

Tibet Oral History Project

**Interview #26D – Tading Choekyi Aduk
May 16, 2012**

The Tibet Oral History Project serves as a repository for the memories, testimonies and opinions of elderly Tibetan refugees. The oral history process records the words spoken by interviewees in response to questions from an interviewer. The interviewees' statements should not be considered verified or complete accounts of events and the Tibet Oral History Project expressly disclaims any liability for the inaccuracy of any information provided by the interviewees. The interviewees' statements do not necessarily represent the views of the Tibet Oral History Project or any of its officers, contractors or volunteers.

This translation and transcript is provided for individual research purposes only. For all other uses, including publication, reproduction and quotation beyond fair use, permission must be obtained in writing from: Tibet Oral History Project, P.O. Box 6464, Moraga, CA 94570-6464, United States.

Copyright © 2014 Tibet Oral History Project.



TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

www.TibetOralHistory.org

INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #26D
2. Interviewee: Tading Choekyi Aduk
3. Age: 73
4. Date of Birth: 1941
5. Sex: Female
6. Birthplace: Lithang
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1957
9. Date of Interview: May 16, 2012
10. Place of Interview: Hotel Tibet, Mcleod Ganj, Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 18 min
12. Interviewer: Rebecca Novick
13. Interpreter: Thupten Kelsang Dakpa
14. Videographer: Ronny Novick
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Tading Choekyi Aduk remembers her early childhood in the Kham Province where she played different games with her friends and was instructed by her parents to not fight with others. She moved to Lhasa at the age of 9 and describes the 3-month journey on horseback. She is among the lucky few who had the opportunity to go to school. Her school called Narangsha had about 100 students. She explains the daily routine and subjects taught, specifically about learning to write the Tibetan alphabet on a *jangshing* ‘wooden slate’ and later practicing on paper.

Tading Choekyi Aduk gives her impression of the Chinese, whom she disliked from the beginning. She recounts celebrating a “Children’s Day” organized by the Chinese where the Tibetan and Chinese schools met together and received treats, but then the Chinese privately asked the Tibetan students what their families said about the Chinese.

Tading Choekyi Aduk was taken by relatives on a pilgrimage to India for the 2500th anniversary of Lord Buddha’s death in 1957 and she never returned to Tibet. Her granduncle was Gonpo Tashi Andrugtsang, founder of the *Chushi Gangdrug* Defend Tibet Volunteer Force, whom she met once in Darjeeling. She believes he planned her trip to India knowing that his family’s safety would be jeopardized by his resistance against the Chinese. In the early 1960s Tading Choekyi Aduk father was arrested while living in Kham and died in prison from starvation.

Topics Discussed:

Kham, childhood memories, education, first appearance of Chinese, oppression under Chinese, pilgrimage, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas, life as a refugee in India.

TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

www.TibetOralHistory.org

Interview #26D

Interviewee: Tading Choekyi Aduk

Age: 73, Sex: Female

Interviewer: Rebecca Novick

Interview Date: May 16, 2012

Question: Could you please tell us your name?

00:00:13

Interviewee #26D: Tading Choekyi.

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 people around the world.

#26D: [Nods]

Q: Your memories are going to help us to document the true history, culture and beliefs of the Tibetan people.

#26D: [Nods]

Q: Do you give permission for the Tibet Oral History Project to use this interview?

#26D: Recording?

Q: Yes. Recording this interview.

#26D: Recording this interview?

Q: Yes.

#26D: Yes, of course, because it is for the cause of the Tibetans.

[Interpreter to interviewee]: Please look at me when you speak. It will be better on the film.

#26D: Okay, [I] am to look at you.

Q: During the interview if you want to take a break at any time, just let us know, okay?

00:01:37

#26D: Okay.

Q: If there's any question you'd rather not answer, that's fine.

#26D: Okay.

[Discontinuity in video]

Q: Okay. Could you please start by describing some of your earliest memories as a child growing up in Lithang?

#26D: As a child in Tibet, except for memories of playing, there was nothing much to think about then.

Q: Could you give a little description about it?

#26D: There were many children and [I] used to play with them. There were different types of games, different types of Tibetan games like hacky sack, skipping and such that [I] used to play as a little one.

Q: What was it like growing up in your family?

00:02:57

#26D: When I was growing up in [my] family...my parents were with [me]. Mother was a little assertive but father was very loving; he never spoke a bad word. [He] was very loving and I loved father more. Mother used to scold when [I] was naughty.

Q: Were your parents very religious?

#26D: [They] were religious. [They] were religious. They were both very religious. Our family was great believers in the dharma.

Q: What kind of religious activities did you see in the home as a child growing up?

#26D: Prayers were performed [by monks]. One day when I was little, many monks from a monastery were invited home. [The monks] prepared numerous *tso* 'ritual offerings' and recited prayers. After the prayers got over, the *tso* were distributed to all the neighbors. As a child, [I] loved eating *tso* because there were sweets and other things in the *tso*. Such a prayer was conducted.

Q: What kind of values did you feel you learned from your parents, spiritual values?

#26D: [They] would tell us not to commit sin. [They] would tell us not to kill insects because that was a sin. "Do not commit sin. Do not fight with others or be aggressive." [They] would give such advice on religion. Other than that [I] cannot recall much about my childhood..."Do not fight with other children. Be in harmony." Such was the advice given.

Q: Did you go to school?

00:06:26

#26D: I have not been to school in Kham since I was small then. Later [I] came to Lhasa at the age of 9. We owned a home in Lhasa called Andrugtsang. I was 9 or 10 years old and was sent to school in Lhasa. When [I] came from Kham, there were no vehicles then. One had to ride horses and mules. It took three months from Kham to Lhasa. It was wintertime and the coldest season. [I] came on horses and mules. [I] was sent to school in Lhasa.

Q: Can you describe that journey a little bit, the three-month journey? It sounds very difficult.

#26D: The journey was during wintertime and the weather very cold. Sometimes when the sun shone bright, [we] rested for half a day where there was good grass and water available. That was for the horses and mules to eat grass and the people to rest, as they were also tired. [We] stopped by the way side. Except for the cold weather that posed a problem, I found it enjoyable to come riding horses and mules.

Q: Can you describe your house in Lhasa, your new house? Where was it in relationship to the Potala, perhaps you can say and what kind of house was it?

#26D: [The house] was not located close to the Potala [Palace]. Perhaps there was a distance of 2-3 kilometers between home and...

Q: Was it in the south or where?

00:09:12

#26D: [I] do not know whether it was towards the south or north.

Q: Can [you] describe the home? What was it like?

#26D: The home was three stories and there was a yard. It was a big home. We were engaged in business in Lhasa, in India, Chamdo and Dhartsedo. [The family] carried out business. I was sent to school.

Q: Can you tell me the kind of school you went to?

#26D: The name of the school was Nangsha. Nangsha School.

Q: Nangsha?

#26D: [It was also] called Narangsha.

Q: Narangsha?

#26D: Yes. The superior teacher of the school was a great doctor. At the time I joined school, the teacher told me that it was around 40 years since the school was established. The teacher was a doctor, a very accomplished Tibetan doctor. [I] have forgotten his name.

Q: How many children were there?

#26D: Perhaps there were around a hundred.

Q: Hundred?

00:11:10

#26D: Yes, perhaps over a hundred. There were children of traders, humble families and aristocrats. The school consisted of all.

Q: We don't know much about the education system in pre-1959 Tibet. Could you like describe like a typical day at school for you, from the morning what you did until you left?

#26D: [We] had to go early in the morning, perhaps around dawn. [I] went to school early in the morning and there was a prayer assembly. There was a prayer assembly and [we] chanted the *arabaza* and other [prayers]. The prayer assembly attended by the whole school lasted for over an hour. After the prayer assembly got over, we went home for breakfast. [Laughs]

I had to take a detour of the Bakor 'Central Square' of Lhasa to reach home. [I] wonder how many kilometers it was...perhaps one and half [kilometers] to my home. I am not able to tell [you] exactly. After eating a breakfast of *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley,' one returned to school. We studied whatever lessons we had to until lunchtime. Then it was lunchtime and one went home for lunch. Perhaps the lunch break was an hour and then [we] came back to school until it got over around 4 or 5 o'clock in the evening.

Q: What were the lessons like?

00:13:33

#26D: When I first went to school, there was the *jangshing*, the wooden [slate]. Something like white powder was strewn over the *jangshing* and lines drawn on it for the alphabet. A person held my hand from behind and wrote [the character] *lawo*, holding my hand and writing with it. That was the very beginning, the basic. You were made to practice writing it for two or three days.

After that was done, you wrote [the characters] using ink. Once you became experienced with that, then you wrote the alphabet on the *jangshing* [holds imaginary slate on lap] by looking at the copybook. Once you finished copying the 30 characters of the alphabet, you showed it to the teacher. The teacher would check the work and write corrections next to the mistakes. Then I must copy and write it down.

First the characters were this big [gestures off camera] and when you became experienced, it was reduced a little. Once you mastered it, the size reduced gradually. Once you mastered writing on the *jangshing*, then you started writing on paper.

00:17:31

After learning [to write] the alphabet on the *jangshing*, [we] graduated to the vowels and others and continued to reduce the size [of the characters]. Once you mastered writing on *jangshing*, you started on paper. One must hold the paper in hand and write. We did not have desks and sat cross-legged and wrote like this [gestures off camera].

Q: Did [you] hold the paper in hand and write?

#26D: [We] held the paper in hand.

Q: Weren't there wooden boards?

#26D: There were no wooden boards. The paper was Tibetan paper, which was strong and it was done this way [folds a paper napkin three or four times lengthwise]. We made lines on it like this [slides folded napkin with slight pressure over knee] and see here is the line [points to line formed on napkin]. Then [dipping]—we had pens made from bamboo—in black ink we wrote [holds imaginary pen between thumb and index finger]. There were no wooden boards or anything.

Q: After you learned writing and reading, did you study any other subjects?

00:19:30

#26D: The other subject we studied was calculation, Tibetan calculation.

Q: Tibetan calculation? Mathematics?

#26D: Mathematics. There was mathematics to study. I did not get time to study mathematics. Most of the time was spent on learning writing on *jangshing*.

Q: How many years did it take to learn writing on *jangshing*?

#26D: Learning to write on *jangshing* would have taken around a year, starting with big characters and gradually reducing the size. And then one had to start on paper.

Q: How many years to write on paper?

#26D: It might have taken two or three years, most probably three years of writing on paper.

Q: Three?

#26D: Yes. Here you have division, subtraction and such in mathematics. This was also present in the Tibetan mathematics. I did not get time to study that, as I went on a

pilgrimage to India. [I] went to school for around four years. We have this thing [used to calculate] in Tibet, wooden pieces and such with 10, 15, 5, 1, 2, 3.

Q: Isn't it the Chinese one?

00:20:56

#26D: It is not the abacus. The Chinese one is the abacus. Tibetans have pieces of wood of this length [makes a gap of an inch or so between right thumb and forefinger] and cups with numbers on them like 10, 20 and then there was subtraction and such. I did not get time to learn that. There was a complete mathematics lesson to study.

Q: So after your pilgrimage you didn't go back to school?

#26D: [I] could not go back [to Tibet] because my paternal uncle, Andrugtsang Gonpo Tashi-la, who was a freedom fighter leader...They had made preparations earlier though we being children were not aware of it. We were never told of it. We went on pilgrimage during the 2,500th anniversary of Lord Buddha when India invited His Holiness the Dalai Lama. [I] was taken on pilgrimage then. [We] could not go back after the pilgrimage because there, my paternal uncle Gonpo Tashi-la and likewise people from the three provinces were holding secret meetings and making preparations to revolt against the Chinese. So, we could not return and then remained in India.

Q: This was in 1959?

#26D: It was 1957.

Q: So you were 17?

#26D: Maybe. Maybe 17. 15, 17.

Q: What was your understanding at that time at the age of 17 before you came out of Tibet? What was your understanding about the rest of the world? What did you know about other countries and the history of what's happened in the rest of the world outside of Tibet?

00:23:31

#26D: We did not know much about the world then. [I] had heard about America. As a child [I] heard that America was very far away. [I] heard that if one went to America as a child, he/she would reach there only as an elderly person. When we were children we did not know about technology. [I] did not know about the world then.

Q: Had you heard of the Second World War?

#26D: [Shakes head to indicate "no"] World War II, no.

Q: Had you heard of Adolf Hitler?

#26D: [Speaks before question is interpreted] [I] heard in India. [I] never heard [of the Second World War] in Tibet, only after coming to India.

Q: You heard when you came to India.

#26D: Yes.

Q: When you were in Tibet you really didn't know anything, really?

#26D: Nothing about wars. Tibet was peaceful. We were a peaceful nation and did not bother much about what other countries of the world were doing.

Q: Can you describe what Lhasa was like because you came to Lhasa in 1951, yes? So you were 10 years old. Can you describe what Lhasa was like in those days?

00:25:20

#26D: At that time Lhasa was your country, joyful, peaceful and carefree wherever you went. Everybody you met were...what should [I] say...happy and everyone content. [It] was a peaceful country. You need have no fear wherever you went. You felt that you had arrived at a blissful place. I felt like that. Then there was the Tsuglakhang 'Central Cathedral' and other sacred places of pilgrimage. It was extremely nice.

Q: Were you excited to move because there's a big difference from Lithang? Did you like your new place and your new set up?

#26D: One felt happy in Lhasa. Lithang was not a city; it was like a village. We were farmers and nomads with lands of our own. When [I] reached there [Lhasa], [I] had to immediately attend school. Lhasa was a totally different place. I liked Lhasa as a child. I felt incredibly happy there.

Q: Did you have problems communicating because of the difference in language?

#26D: When I attended school, most of the children in school were from Lhasa and I was from Kham and when I spoke in the Kham dialect, the Lhasa children teased me. [Laughs] [They] teased. I used to be very shy then, felt very embarrassed.

Q: What kind of things did they say to you? Do you remember?

00:28:24

#26D: They would say that they could not understand the Kham dialect. I spoke in Kham dialect and the Kham dialect is a little different. So they teased [me].

Q: Yeah, kids can be very mean.

#26D: Yes. There was no other problem. Then in one, two or three months, my accent changed to the Lhasa one.

Q: Can you describe any big public events that you attended in Lhasa in those days?

#26D: Public what?

Q: Like gathering of the people in Lhasa? Monlam?

#26D: [Shakes head]

Q: No?

#26D: Like people's meetings?

Q: Like meetings.

#26D: There might be but I do not know.

Q: Do you ever remember seeing His Holiness the Dalai Lama?

00:29:45

#26D: His Holiness the Dalai Lama attended the Monlam 'prayer Festival.' He would arrive in a palanquin and people lined the sides [of the roads]. He would look through the glass pane like this [peeps] and [I] caught a glimpse. Besides that [I] had not seen [His Holiness]. There would be a great rush of people then.

Q: When did you first notice the...When you first came to Lhasa, were there Chinese people already in Lhasa?

#26D: When I first arrived in Lhasa, the Chinese...When we were on our journey from the village, we saw campfires and numerous [empty] cans that [I] was told was left behind by the Chinese, but [I] did not see [them] then. When we arrived in Lhasa...Which year was it? [I] wonder which year it was when [I] was around 9...The Chinese appeared later in Lhasa, saying that they had come to liberate or some such thing. There were portraits of Mao Zedong and...was it Stalin?

Q: Stalin.

#26D: Their portraits were mounted on a big jeep. It was below the Potala or elsewhere—I cannot recall much—they came beating on something, blowing trumpets and making a lot of noise. However, most of the people did not like it when the Chinese first appeared.

00:32:01

[I] wonder which year [the Chinese] arrived in Tibet, their arrival in Lhasa. It must be somewhere in the '50's. [I] do not know.

Q: Did you see them coming? Did you see the army?

#26D: [I] cannot recollect much about the soldiers.

Q: What was your experience from that time, before you left in 1959? How did the life of your family change or did it change at all because of the Chinese presence in Tibet?

#26D: When the Chinese arrived, they were thought of as having come to make the Tibetans suffer and [people] felt fear. [My] family did not consider [them] as helping the Tibetans but causing suffering to the Tibetans. Whether [the Chinese] spoke sweetly or not initially, [they] were thought of as cause of suffering. Our family never thought that the Chinese were helpful to the Tibetans. That was because we heard many stories that in Kham, far away in Dhartsedho, the Chinese had captured numerous influential people, lamas and *geshe* ‘monks with a Buddhist philosophy degree’ and subjected [them] to *thamzing* ‘struggle sessions,’ killed, arrested or imprisoned [them]. As a child [I] heard many such stories that the elders spoke of.

00:34:04

Therefore, on seeing a Chinese [I] never thought of [them] as being good to us even then. [I] had heard the stories earlier. At that time there were no such things happening in Lhasa but it occurred on a large scale in Kham. The Chinese captured numerous monks, monasteries and abbots; some were subjected to *thamzing*, imprisoned or killed. [I] had heard many such stories and [I] never believed the Chinese were anything but enemies. I never liked the Chinese even when I was attending school in Lhasa; [I] have no idea why. It was my nature. The Chinese troops, the police marched in the Bakor.

Q: Did they move on motorcycles?

#26D: No, they marched with a loud noise. They had something red tied here [indicates left arm below shoulder]. [They] marched like that.

Q: Did you have any personal interaction yourself with Chinese?

#26D: When we went to school, the Chinese celebrated a “Children’s Day.” [Speaks in English] Chinese school and Tibetan school together. They were giving so many sweets, biscuits, you know. Then they take...Chinese army or people take two or three children, take to the corner and ask, “[Does] your family [say] Chinese good or bad?” They asked to me, “What your family said?” I did not say anything.

Q: They’re asking what your family is saying about the Chinese?

#26D: [Nods]

[Interpreter to interviewee]: *Ama-la* ‘respectful term for mother,’ can you answer in Tibetan?

00:36:23

#26D: Sorry. There was the Children’s Day and all the children were assembled at the Seshing Lapta, a Chinese school. The children of this school and the Tibetan school gathered together. [We] were given a lot of candies and cookies. A few Chinese would take [the children] to the corners and ask, “What do your family members say about

Communist China? Do [they] say it is good or bad? What do your parents say?" I never gave an answer. [I] never liked them and thought that [they] were deceiving [us] by giving treats. [I] never liked them because of the suffering [they] had caused in the Kham regions. [They] asked such questions.

Q: Did you have any Chinese friends?

#26D: No, none. I never liked the Chinese; [I] do not know why. [I] never liked them even when [I] lived in Lhasa because [they] had already caused a lot of suffering in Kham. So whether they smiled or not here [Lhasa], they were the same people. [Their] government's policy was the same. [I] did not like [them], come what may.

Q: So what were your parents telling you about the Chinese?

#26D: My parents were in Kham. [I] think it was '62 that the Chinese suddenly appeared one night and took away father. [I] think it was around '60, '61 or '62.

Q: The year was 196...?

00:38:46

#26D: Yes, it was in the 1960's. The Chinese came home in the night and knocked on the door. They entered and right away arrested father and took [him] away without giving any reason whatsoever. My mother had many children and was too scared to ask where [they] were taking [him] and what [he] had done. There was nothing to be heard even a month later and [she] did not know where [father] was taken.

Much later, a few years later...[Nobody] dare seek [father]'s whereabouts because that would result in a great deal of beatings. Much later, there was a place called Minyak, Minyak Rangagang, where there was a large prison. There was a large prison in Minyak Rangagang. My father had been taken there. Much later there were a few prisoners that returned. [They] said that most of the people died of starvation. There was no food and the Chinese subjected them to hard labor. My father had passed away there for want of food. All the people were made to construct roads and there was not much to eat. Most of the people, really, except for one or two, everyone died there.

Q: Around how many died?

#26D: [I] think there might have been 80-90 prisoners. Except for one or two, everyone died. My father's whereabouts could not be traced, and the Chinese would chide for doing so [seeking information]. There was nobody to make inquiries.

We had a huge home in the village. Everyone was driven out of the home and the belongings confiscated. [Mother and siblings] were driven into the cowshed.

Q: Were they told to take [the things] away?

00:40:45

#26D: No. The Chinese confiscated all the possession in my parents' home and giving them [mother and siblings] a few utensils and such were chased out of the home and housed in the cowshed. They suffered a lot. My mother had many children and [she] suffered a great deal.

Q: *Ama-la* [interviewee] was in Lhasa then?

[Interviewee misunderstands question as her *ama-la*, her mother]

#26D: No, [she] was in Kham.

Q: Had [you] arrived in Kham?

#26D: [She] was living in Kham. My mother was living in Kham and she passed away at a young age due to misery. [She] could not trace my father, there were many children and the Chinese chased [them] out of the home. [She] underwent great difficulties and [I] think mother passed away in [her] 40's. This happened not only to my family but the Chinese caused such suffering to [all people] of the three provinces of Tibet.

Q: When did [your] mother pass away, in 1962 or '63?

00:43:49

#26D: I do not know when mother passed away because I came to know of it only after arriving in India. There was no contact between Tibet and India then.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So this is happening while she was in India, this is all happening because she went to India in 1957, right? Okay.

Q: The decision to go on pilgrimage, whose idea was that?

#26D: My maternal uncle was there.

Q: Your maternal uncle's name?

#26D: My maternal uncle's name was Lodoe Phuntsok. [He] has passed away. [He] was my mother's brother.

Q: Andrug Gonpo Tashi, he was uncle on your mother's side or your father's side?

#26D: My grandfather and Gonpo Tashi were brothers.

Q: So granduncle. Did you ever meet him?

00:54:18

#26D: Yes, [we] met in India.

Q: Where in India?

#26D: In Darjeeling [West Bengal].

Q: When was that?

#26D: [I] wonder when it was. [I] cannot remember dates much.

Q: That's okay. What happened at that meeting?

#26D: He had been to fight earlier and was injured. There was a bullet lodged somewhere and Gonpo Tashi-la was operated upon in England. After the surgery, he returned and passed away in Darjeeling. At that time I was in Simla [Himachal Pradesh]. A letter mentioning that Gonpo Tashi-la was ill was sent to me, but the carrier of the letter did not come directly and had taken 15-20 days. When [I] received it, I requested for leave from my employer to go to meet my relative but was refused.

It took several days and then it was in the newspapers that Gonpo Tashi-la had passed away. There was an elderly English lady. They [non-Tibetans] do not have such considerations and [she] immediately brought the newspaper to me and asked, "Is this your uncle?" "Yes," I replied. "He has passed away," [she said]. So I did not meet [him] at the time of his passing away.

Q: [You] haven't met him at all?

00:46:47

#26D: [I] had met him once earlier.

Q: How was the meeting?

#26D: He was very busy. There was a lot of work like sending people into Tibet in secret and such. [He] did not tell us much because we were children and if the secrets leaked...

Q: How did your conversation...

#26D: Yes?

Q: What did you and Gonpo Tashi speak about?

#26D: I was sent to Simla then by the Tibetan Education Department, to the crèche [nursery] at Simla. Save the Children Fund had a crèche there. I was sent there by the Education Department and I worked there for a long time. It was my paternal uncle that sent me there through the Education Department.

[I] worked there for a few years with Tibetan children. TCV's [Tibetan Children's Village] condition was not like what it is now. It was the 1960s and the conditions were very poor. All the children that were sick, weak and afflicted with tuberculosis would be sent there [Simla Crèche] from here [TCV, Dharamsala]. There were less children, good health and

medical treatment there under the organization. I worked there for around three years with children.

Q: Where was the bullet lodged [in Andrug Gonpo Tashi]?

#26D: He had a surgery and there is a book by him, which cannot be found these days. It was said that a bullet was found lodged somewhere.

A bullet had hit him here [points to left side of neck near chin] and emerged here [points to right neck near chin] but nothing happened [to him]. The scar was there. Then [I] heard [he] was hit by a cannon and a part of his calf was cut away. There was a cavity there and it healed after medical treatment. Here [points to neck] the bullet passed straight out. [He] showed me these.

00:50:34

[I] did not get to meet [him before he passed away]. I was just crying; there was nothing to do.

Q: Yeah, you couldn't do anything. Yeah, of course not. Do you think that your uncle, Lodoe Phuntsok, arranged this pilgrimage to get you to safety because of the activities of your granduncle put your family in danger? Do you think your uncle, Lodoe Phuntsok, was taking you actually out of danger?

#26D: I think that in general we would have never been on a pilgrimage and it was a special occasion. Therefore, [I] think his [Gonpo Tashi] sending us [to India] was after having pondered over it, because he was going to confront the Chinese and had all our family members been living there, the Chinese would have skinned us all. In retrospect [I] feel that in a way it was to save us that he sent [us]. I feel that way. It would have been critical had [we] lost him, our wealth and all the people [family members].

Had we children been living there...The reason for my father's capture was because [the Chinese] said that we were members of the reactionary Andrugtsang Gonpo Tashi. That was the reason for my father's capture. [He] was accused of being a rebel and arrested. Therefore, had we been there, none of us would have been left by the Chinese. [We] would have been imprisoned, subjected to *thamzing* and much suffering. Hence, I think perhaps he thought of that and send us on the pilgrimage. Along with the chance of a pilgrimage, it saved our lives. In retrospect I think it was that.

Q: Who came out with you, your uncle, Lodoe Phuntsok, and yourself and your sister?

00:53:27

#26D: [Speaks in English] Brother. No sister. I have three or four sisters. They are all in Kham.

[Interpreter to interviewee]: In Tibetan...

[Interviewee to interpreter]: Oh, sorry. Yes, in Tibetan.

#26D: Yes. [They] are in Kham. There are four sisters and a brother in Kham. Here I have an older brother.

Q: An older brother?

#26D: Yes, an older brother from the same set of parents.

Q: So who came with...

#26D: There were maternal uncle, a sibling and an elderly man who was distantly related to us. We embarked on the pilgrimage.

Q: Four people?

#26D: Yes.

Q: A very small group, actually. Can you tell us about your preparations for that journey?

00:54:33

#26D: From Lhasa...?

Q: How did you prepare for your journey from Lhasa to India?

#26D: I was at school then. While at school, my uncle sent someone to seek permission for [me] to leave. [I] was not aware of where [I] would be taken after availing leave. [I] think perhaps [they] did not want it known. Leave was sought for me and [I] asked where [I] was going and was told, "To India on pilgrimage." Straight away I went to offer butter lamps to the Tsuglakhang, Ramoche and other [sacred] places with a servant carrying liquid butter. A Chinese vehicle had been hired. A Chinese vehicle had been hired to take [us] until Shasima.

Q: Until where?

#26D: Shasima. It is [also] called Yardhong or some such thing.

Q: Yardhong?

#26D: Yardhong or some such thing. It is called Shasima, close to Dromo. We came in a big vehicle then. [We] faced a lot of problem during the journey. The Chinese [driver] did not take us to Shasima though [he] had already received payment for it; there were many Tibetans. [The driver] stopped the vehicle at a place called Khangmar in Tsang region saying that the vehicle could not go further in the snow.

We travelers were stranded there for a number of days. We said, "[You] must go. Indian vehicles are arriving in the snow with chains, so why can your vehicle not go?" Some Tibetans argued with the driver of the vehicle. They spit or did some such thing and [I]

think that is considered bad [by the Chinese]. He flatly refused to budge. He did not even return the vehicle hire charges and left us stranded.

00:56:22

Then in the [place] called Dromo there were families that hired horses and mules to transport people and stuff. We were able to hire one to continue the journey. The Chinese vehicle should have dropped us at Shasima but did not. Then we travelled on horses and mules to Dhuena where there was a huge open ground. The weather was very cold, incredibly cold. There was heavy snowfall.

Having come walking, [I] was cold and wore a knitted cap. The breath from here [indicates mouth] froze here [indicates below mouth]. I thought [I] would freeze to death. [I] felt so very cold. Then we struggled on and reached Shasima; [we] reached Dromo. The horse transporter family was a big family and it was the father [of the family] that drove the animals. [We] were in Shasima and reached India through Gangtok [Sikkim]. So, in that way the Chinese did not take all the Tibetans half the way.

00:59:34

It was extremely cold. The wind blew *wrrr...* and the snow fell *srrr...* [indicates snowflakes falling on face].

Q: Where was this? Was it the Changthang 'Northern Plateau'?

#26D: Dhuena. It was called Dhuena. It is said to be a cold [place].

Q: Where's Dhuena located?

#26D: It is somewhere close to Tsang. After passing through Khangmar, you reached Dhuena. I am not very familiar [with the region]. And when we reached Dromo, it was similar to India; it was a bit warm with green foliage. The weather was warm and [we] spent a night there. And then [we] arrived through Gangtok.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So she came through Sikkim?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Um.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: That's where they crossed. So we've established that she came through the Sikkim border, Tibet-Sikkim border. I think that border must have been closed. I want to check when that border became impossible because not many people came through that border. But this was '57; this was before it really got hot.

Q: What do you remember taking with you? Do you remember taking anything with you personally?

01:01:13

#26D: [Shakes head] I did not bring anything.

Q: Did [you] bring any special personal items?

#26D: [I] did not bring any.

Q: Nothing?

#26D: I was wearing a necklace of coral and *dzi* ‘special beads made of agate stone.’ [I] did not bring anything else.

Q: And that’s it.

#26D: The other things were transported on the horses and mules.

Q: What happened when you reached the border and you met the Indian authorities? What happened there?

#26D: The Indian Government [authorities] did not put any special restrictions.

Q: [They] didn’t do anything [to you] in Sikkim?

#26D: [They] did not do anything.

Q: No questioning...?

01:02:01

#26D: It was common for numerous horses and mules to pass through [at this border] on trade between Tibet and India. There were no problems.

Q: Just came through easily. What happened next?

#26D: We lived in Kalimpong [West Bengal] after reaching India. There were [my] paternal uncle, maternal uncle, older brother and the elderly man that was a relative. We sort of settled in Kalimpong. It is close to Darjeeling [West Bengal]. My uncle Gonpo Tashi-*la* had a lot of responsibilities. [He] was sending men secretly into Tibet.

Q: Were you then together with Gonpo Tashi...?

#26D: Gonpo Tashi-*la* was not with [us] then. He was in Tibet when we left. That was the time when the attacks were going on with the Chinese far away [in Tibet].

Q: I see.

#26D: [Gonpo Tashi-*la*] arrived much later. He arrived through the [place] called Missamari [Assam] after having escorted His Holiness the Dalai Lama to India.

Q: Through Assam?

#26D: Yes.

Q: And the pilgrimage? You did go on the pilgrimage?

#26D: Yes?

Q: [You] did go on the pilgrimage?

01:04:01

#26D: [We] did. [We] went on pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya [Bihar], Varanasi [Uttar Pradesh], Kushinagar [Uttar Pradesh] and Lumbini [Nepal]. [We] visited the four great pilgrim centers.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about that? Can you tell us what that was like?

#26D: Since it was the 2500th Anniversary of the Buddha's passing away, the Indian Government had halved the price of rail fares. We proceeded on the pilgrimage and prayed. The pilgrim sites were sacred and each of us prayed. [We] had not much knowledge of what had happened to [our] parents then. [I] prayed that the parents should not suffer from illnesses and that we would have the chance to meet soon. [I] prayed like that at all the pilgrim centers.

Q: At what point was it explained to you that you really could not go back to Tibet?

#26D: Everybody was hoping to go back to Tibet soon. I never heard [anyone saying] that [we] will not get the chance to go to Tibet. Everybody hoped that we would get to go back to Tibet in a few years.

Q: When you met Gonpo Tashi, was it just one time you met him or was it more than one time?

01:06:27

#26D: [I] have met [him] only once.

Q: Do you remember anything he said to you?

#26D: [I] cannot remember much.

Q: Really, nothing at all? Okay. What was your impression of India?

#26D: Unlike Tibet, India is one where you can see and hear greatly about the world. You hear about various issues. It is not a secluded country. You get to hear various issues. For instance, these days [we] instantly hear about whatever is happening in Tibet. [I can say] from experience that you get to hear a lot here.

Q: You were getting lots of information about what was happening in Tibet?

#26D: We hear a lot of news on television, Voice of America and Radio Free Asia in Tibetan language.

Q: When you hear about the activities of your great uncle, Gonpo Tashi, were you amazed to learn what he was doing?

01:08:16

#26D: Yes, [I] was amazed. [I] think it was great that [he] was able to escape with his life. There was such [a huge number of] Chinese soldiers; we could not have matched the Chinese, whether in terms of weapons or strength of men. And to have escaped from the midst of this attack...[to interpreter] please say that I am really amazed.

Q: I'm thinking you must have felt very helpless though, because of what was happening to your family. It must have been a very difficult time for you.

#26D: Feeling sad... Well, it was the same for everybody in Tibet and not my family alone. In general, [I] feel sad that I never met my parents since a young age. However, it was not us alone for the Chinese caused similar suffering on everyone in the three provinces of Tibet. What happened to me has happened to other people. Having such thoughts lessened my sorrow. [Everybody] suffered the same misery. I feel that it is best to be courageous.

Q: How is your life these days? Are you quite happy?

#26D: [I] am happy. [I] chant prayers and listen well to the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Though I have no wide knowledge yet [I] have received many teachings from His Holiness about the way of thinking according to the Buddha dharma. So when you contemplate over the dharma, you get peace and happiness. I wanted to say something but have forgotten.

[My] biggest anxiety is not about my personal livelihood. [To interpreter] Please tell [the interviewer] that [my] biggest worry is over the situation in Tibet. Just recently a young 30-odd year old man immolated himself. I see this as a great loss for us. [I] am very worried about the situation in Tibet. There is a great emergency in Tibet and the Chinese are putting great restrictions. Please say that I am living with hope that as per His Holiness' considerations that our truth about Tibet will prevail one day. [My] biggest worry is about Tibet.

Q: What do you think about the self-immolations?

01:12:42

#26D: In general, they are not to be blamed because with the Chinese, there is no just way as per law; no way to proceed by speaking [the truth], no way to proceed by putting up a petition. When there is no other way left...monks in the monasteries are driven out. For instance, there are several thousand monks in Kirti [Monastery] but Chinese soldiers have been sent to the monks' residences. [The Chinese] cause a lot of suffering and with no voice, in desperation, and feeling hopeless and desperate and [believing that] if they sacrificed their lives, there will be attention and the world will become aware; the Chinese do not

budge at all and they [those that self-immolated] are desperate due to which, [I] believe they did it.

In general, if [we] look at the Chinese viewpoint, not just 30, even if a thousand of our people died, they will be happy and take no notice. Though it is incredibly great that they [those that self-immolated] did it for the love of the country, yet I feel a great loss that such young people have passed away. It is a loss even if we lose one person.

Q: I just wanted to ask you...I was a bit surprised that young Tibetans in exile are not taught about modern Tibetan history. They're not taught about the deeds of Gonpo Tashi and *Chushi Gangdrug*. They're not taught this in school. Does that concern you at all? Do you feel a little bit regret that young Tibetans are not learning about these events?

#26D: Perhaps there were no proper records. It is said that books are being published from the United States of America, which contain [stories] about Gonpo Tashi. I heard something about that. However, there are no special records in Tibetan...

Q: No, it's not about the stories [in the books]. She [the interviewer] says that the stories should be in textbooks.

#26D: I see.

Q: Why are [the stories] not there?

01:16:46

#26D: There must be some policy. There are many such, one after the other, there are many. There must be some reason for [the stories] not being there [in textbooks].

Q: Well, thank you so much. It's been so interesting to talk to you and I think we need to ask you one more time how you feel about what you said in the interview and if we can use it to put online.

[Interpreter interprets as: If this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would it create any problem for you?]

#26D: I think there will be no problems.

Q: Okay. Thank you so much. Thank you so much.

#26D: Please tell [the interviewer] that I could not relate my story in a nice and orderly way. It has not been put orderly. However, you can go through the useful and useless parts and discard the useless. If useful, please...

Q: Okay. Thank you so much. It was very helpful; definitely I learned a lot.

END OF INTERVIEW