cannot say. I am not in a position to say. If the people there do not protest against the Chinese now, they will still become worse. [The situation] will still grow worse. It will become worse. If the Chinese do not bring about a change, it will become worse and not better.

Q: After the leader tried to convince people and then he was arrested and tortured, what happened to you in your village? What happened?

#62D: I escaped before the imprisonment.

Q: Before the leader was imprisoned?

#62D: Yes, the leader had not been captured yet. [He] was acting as an official of the Chinese. [He] was on the verge of being arrested. I fled in the meantime.

Q: Where?

#62D: [I] fled to Lhasa.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Does he know what happened about the land and...What did the Chinese do about the land and the family that was still there?

[Interpreter interprets question as: While you were living there what changes did the Chinese bring about with the land and grain stocks belonging to the people?]

#62D: At the time I left...take our region for instance, each family owned a house; each family owned lands and animals. There was enough for us to survive. The Chinese confiscated all of these for the Chinese Government. [A person was] questioned, "How many animals do you possess?" And it was recorded. There were no longer grain stocks since the Chinese had taken away all of it. Land holdings were recorded. Families were left with nothing but the clothes [touches shirt]. Everything else was confiscated. There was nothing except what was on the body. The Chinese confiscated everything.

Q: Who did they give them to, all these belongings?

01:14:25

#62D: The government took them. [Laughs] There was no knowing whom they were given to; the government took them. There was no knowing to whom they were given.

Q: What happened to the people who owned land and were there classes of people in that commune? Were the people still wealthy, still moderate, still poor? Can you tell us what changed?

#62D: There were [people of different economic status]. The entire grain stocks were confiscated. The government confiscated all the grains. Now [everybody] became equal. One had to cultivate and begin again. I fled that year. I fled while my wife and two children were there. There were two sons and both of them died from starvation. [They] died from starvation.

Q: All three? Wife?

#62D: [There were] wife and two children. Both of them died. Not only them, but many people died from starvation in our region.

Q: Were you living there at that time when your wife and sons died?

01:16:28

#62D: I had fled when the Chinese arrived. I reached Lhasa.

Q: What made you flee? Why were you fleeing?

#62D: The reason [I] fled was that [the Chinese] insisted I still possessed grains, insisted that [I] still possessed grains. It was impossible to convince that [I] did not. [They] insisted that [I] did when [I] said [I] did not. Therefore [I] fled.

Q: Did you flee by yourself or did you flee with other people?

#62D: I had a companion. We were two of us.

Q: What did your wife think about your leaving and how old were your sons?

#62D: [I] did not inform [my] wife...[not discernible]...[I] did not speak to [my] wife.

Q: [You] didn't mention that [you] were going to flee?

#62D: No, [she] was not told.

Q: How old were the sons?

#62D: One of the children was 7 and the other 3.

Q: One was 3 years old and the other?

01:18:05

#62D: One was 7 years old.

Now I will talk about what happened at this time. Unable to endure the demand for grains, there was a lady called Acha Thuji in our region. Thuji.

Q: Thuji.

#62D: [She] was called Thuji. Unable to endure, [she] jumped in the river and killed herself. [She] leaped in the water and killed herself.

Q: [She] jumped in the water.

#62D: Yes, jumped in the water. That is one. Then there was one called Rulachi.

Q: Yes?

#62D: Rulachi.

Q: Rula...?

#62D: Rulachi.

Q: Rulachi?

#62D: Yes, Rulachi. Rulachi. Rula.

Q: Rula?

#62D: Yes, Rulachi. [He] was from Lhasa, Lhasa. He cut his own neck [make gesture of cutting throat].

Q: Cut [his] neck?

#62D: Cut his neck.

Q: With a knife?

01:19:04

#62D: Yes, cut with a knife when grains were demanded. It was said that the neck was almost severed and [the head] hanging backwards. Thus two people died. [He] was called Rulachi. Then there was one called Chating Namtheya.

Q: Chating...?

#62D: Namtheyya.

Q: Namtheyya?

#62D: Yes, Namtheyya. He hung himself. He hung using a rope and killed himself.

Q: Where did these happen?

#62D: On account of grains.

Q: Yes?

#62D: Because of grains. The Chinese...

Q: ...demanded grains. It was because of grains?

#62D: Yes. That is not all. There was another one, one called Lochoe. Lochoe. [He] was called Lochoe. He hung himself too. He hung himself. How many people is that?

Q: Four.

01:20:05

#62D: That is four people. [They] committed suicide during that time.

Q: Was that in your region?

#62D: Yes, it was in our region, in our very region.

Q: Were they starving at that point or were they afraid that they were going to be subjected to starvation?

#62D: There was nothing to eat and [the Chinese] would not sell grain when asked and so they committed suicide.

Q: There were no grains available?

#62D: There were no grains available. How would there be then?

Q: One couldn't buy...

#62D: There was none to be bought.

Q: Was suicide typical in your area before the Chinese came if you had a problem?

#62D: No, no. There were no suicide cases before the Chinese came. No, no.

Q: Who was the person you escaped with?

01:22:14

#62D: [He] was called Kunsang.

Q: What was your relationship to him?

#62D: [He] was not a relative but we hailed from the same village.

Q: Why did you choose to flee to Lhasa?

#62D: We arrived in Lhasa in a vehicle. [We] fled in a vehicle. First we fled to Arik in Tsongon. It is called Arik in Tsongon. It is Tsongon. Then we travelled in a vehicle to Siling and from Siling to Lhasa.

Q: What happened when you got to Lhasa?

#62D: Nothing happened in Lhasa when [we] reached there. In order to survive we went to the villages selling snuff and incense. That is how [we] visited the villages and received *tsampa* for survival.

Q: By doing petty trade?

#62D: Yes, [I] did some trade. [I] had nothing, nothing at all.

Q: How long did you stay in Lhasa before, like...? Do you know approximately what year was that you went to Lhasa and how long did you stay?

01:24:23

#62D: Perhaps it was 1958. [I] reached there in 1958.

Q: How long did you stay in Lhasa?

#62D: [I] stayed a year in Lhasa.

Q: And then why did you leave?

#62D: I left Lhasa to join the army that was in Lhoka. [I] joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force].

Q: [You] joined the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

#62D: Yes, [I] did.

Q: So you became a soldier again.

#62D: Yes, [I] did.

Q: Did you stay with the *Chushi Gangdrug*, like how long?

#62D: What?

Q: How long did you stay with the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

01:25:28

#62D: [I] could not stay long with the *Chushi Gangdrug*. Lhasa was lost then. [I] joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* after Lhasa was lost. We joined the *Chushi Gangdrug*.

Q: [You] didn't stay for long.

#62D: [I] did not stay for long. Lhasa, and then Lhoka was lost.

Q: I think we're going to wrap up. Are there any other... We're going to begin to end our interview. Are there any subjects or things that you want to mention before we close?

#62D: I have nothing left. There is nothing left. We can conclude.

Q: Could you tell us what do you think that... what do you think we should try to tell the next generation of Chinese people about Tibet? What do you think we should communicate to them?

#62D: I would not know what to say. We will definitely be cordial with the Chinese people. The Chinese have faced problems just as we have. We have the same wish. Except for a few people, the Chinese have faced problems and similarly, the Tibetans faced problems. Should a change come about, it would be excellent for both the Chinese and the Tibetans. It is just a few people that control China and not the people of China.

Q: What do you...?

01:28:10

#62D: [Interrupts] China is controlled by nine people. There are nine people of the Communist Party that are in control. Now the number has reduced because one or two has left for the United States.

Q: What do you think should be preserved about Tibet by the next generation of Tibetans? What do you think is important that they preserve?

#62D: One can see the new generation these days. It can be seen that they are immolating themselves. The main point is that the people must adopt the Middle Way, even the youngsters. They are immolating themselves in order to pursue the Middle Way. Is that not so? Otherwise, how can anyone immolate himself? How much pain would I feel if [I] set myself on fire. They are immolating themselves for the Middle Way and for the cause of the country.

01:29:59

Q: And what, what do you think would have... Did I ask what would have to be preserved?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah, that's his answer.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Okay, that was his answer. Okay. I think that would be a good...

Q: What do you hope will happen to Tibet in the end? What do you hope? What is your wish for Tibet?

#62D: My wish is that His Holiness the Dalai Lama be escorted to Tibet. That is the main point. His Holiness must go to Tibet and the people must adopt the Middle Way. That is it.

Q: The Middle Way?

#62D: Yes, adopt the Middle Way.

Q: Yes?

#62D: Adopt the Middle Way.

Q: The Middle Way?

#62D: Yes, pursue the Middle Way.

Q: Accept the Middle Way. The people of Tibet or the people of China?

#62D: The Tibetan people already accept the Middle Way.

Q: Should the Chinese...?

01:31:18

#62D: The Chinese will also accept [it] while the Tibetans already do so. However, it is possible that from a hundred there are one or two that like the Communists. It is possible though the people will pursue the Middle Way. There could be one or two that prefer Communism.

Q: [You] mean among the Tibetans?

#62D: It is possible there are some among the Tibetans.

Q: How would you if somebody asks the question, the Middle Way, how would you describe what the Middle Way is?

#62D: The Middle Way is what we would describe as democracy. The Middle Way is democracy and there is nothing different about the Middle Way. It is not something different. Democracy is pursuing the Middle Way. Middle Way and democracy are the same.

Q: So thank you very much for this interview, but before you go, I want to ask you again. If this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you, if it was shown in Tibet, China or anywhere else around the world?

01:33:22

#62D: There will be no problems. What problems would there be?

Q: Can we use your real name for this project or you want us to use a pseudonym?

#62D: There is no reason to change my name.

Q: Well, thank you for sharing...

01:33:46

#62D: If [you] want to change the name, do it. There is no difference. If [you] want to change the name, do it. That will make no difference. You decide.

Q: No, we want to use your real name. Is that okay?

#62D: Yes, that is okay.

Q: Well, we want to thank you for your interview. We appreciate learning about Tibet from your eyes.

#62D: [Nods]

Q: And we would now like to...that's it. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW