

# **Tibet Oral History Project**

Interview #2U – Yama  
April 6, 2017

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# TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #2U
2. Interviewee: Yama
3. Age: 89
4. Date of Birth: 1928
5. Sex: Female
6. Birthplace: Rinchenling
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: April 6, 2017
10. Place of Interview: Lingsang Settlement, Manduwala, Uttarakhand, India
11. Length of Interview: 2 hr 03 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Tenzin Choenyi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

### **Biographical Information:**

Yama was born in Rinchenling, Kham Province in 1928. Her family lived as both farmers and nomads. They moved seasonally between a house in the village and a yak-hair tent in the mountains. There was always an enormous amount of work to do, including milking the animals, making butter and cheese, and caring for their large number of animals. Yama was an illegitimate child and her father stayed with his other family. She explains that Tibetan society did not view such open relationships as improper.

Yama visited the local monastery annually to watch *cham* 'religious dances performance by monks' and she describes the characters and events. She also provides an elaborate description of the clothing and jewelry worn by the people of her region when attending a wintertime spiritual practice at the monastery.

After the Chinese appeared and their demand to implement socialism was rejected, the King of Lingsang was imprisoned. Yama recounts how Yarling Wangyal, a minister to the king, freed him from prison and led the royal family and many of the people into exile. When they encountered the Chinese along the way, they were forced to flee so quickly that all their belongings were abandoned. Yama and many others helped to create a pathway for His Holiness the Dalai Lama to escape into India from Tsona.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Kham, childhood memories, nomadic life, farm life, customs/traditions, religious festivals, oppression under Chinese, resistance, Dalai Lama's escape, escape experiences.

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**Interview #2U**

**Interviewee: Yama**

**Age: 89, Sex: Female**

**Interviewer: Marcella Adamski**

**Interview Date: April 6, 2017**

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:10

**Interviewee #2U: Yama.**

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?

**#2U: Yes.**

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

**#2U: [Nods]**

Q: During this interview if you wish to take a break or stop at any time, please let me know.

**#2U: Okay.**

Q: If you do not wish to answer a question or talk about something, let me know.

**#2U: Okay.**

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

**#2U: There will be none.**

Q: Okay. We're honored to record...

**#2U: [Interrupts] [I] fled from the Chinese and reached Lhasa.**

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

00:02:17

**#2U: [Nods]**

Q: *Ama-la* ‘respectful term for mother,’ can you please tell me how old you are?

**#2U: 89 years.**

Q: Where were you...what village were you born in in Tibet?

**#2U: Rinchenling, Rinchenling in Kham.**

Q: It’s in Kham. What was the nearest temple in Kham?

**#2U: What? The location of the village?**

Q: The monastery, monastery.

**#2U: Monastery?**

Q: What’s the name of the monastery, the nearest monastery?

**#2U: The monastery’s called Ringu Gonpa. It belongs to Siti Rinpoche.**

Q: Isn’t it a Sakya Monastery? Last time you mentioned a Sakya Monastery.

**#2U: There is a Sakya Monastery. There is a large river flowing close by our [village]. If Rinchenling is here, the Sakya Monastery is here and the Ringu Monastery is here [gestures off camera]. Ringu monastery is in the front [points ahead] and Sakya Monastery there [points back].**

**The Ringu Monastery belongs to Siti Rinpoche. It is a Kagyu Monastery. The Sakya Gongma appoints the head lama of the Sakya Monastery for it is a branch of the main Sakya Monastery.**

Q: Did your parents attend the Sakya Monastery or the Gelugpa?

**#2U: Who? Mother and Father?**

Q: The parents.

00:04:18

**#2U: There were no *cham* ‘religious dance performances by monks’ performed at the Sakya Monastery. There were no *cham* and such but only prayer assemblies to see. There were not many monks for it was new. At the Ringu Monastery many *cham* with masks used to be performed and also the lion dance that went on for 2-3 days.**

Q: Did you...

**#2U: There were many *cham* performances. [Ringu Monastery] is a branch of the Siti Monastery of the Karmapa.**

Q: So as a little girl, can you tell us about going to the lion dances?

**#2U: And then ...**

Q: As a little girl, can you describe what the lion dances were like?

**#2U: When the lion dance began, children started to run away crying and the mothers held them. Then the monks pretended to catch the lions and the lions shook the monks. There would be many people watching and they got scared and cried.**

Q: *Ama-la*, what about the *cham* dances? What were they like?

00:06:25

**#2U: The *cham*? During the *cham* there were the lions that danced and drums that were beaten. There used to be huge drums. Many monks played the cymbals. Then the performers did the *cham* listening to the beat of the drums. The performers danced the *cham* listening to the beat of the drums. This was followed by the playing of brass horns and clarinets. The lamas had trained in that.**

Q: Did the children or the adults...were they ever told what the meaning of the *cham* dance was or the symbolism of the characters in the *cham* dance?

**#2U: Yes, the lamas made the introduction.**

Q: Yes?

**#2U: Eight lamas performed the eight manifestations of Guru Padmasambhava. In the center was [the lama] that played the role of Guru Padmasambhava wearing the guru hat. That is the eight manifestations of Guru Padmasambhava performed by eight lamas. Then there were the *pawo dheshi* 'four families of heroes' performed by four lamas holding *damaru* 'small hand-held drums used during religious rites.' The *pamo dhenga* 'five families of heroines' has five performers. The lamas made the introduction of the *pawo dheshi* and the *pamo dhenga*. *Pamo* means female deity while *pawo* means male deity. The lions prostrated. Then the Guru Padmasambhava performer appeared. He sat there wearing the big guru hat. Then the lions prostrated. Flutes were played and the lions danced and prostrated.**

00:09:19

**This was followed by two men in masks with beards. They told jokes and all the people laughed, *ha, ha*. That was because they told jokes. [These] were young lamas that wore masks with beards. They made fun of the people sitting there that laughed and clapped.**

Q: How often did they have the *cham* dances and the lion dances?

**#2U: That was on the...during summer the performances...[not discernible]. The *cham* is performed on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> day of autumn. On the 9<sup>th</sup> day performers danced without masks and on the 10<sup>th</sup> day masks were worn. People did not know which monk was performing.**

Q: *Ama-la*, is it on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of autumn?

**#2U: Yes, on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of autumn. Summer is too hot to perform. It took place in autumn.**

Q: Was there a performance in summer?

**#2U: There was no performance in summer because the monks were in summer retreat. All the ordained monks were in summer retreat. However, monks were not necessary for the lion dance because lay people learned to do it.**

Q: Was *cham* performed during autumn?

00:11:12

**#2U: Yes, *cham* was performed after the barley crops were harvested in autumn. There was the *cham* performance in the middle of autumn.**

Q: What was performed on the 9<sup>th</sup> day?

**#2U: On the 9<sup>th</sup> day performers did not wear masks, masks.**

Q: Wore masks?

**#2U: No, [the performers] did not and danced bare [points to face]. Then on the 10<sup>th</sup> day [they] wore masks and we would not know who was performing. The monks wore masks of Guru Senge Dadok, Guru Dorjee Dagleg and so on.**

Q: Was it fun to try to guess who was wearing the mask on the 10<sup>th</sup> day?

**#2U: Yes. “Who could that be who is so agile?” One would not know because of the masks. Then it was said, “Guru Senge Dadok is coming. Guru Dorjee Dagleg is coming.” and everybody bowed and prostrated, and prayed.**

Q: Who? The lions?

**#2U: No.**

Q: The people?

**#2U: The people. And then the lions came. First [the one in the role of] Guru Padmasambhava came and sat on a throne. Then appeared eight monks wearing hats of**

**Dorjee Dagleg, Senge Dadok, Shakya Senge and all the manifestations of Guru Padmasambhava.**

00:13:35

**As Guru Padmasambhava sat there, the one in blue mask who is Guru Senge Dadok, sat here [points to right] and this side [points to left] was the one in a red mask who is Guru Dorjee Dagleg. In that way the eight manifestations of Guru Padmasambhava were performed.**

Q: Did all the people coming to the festival or did many of them have sons who were in the Kagyu Monastery where the performance was held?

**#2U: There were. Among the *cham* performers were *gelong* ‘fully-ordained monks observing 253 vows’ that are celibate lamas. Normally they lived in the monastery. During the *cham* period at the monastery, even monks that are not celibate joined the prayer assembly for seven days. [They] wore monks’ robes and performed.**

Q: The monks performed the *cham* and...

**#2U: Yes, the monks that are *gelong*.**

Q: The *gelong*?

**#2U: The *gelong* performed *cham* and when there was a shortage of *gelong*, lay people that stayed home...In our region there was a lot of work and if a family had two sons, both cannot become monks. One stayed home and one became a monk and subsequently a *gelong*. So the one who is a lay person...[not discernible].**

Q: What did the son that didn’t become a monk do?

00:15:23

**#2U: He also went to perform the *cham*.**

Q: He performed the *cham* too?

**#2U: Yes, because there were many *cham* performances. Of course, the *gelong* performed. They wear the yellow *choegoe* ‘formal monastic robe.’ However, lay people did not wear the yellow *choegoe* but a red one.**

Q: And then performed?

**#2U: Yes, and then performed.**

Q: If they were not among the celibate monks?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Correct.



Q: Okay.

**#2U: For instance, Tsedho [son of interviewee] looks after the family, but he would also go to the monastery to perform *cham* [if in Tibet]. It was like that. A *gelong* is Tashi, my younger son. He is a *gelong* and he would be living in the monastery and not at home except for short holidays. All the *gelong* did not live in the village but in the monastery.**

Q: *Ama-la*, in your family...how many people were in your family when you were a little girl growing up?

00:17:28

**#2U: At home were [my] mother, father and maternal uncles. Mother had three brothers. Mother had two illegitimate daughters: me and another from a man that lived in another house. My mother lived at home with her brothers. There were two brothers that lived at home with one *nama* ‘bride.’ The *nama* got left behind in our hometown along with seven sons.**

Q: Does the *nama* have seven sons?

**#2U: The *nama* had three sons, three daughters—that is six...four sons...altogether seven. Her daughter had seven sons. Among the seven sons, there are three elder ones and three younger ones. The middle one is a *tulku* ‘reincarnation’ called Tenphel Chagmo Tulku. He came here last year.**

Q: What’s the name of the *tulku*?

**#2U: Tenphel Chagmo Tulku.**

Q: Tenphel?

**#2U: Tenphel.**

Q: Tenphu?

**#2U: It is a large nomad monastery where *cham* used to be performed.**

Q: In Tibet?

**#2U: Yes, he lives there presently.**

Q: Was there a father?

00:18:58

**#2U: I was born from another man. Father brought us along here.**

Q: At home?

**#2U: Father lived at home here. Father gave me away in marriage.**

Q: When you were living in Tibet as a little child, there was mother...?

**#2U: There were Mother and three maternal uncles. There were the maternal uncles, and one maternal aunt.**

Q: Okay.

00:20:05

**#2U: My father is called Pema Dorjee, who was a colleague of [the father of] Pema Delek [interpreter's husband]. I am the illegitimate child of Pema Dorjee. He was the leader of Rinchenling. [My] family decided not to bring home a bride, but Pema Dorjee brought a wife for the two maternal uncles. He has two daughters of whom I am one and the other is left behind in the hometown. Then a *nama* was brought and she had many children including a *tulku*.**

Q: That one is the wife of the maternal uncles, right?

**#2U: Yes, maternal uncles' *nama* and they are left behind at home, in Mother's home. Mother also got left behind in the hometown. I fled along with the King of Lingsang.**

Q: *Ama-la*, we'll talk about that story a little bit later, but I want to ask if...in Tibet if there was an illegitimate daughter, does the father like Pema Dorjee, did he support that mother and daughter or did she have to count on her own family to do that?

00:21:54

**#2U: There are those that take care and some that do not. We owned farmlands and a large number of animals. We could not leave our land. Then my grandfather—my father's sibling—the King of Lingsang was imprisoned by the Chinese. The king had been arrested and imprisoned. The Lingsang king was in a prison and when one looked up like this [looks up] from outside, one could see the king walking about. [He] was taken inside for the night. One day Yarling Wangyal stealthily entered [the prison]. The Chinese guards...**

Q: Who?

**#2U: Wangyal.**

Q: Who's Wangyal?

**#2U: Wangyal is the sibling of Pema Dorjee. He was the minister of Lingsang. He brought out the Lingsang king. We were camped at a great distance and he [Yarling Wangyal] left taking along a number of men. The King of Lingsang was in a prison and unable to escape. From afar one could see the king being led out during the day and walking about and then taken in for the night. So one day Wangyal entered armed with a small gun called pistol about this size [indicates right palm]. The gun was carried here [indicates left hip].**

Q: A gun?

00:23:28

**#2U: Yes, a gun. As he entered the room there was a guard at the door. He, the leader walked in and there was a guard at the door. When [Yarling Wangyal] opened the door, the guard did not say anything. He entered and saw the king sitting inside and said let's go and brought the king out of the prison. None of the Chinese could raise a hand due to the protective deities.**

Q: *Ama-la*, what did you do as a little girl? What kind of chores and activities?

**#2U: Until the age of 11, 12 or 13, a child was not assigned any duties except for some household chores.**

Q: Yes?

**#2U: Until the age of 12 or 13 and then at around 13...by 11 or 12 [a child] is capable of doing a good job.**

Q: What kind of work did one do at around the age of 13?

**#2U: The duty involved taking care of animals. There were also farmlands that were sown in summer and harvested in winter. However, children cannot do this work. So when the animals, the *dri* 'female yaks' had calves—when the *dri* had calves, there would be 14, 15 or 20. [The children] drove these to the hills. When the animals, the *dri* and *dzomo* 'female animal bred from a yak and a cow' were brought down in the evening...the animals were brought to the milking area and tethered. Then the animals were brought into the enclosure.**

Q: Yes?

00:25:45

**#2U: Then the animals...There were many *dri* and *dzomo* that were the mothers and these the herders brought back from the hills. Then they were tethered and milked. There were adults that did the milking and when some gave trouble while being milked, the children brought the calves. Then it was the work of the women. There would be daughters-in-law, daughters and maids who had to milk 30, 40 or 50 *dri* and *dzomo*; there were many. After milking there were many pails of milk. A person milked 5-6 pails at one time and this was taken indoors.**

**There was a large fireplace made using stones and clay with three stoves: one here, one here and another here [points at three spots in front]. Water was boiled on the water boiling spot and milk boiled on the milk boiling spot. Then the milk is shaken in yak hide and a large piece of butter is formed. The butter is taken out and then cheese made from the buttermilk. After taking out the cheese, the residual liquid is thrown out and the cheese is dried in the sun and then consumed. The butter is also consumed. There was a lot during**

**summertime, but not much milk during winter because the grass dried. The weather also turned freezing cold and the animals gave less milk.**

Q: Thank you for that very good description.

00:28:51

**#2U: [Nods] Tales of the hometown. [Laughs]**

Q: What did the...If there was not much milk in winter, did the babies have milk, the little children?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Human babies?

Interviewer to interpreter: Yeah.

**#2U: That much was available. There was milk for children. *Dzomo* called *yama* ‘*dzomo* a year after giving birth’ were milked and there was also enough milk for making butter. Old people had butter for consumption. There was enough milk to make butter, which was yellow, while the butter in summer tasted bitter. Then *tsampa* ‘flour made from roasted barley’...Barley was roasted in a container and then we ground it between two stones like this [rotates right arm] and *tsampa* emerged. We had to do a lot of work.**

00:29:47

**During summer while up on the mountains, it rained and one had to pitch a tent. The hair of yaks was spun and then woven into pieces. When these were pitched rain did not seep inside. The tent is made of yak hair. If made of cloth, it will tear but it did not tear because it was the hair of animals. If the tent that is pitched is made out of cloth and if it rained for a month, [the cloth tent] will rot, but the yak hair tent did not and dried if the sun shone for a little bit. However much it rained, it did not seep in.**

Q: Did the family make the tents or did they get them from other families?

**#2U: A tent? A tent that is pitched?**

Q: You pitched tents on the mountains. Did you make it?

**#2U: Yes, we made those. The cloth came from China. We did not have cloth.**

Q: You said that animal hair was used...

00:31:53

**#2U: It was made of animal hair that we spun on a spindle.**

Q: You made them.

**#2U: Yes, made ourselves. [The hair] is spun into thread and then looped [on a loom] and then woven. After weaving flat pieces like this waistband [gestures off camera] of about this**

size [makes a gap of around 2 feet between hands] it was used as a *ba* ‘tent made from yak hair’ and pitched. However much it rained, it did not leak or rot. It was warm in wintertime because it was made of animal hair. It was black—black animal hair. While migrating during summertime one took a cloth tent because it was light.

**One can make a fire or anything inside [a *ba*].**

Q: What kind of things did you do in the summertime when you took your tents and stayed in the mountains overnight? Did you play games? Did you have music? What kind things while the sheep and goats were grazing?

00:33:46

**#2U: There was not any dancing. There were many animals to take care of. The animals must be milked and the milk churned. Then there were other tasks to do. At the time of going to sleep there was some storytelling about the olden days, like there was a king that did such and such and a queen that did such and such. Very long stories were told in a singsong manner. Then there was singing like we do *aaa...* Those with a good voice sang and competed as to who could use rude lyrics. Both men and women did it. There were long stories of the olden days that were told. I have forgotten those. Such used to be told.**

**Then one went to sleep and woke up when the cock crowed. One got up and took the pail to do the milking. And then the milk had to be shaken. There was a lot of work to do. One cannot sleep like it is done in India. “Eat your food; do your work.” One did not have to approach anyone and request to be sold this or buy that.**

**During summertime there was butter and cheese that was saved for the winter. You had the farmlands from where there was one harvest a year. Here one can harvest in summer and winter too because of the warm weather. Our region was too cold. During wintertime one cannot break the frozen ground with an iron bar.**

Q: [Harvest] once a year?

00:35:27

**#2U: Barley was harvested once a year. Three months of summer, three months of autumn. During the three months of winter the river froze. One can drive the animals and walk across. That remained for around four months and then it thawed and turned to water. The river is very large.**

Q: Did people do any skating on the frozen river? Did they just for fun?

00:37:23

**#2U: There was playing when it froze. There was the dung of animals—dung of animals. This was flattened. Two holes were pierced after flattening it and a rope passed through [the holes]. The next morning it would have frozen. Then one skated on it from a height. As the sun rose, it disbanded. [The flattened dung] froze in the night, as the region is very cold during the winter months. But summertime is very warm.**

**The boys skated in a group and the girls in another group, screaming and pulling one another on the ice.**

Q: When they put the holes in the dung...

**#2U: [Interrupts] The ice remained for only around three months.**

Q: ...was that for your foot to go in? What was the purpose of the hole?

**#2U: No. The two holes would have frozen and a rope was passed through the two holes. A rope like this [indicates wire of microphone] was tied which was placed here [gestures off camera—interpreter interprets as beneath the legs] and then it slid over the ice. It can only be used to skate for a day and then when the sun shone, it disbanded and became dung. It froze if left overnight due to the intense cold.**

Q: I see. So the yak dung became ice skates and you put a rope through it and tied it around your...

00:39:47

**#2U: [Interrupts] That happened only during the three months of winter.**

Q: So the yak dung is used as a skate on the ice.

**#2U: Skate on the ice and frozen river. There was a large river, the Mekong River, that froze and one skated over it.**

**The ice remained for three months and then when it became hot it thawed.**

Q: If you could skate on the river, did you ever...there must've been snow in your region in the winter. Did you skate down, any way to skate down the slopes of the mountains?

**#2U: One did not skate down the mountains but on the frozen river. There was such a large amount of snow on the mountains that we were scared of falling in it. On the lower slopes of the mountains the snow melted in 4-5 days or a month. The mountains are very high. On the high mountains snow remained for around three months. Then they gradually melted. I have a picture of a mountain.**

00:41:31

**We lived in Kham, so it was colder whereas it did not snow as much in the central part of Tibet. There was a large river flowing by. The large river flows in the north and it has many tributaries in our region. It froze for three months in the winter and the children ran over the ice and skated. After three months it was over; it became water.**

Q: *Ama-la*, when you went to take the animals to graze, you went in the summer and the winter. Is that correct you went both seasons? And for how long would you go in each season? Would you go for a week or 10 days or a month, how long? And who went with you? Was it other children, some adults? Can you describe that?

**#2U: In summer...there were 30-40 families that lived in our village. They went to herd, many together.**

Q: Did [you] say there was a house?

00:43:15

**#2U: There was a house for the winter and a tent made of yak hair for the summer.**

Q: A *ba* in winter?

**#2U: It was a house for the winter, a house we had constructed in the village. During summertime the nomads went up the mountains. For instance, one spent the winter in a place like Dehradun [India] and went up the mountains of Mussoorie in the summer, driving the animals. During winter...[we] came down at this time of the year for the weather turned cold and it started to snow. So one came down. There were many animals that had to be taken care of as our food came from them, like milk and curd.**

Q: How long was it? How long did you stay in the mountains during summer?

**#2U: Yes?**

Q: How long did you stay in the mountains during summer?

00:44:02

**#2U: It was around three months on the mountains in summer. After three or four months one came down and then it was time for the farmers to harvest the barley in autumn. After harvesting the barley [the nomads] came down to the house. One went up to a place like Mussoorie [India] in the summer and came down to the house in Dehradun in winter after the harvesting of barley. There was barley, milk, butter and cheese. We were both farmers and nomads and were like this [raises both thumbs]. There was no need to buy any food items. One did not have to ask, "Please sell me barley, please sell me wheat or please sell me butter." Then one took some to the people of Zakho. Those in Zakho had good farmlands.**

Q: Where?

**#2U: To Zakho.**

Q: Zapa?

**#2U: The place near the Zachu 'Mekong River' is called Zakho and it is part of Lingsang. Then the river joined the Salween River of China. The territory of Lingsang extends from Zawari until Zango Monastery. The population of Lingsang was not very large, but there were three nomadic regions.**

Q: Was your family middle class or was it considered very wealthy in Tibet?

00:46:44

**#2U: The family?**

Q: Yes.

**#2U: The family is among the middle class.**

Q: Middle class family and...

**#2U: The very wealthy owned 300-400 yaks and *dri*. The middle class owned 200 or 100 and there was not anyone that owned less than 40-50. Even the least owned 40-50 animals. There were not anyone with less because animals were needed for milking. The wealthy owned many animals and servants and maids because there was the milking and the churning. It was difficult. Yet one continued to work for what else was there to do? Then the Chinese seized everything at one go. Then one just looked on. [Laughs] And then there was the harvesting in autumn.**

Q: When you were born then, the land that you were living on and owned, it belonged to your mother and her brothers and then...so it was your mother, you and a sibling. Was that a boy or a girl?

[Discontinuity in video]

Q: When you were little, how many children did your mother have?

00:48:37

**#2U: Including me...there were just one boy and two girls, three including me.**

Q: Were you treated any differently because you were an illegitimate child in the larger family by your mother's brothers, you know, by the uncles?

**#2U: No. [My maternal uncles wished to] keep [Mother] at home. Mother had three brothers of whom one went separate ways. Two of my maternal uncles lived at home. Later Yarling Wangyal brought a *nama* for them and she had seven sons.**

Q: Your father and mother didn't live together...

**#2U: Were not together. Were separate.**

Q: Since they didn't live together, did the maternal uncles consider this bad?

**#2U: No, even when asked to do so, [my maternal uncles] did not want to send their sister out and wished to keep the sister at home.**

00:50:05

**My father said he wanted to give away his daughters and so I was given away in Serbar. The sister lived separately with a man.**



Q: Given away in marriage?

**#2U: Yes. The other sister...the sister is younger to me but passed away last year. Now [I] have one sibling, a brother.**

Q: Were you given away in marriage?

**#2U: Yes, I was given away in marriage in Serba.**

Q: Where? Which place?

**#2U: It was in the place where Pema Delek's father lived, in Serba. My father Pema Dorjee used to move around with the father of Pema Delek. Pema Dorjee, I am his child. There is one sibling, Choesang, who lives here.**

**Then there were three maternal uncles. One maternal uncle moved away. A *nama* was brought home for the two maternal uncles and they had seven sons and daughters, who presently live at home, and are the children of my maternal uncles that lived at home. Two maternal uncles lived at home and one moved out.**

Q: *Ama-la*, can you tell us about...you were given away in marriage...

00:51:58

**#2U: [Interrupts] Then I was given away in marriage to the place where my father lived and this family escaped. My main family, Mother's family, was left behind in the hometown. However, presently [the family] is doing well.**

Q: How old were you when you were given away as a bride?

**#2U: [I] must have been around 20 years old.**

Q: How far away did you...

**#2U: [Interrupts] [I] already had three children Tsedho, Kartse and Pema Ngodup in my 20's. [We] fled with two of them on yaks and one on horseback and then reached Lhasa. The two younger children are by my [husband's] brother. The elder one, Pepay, was born in Lhasa. After reaching Lhasa, the mother of the family I married into died. The aged mother died, Pepay was born and the King of Lingsang gave teachings. At that time the King of Lingsang was a lama, the King of Lingsang. By then [we] were in Tsona.**

Q: In Tsona?

00:53:30

**#2U: [We] had reached the place called Tsona and were quite a distance from the Chinese. By then the King of Lingsang, who was in prison, had already been brought out.**

Q: When you were married, did you stay in the same area or moved to another town or village?

**#2U: Yes, to Serba—Serba where Pema Delek’s father lived.**

Q: Serba?

**#2U: Yes, it is at a distance of an hour or two from Lingsang and located across a river. It is the same village as Pema Delek’s father.**

Q: Did you want to get married?

00:55:05

**#2U: Wanting to go...Father left [me] there. The brothers in my mother’s family had said, “[We] do not want to bring home a wife, but will keep our sister at home.” Since I am the daughter of Pema Dorjee of the Yarling family, [my father] said, “I will give away both my daughters and you should bring home a wife.” So he brought home a wife for my two maternal uncles—brought home a wife and gave the two of us away, me and my sister. She passed away last year. There are five or six sons and daughters surviving.**

**Pema Dorjee had a real wife at home and [we] were children born outside. [Laughs]**

Q: Did you see Pema Dorjee...?

**#2U: [Interrupts] There are [Pema Dorjee’s] children called Athuk and her children Lhanze and Tenmar and others.**

Q: Did Pema Dorjee ever come and talk to you as if you were his daughter? Did he acknowledge you as his daughter?

00:56:43

**#2U: Yes, like any father. Their house was like there [points to right], the house of the Yarling family, and our house was like here [place of interview]. At night [we] would go and sleep there along with his wife and children. They were sleeping close by and we would make a lot of noise. When the children became too noisy and would not sleep [Father] would say go out and then chased [us] out, and then once again allowed the children inside who became noisy. He was loving and gave me away in marriage, and later I came here along with them.**

**My father’s real family is here. There is a daughter living here and also son, Tenmar. They are the children of [my father’s] daughter. There is a good house constructed here.**

Q: Were boys and girls treated differently in Tibet and which ways was that? How was the treatment different?

00:58:10

**#2U: There was no difference. Each boy or girl has a different egotism. Girls are...Boys are supposed to live at home, while girls are to be given away in marriage. The boy stayed**

home and brought a bride. The one to take charge of the home is the son in most cases. If there was no son but a daughter, then she was not given away in marriage, but a bridegroom was brought home.

If there were many sons, some became monks. If there were many girls, some became nuns. Then there are girls that brought home illegitimate children. One cannot say for there are various kinds.

Q: Did people accept all these different kinds of women's roles?

#2U: [Having illegitimate children] was not considered bad. It was said, "This one is an illegitimate one and does not live with a father." That was it.

00:59:56

Take Tsedho for instance, who has a wife at home. If he has a child outside it would be said, "He has an illegitimate child there and must support [the child]." A good man will support—support both of them. A not-so-good one will not give that much support. There are helpful ones and not helpful ones.

Q: What about the opposite? If a woman who is married and had a husband at home, what if she had a love affair with a man outside? How was that viewed?

#2U: It would be said, "She is going over to him." However, it was not considered very bad in our region. It is a different region. There are many illegitimate children. My maternal uncles had a wife at home and the wife had many children. Yet [one of the uncles] went out stealthily at night carrying a sword at the waist and we little children would say, "Maternal uncle is going out!" [Laughs] [Children] did not feel embarrassed.

There were a large number of animals tethered outside and the children and servants slept nearby to watch the animals. Then [we] would see maternal uncle walking out. There were two maternal uncles at our home. One [maternal uncle] had moved out and the two [at home] shared a wife. While one maternal uncle stayed home, the other went way across the river carrying a sword at the waist, moving stealthily. "Maternal uncle is going out!" the children screamed.

Q: What was it at the waist?

01:02:01

#2U: It was a big sword at the waist. Wearing that [maternal uncle] went stealthily across the river. The Mekong River had frozen then.

My father had a *nama* at home, who was the daughter of a wealthy nomad, and there were four or five sons and daughters. A son and a daughter were elder to me. Yet he went out to have me illegitimately.

It was not considered very bad in our region, but it is so in India. Therefore, there were illegitimate children around.

Q: I didn't understand the thing about your uncle. *Ama-la* said she'd see her uncle walk out at night and he'd be wearing a sword? Where was he going? What does that mean?

01:03:48

**#2U: He had a wife at home. So stealthily in the night...There was another, they were two husbands. When they [one of the maternal uncles and the wife] and the children had gone to sleep, he crossed the frozen river to the other side stealthily in the night wearing a sword at the waist.**

Q: Who was there on the other side of the river?

**#2U: There were [women] like that on the other side of the river. There were.**

Q: Who was there?

**#2U: There were the ones like Chonzom Lhamo and others. He went to the other side [of the river] to visit such women and returned early in the morning and pretended to sleep.**

01:04:49

**It was not considered bad in our hometown. If [a man] went out leaving the wife at home, one did not get jealous except for the very bad wives.**

Q: It wasn't considered bad if the woman went out?

**#2U: Women did not go out but the men did. Women did not go out, but men visited them and this was not considered bad.**

Q: It wasn't considered bad if a married woman had other men come home?

**#2U: No, it was not. If the husband is bad, [he] might scold a little but otherwise, no. It could be said, "Someone went in. How shameful!" The village mostly consisted of relatives, so it was like that.**

Q: But the woman did not go out...

01:05:52

**#2U: [Interrupts] In India if one having a husband seeks another, it is considered bad.**

Q: I guess there were no prostitutes or women who were paid for sexual favors in Tibet. Is that so?

**#2U: There were none like that then. [I] do not know about now.**

**There never was, never. There were never any that did such in my village.**

Q: Did your family have much to do with monasteries? Did you go there for prayer ceremonies? How did you do that when you were out grazing the animals? How did you...?

**#2U: [Interrupts] It used to be said that there were prostitutes in another village.**

Q: When you went grazing the animals on the hills, which auspicious days did you go to the monasteries?

**#2U: Monasteries?**

Q: Yes.

01:07:14

**#2U: Normally women were not allowed to the monasteries. There was the *cham*...in winter there was the *dupchen* ‘great spiritual practice.’ One can visit at this time for two days. Your siblings would be at the session and one can go to watch the *cham* and have tea at the monastery. We took butter, *tsampa* and meat to the monastery. On other days women were not allowed to visit the monasteries.**

**[Women] could go twice a year. Once on the 10<sup>th</sup> day when there was a *cham* performance for two days and another during winter for the *dupchen* for two days. Women could not go to the monastery on other days. During this period only the *gelong* lived at the monastery. They lived in the monastery and did not come out much, except those that went to read prayers. Those monks that performed the *cham* were our laymen. They took the role of monks and also plowed the fields and harvested barley. It was difficult, poor things. [The laymen] also took part in the sessions.**

Q: Who did the plowing? Did the monks do fieldwork?

01:08:36

**#2U: The *gelong* did not have to do it while the others...For instance, Tsedho used to be a monk of Ngor Monastery, but now he has a wife at home. He would have to perform *cham* like a monk and then come home and plow the fields and do other tasks. There were many like that that had obligation to the monastery.**

Q: You know, when the women went twice a year for the new year, for Losar, I imagine, *amala*, what...can you describe how the women dressed up? How did you dress up? Did you have any special clothing or jewelry even though you were a hard working nomad? Did you have special clothing for Losar?

01:10:19

**#2U: It was not during Losar [when we visited the monastery]. It is called *dupchen*. Losar is on the 1<sup>st</sup> day [of the 1<sup>st</sup> lunar month]. *Dupchen* takes place on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> days [of the 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month].**

Q: Before Losar?

**#2U: Yes, the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> days. Losar is the 1<sup>st</sup> day.**

Q: What kind of clothing and jewelry did you wear for the occasion?

**#2U: As for clothing there was brocade *chupa* ‘traditional dress’ with the fur of sheep. It was lambskin covered with brocade and bordered with [the skin of] otter that moves in water like a fish. Otter [skin] is used on it. Then there was the red waistband, a *kephen* ‘scarf’ and an adornment of amber [touches head]. The hair is braided into three plaits with tiny braids. Many hair extensions were attached and on these were turquoise, corals and flowers. The women wore such. Then a *kephen* is worn from the back [moves hands around neck] and then one went.**

Q: What’s a *kephen*?

**#2U: *Kephen* are in different colors and also called *shusung*. The ornaments were so heavy that the hair gets pulled down due to the weight. A large piece of amber is worn here [indicates center parting of hair]. Those that did not have one wore flowers. Then those that owned a necklace of *dzi* ‘special beads made of agate stone’ wore it. On that day one wore the very best and went out. One must wear the best of clothing, the best of lambskin when visiting the monastery.**

Q: *Ama-la*, it sounds beautiful...

01:12:50

**#2U: [Interrupts] As for shoes, we had boots covered in good *thonang* ‘good quality cloth.’ There were no shoes like the Indian ones. These used to be called “cutoff Indian shoes” [laughs] because they were only this high [gestures off camera]. Our Tibetan boots reached here [gestures off camera—interpreter interprets as calf-length] and were tied with laces. The boots had pointed tips and ...[not discernible]. It would be said, “So and so is wearing leather boots and so and so is wearing *thonang* boots.” One wore the very best of boots. However, while going up the mountains one wore ordinary boots. There were no Indian shoes there.**

Q: Were there separate pairs for the mountains and for visiting monasteries?

**#2U: The boots worn when visiting monastery was nicely covered with *thonang*.**

Q: What’s *thonang*?

**#2U: That was a piece of good quality cloth in many hues. There are good quality red cloths called *thonang* or *kotsi*. There was only a person or two that made these. The tip is left this long [gestures off camera] and the upper portion is tied with a lace. It would be said, “What a pair of good *kotsi* boots!”**

Q: And then...?

**#2U: [Interrupts] Then the inner part is lined with fur and on the outside was a covering of brocade. Such used to be worn.**

01:14:28

**Then there were hats of fur and yellow fox skin. The hats were covered with a thin layer of sheepskin, tall and with the fur on the outside. The lambskin [touches dress] is covered with brocade on the outside. In those days one used to wear such nice clothes while going to the monasteries to see the *cham*. However, when up on the mountains we wore ordinary *chupa* because the bushes tore them. One wore such clothes.**

**Then there were girls that belonged to poor families and there were wealthy families that possessed much amber. They [the girls from poor families] too wore [amber ornaments] like the others. Those that owned such wore them and those that did not have wore them, too.**

Q: Were these borrowed?

**#2U: Yes, borrowed. We removed the good clothes and they wore these while [we] wore their lambskin. [They] were those that were poor and worked as maids.**

Q: Did you borrow the...?

01:16:05

**#2U: [Interrupts] There was no gold then.**

Q: Yes?

**#2U: Gold, there was no gold then, but *dzi* and corals. One wore large corals, necklaces of large corals. [Shows coral necklace] I have a small one. [Laughs]**

**One wore large corals bought from Lhasa and strung into necklaces. The Lingsang [royal family] and the Yarling family owned a large number of *dzi* and corals then, many pieces and large ones. Instead of wearing, these were laden on the horses and then fell into Chinese hands that day.**

Q: What happened?

**#2U: ...when the Chinese attacked at Lukhang *dukha* 'quay.' Initially, fearing the Chinese would attack, the *dzi*, corals and amber ornaments were worn either on the heads or around the necks and also packed in bags and laden on horses. After sometime one became exhausted and when [we] reached the quay of the large river, the packs were removed and placed nearby. Then the Chinese attacked and they were left there. [The ornaments] are gone. [Laughs]. Not one *dzi* could be obtained.**

01:17:55

**The packed ornaments were laden and also worn around the neck and on the head, and laden on horses, but at the Lukhang *dukha* it was hot and one removed the *chupa*. Then the**

Chinese attacked and there was no time to even put on the shoes. [The ornaments] were left there and [we] fled.

[The ornaments] had been carried all through Kham and into Tibet [Utsang Province].

Q: *Ama-la*, you described so much beautiful jewelry that the women wore and clothing. Did your family own that much or did you borrow it like some of the girls did?

**#2U: I did not own any *dzi* but a necklace of plain corals. We were not those that owned *dzi*.**

Q: No *dzi*, but what's that [you] had?

**#2U: Turquoise and corals like this [indicates necklace around neck].**

Q: Turquoise and...?

**#2U: Corals. What [I] had was very similar to this necklace [indicates coral necklace around neck]. [We] fled from Kham to Tibet [Utsang] where there is a large river at Lho Samdha Gonpa. [We] had traveled all the way from Kham to Lho.**

Q: From Kham to where?

01:19:32

**#2U: From Kham to the place called Lho Samdha Gonpa. There is a large river that has to be crossed at this place. There is this large river and [we] were still driving the animals, all the animals. The animals gave birth and the calves could not cross the river. So [I] carried a calf over the neck and this broke my necklace, which fell into the water.**

Q: What were you riding?

**#2U: It was a necklace like this [indicates necklace around neck].**

Q: No, no. How did the animal break it? Was it around your neck?

**#2U: [I] was wearing it around the neck. The little calf could not cross the river—a calf of an animal, a small calf of an animal. So [I] carried it over the neck. The calf started kicking its legs that struck the necklace and it fell into the river. I began to cry, “My necklace has fallen into the river.” I tried to retrieve it from the water, but the river washed it away. I waited a while. It was a swift river and got washed away. Then there was the Lingsang queen and those from Rinchenling. After we reached the other bank [they] gave me a few corals enough for a necklace. I got a long necklace and wore it around the neck.**

Q: Did the Lingsang queen give [you the corals]?



01:21:04

**#2U: The Lingsang queen did and also others from Rinchenling. There were many that were wearing necklaces. Each gave [me] two or three corals, but nobody gave a *dzi*. The Lingsang queen said that she wanted to give [me] a *dzi*, but did not and then at Lukhang *dukha* everything was left there. [She] did not want to give me even one! [Laughs]**

Q: Sad story. So all the clothing was borrowed then.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Only the jewelry.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: And the *dzi* is a precious stone.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Agate stone.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Agate stone, okay.

Q: *Ama-la*, you keep mentioning escape stories. So maybe it's time we talked about that. What developed before you decided to escape? What was happening? What was going on that made your family have to escape?

01:23:13

**#2U: The reason for escaping? The reason for escaping was that the Chinese initially said [we] should follow socialism in the hometown—follow socialism. The Chinese had taken the grandfather of the Rinchenling family [also known as Yarling] and the King of Lingsang for a meeting to China.**

Q: Who?

**#2UU: The King of Lingsang and grandfather Wangyal of the Rinchenling family. He was the attendant of the Lingsang king, a minister. They went to China. It was said that in China the Chinese provided a nice place to sleep and came to check if [they] were feeling hot or cold at night. Both of them went to attend the meeting.**

**All the talk was about following socialism and equality. The late grandfather of Rinchenling did not accept this. Then the king was captured and was told to remain in prison, the King of Lingsang. Then the king was imprisoned. He was brought from China and imprisoned at Dhenkho. He was taken to Dhenkho near the palace, and then was brought to our hometown from China.**

Q: The King of Lingsang?

01:24:30

**#2U: Yes, in the beginning [the Lingsang king] had been captured in China when he had gone to attend a meeting as ordered [by the Chinese]. The late grandfather of the Rinchenling family was sent back. As [he] gazed from a distance, [he] saw the Lingsang king who had been imprisoned walking outside in the day—[the king] seemed to be have some amount of freedom and wasn't shut in completely—but at night was shut in a room.**

**One day late grandfather saw a large number of Tibetan troops in a forest near a large ground. It seemed to be during the day. As [he] gazed, the king was walking outside in the day and went in at night.**

**Late grandfather possessed a small pistol, which he took along with a sword at the waist and entered [the room where the king was imprisoned]. The guards at the door did not dare say anything. He went inside. He entered the room and saw that the king was not shackled and escorted [him] out. The guards were holding guns but did not dare shoot. [They] just stared and said nothing. It seemed to have been the work of the protective deities.**

**As he escorted out the King of Lingsang, no one said anything. [He] had fled taking along the king. We had already reached Langthikhog, the nomadic region. One day it was said that late grandfather had appeared along with the King of Lingsang. [He] had brought the king. The queen, the princess and the younger prince had been made to graze horses in a forest. There were horses and mules and the Chinese had made them herd horses, sent as horse herders. [Late grandfather Wangyal] brought them and the king and arrived there.**

Q: And then fled?

01:26:32

**#2U: [He] escorted [the royals] to the place where we were. Then we began to move to another place. There were many people by then, from Serbar and many other places and also from Lingsang that wanted to go to Lhasa. This was the nomadic region—region of the nomads and not Lingsang region. “Let us not go for a while and move during autumn.” So we waited a month and went back to the hometown for there was no grass and the animals would die. Some of us continued to stay there along with the Lingsang king.**

Q: Did the Lingsang king stay at the nomadic region?

**#2U: Yes. [We] stayed there and then went to Tsatsa where there was the Tsatsa Monastery, which is the real place where Ling Gesar ‘King Gesar, an emanation of Guru Padmasambhava’ was born. [We] came to this place and then one day it was said that [we] would have to go back. My family said that the animals would die and there was grass available in the hometown. Then [we] went back. It seems around that time the Chinese were advancing. Then there was fighting with the Chinese and a fair number of Chinese ran back to China. Some were killed.**

Q: Who resisted?

01:27:52

**#2U: Our people, the people of Lingsang; the group of Yarling Wangyal. The country was on the verge of being lost and we were fleeing along with the king, and encountered the Chinese. The Chinese were more in number. [The Chinese] had been defeated at one place and it was said, “We have managed to oust the Chinese.” However, another group of Chinese had come from another route for there were many Chinese and appeared from**

different directions. Then the Chinese pursued us and we fled along with the Lingsang king. There were Chinese along the path trodden in the morning and after crossing a mountain pass there was yet more. This went on for eight, nine or 10 days. Finally, [we] just about managed to reach the other side of the Yangtze River. After crossing the Yangtze River [we] stayed there for a month at this place. Though the king could come, it was an arduous journey.

Q: The king was brought to the nomadic region. Did you see him with your own eyes and how old were you?

01:31:39

**#2U: The queen and the princes had been made to graze horses. They were brought first and left with us.**

Q: The king was brought to the nomadic region where you were. Did you see him with your own eyes?

**#2U: Who? The king?**

Q: The King of Lingsang.

**#2U: Of course, [I] saw the king. [My son's] father died in Tsona and the king observed the 49 days of prayers.**

Q: Yes?

**#2U: The father of Tsedho, the father died in Tsona, Tsona in Tibet.**

Q: The king died in Tsona?

**#2U: No, we escorted the king and left him at the mountain pass of Mon Tawang [India]. [Points to palm of left hand] Mon Tawang is located here on an open ground where the king was left. A little further up the mountain pass of Mon Tawang and one reached India. [The king] was left at the mountain pass.**

**We stayed in Tsona because there was not any food—stayed in the place called Tsona, which is in Tibetan Territory. We gathered wood and sold it to the villagers, and also dung and sold these, for we needed to survive. Then once a week a little bit of *tsampa* and rice was rationed by the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force].**

Q: *Chushi Gangdrug*?

01:33:10

**#2U: *Chushi Gangdrug* of Tibet. The *Chushi Gangdrug* provided us at that time.**

Q: Where was the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

**#2U: It was the fighting [unit].**

Q: Who was there fighting?

**#2U: All our men joined the force. After we left the camp, Yarling Wangyal brought out the King of Lingsang from the Potala [Palace].**

**When [the Lingsang king] was being brought from the Potala, we were left at Tsona close to Mon Tawang on a mountain pass. The king had been interned at the Potala.**

Q: Potala?

**#2U: Yes, at the Potala in Lhasa.**

Q: In Lhasa?

**#2U: The king was interned at the Potala in Lhasa.**

Q: By the Chinese?

**#2U: The Chinese had captured and imprisoned him there. One day Wangyal saw and went in and escorted [the king] out.**

Q: Wasn't that at the nomadic region in your hometown?

**#2U: Which one?**

Q: You mentioned that the king was escorted to the nomadic region. So wasn't that in your hometown?

**#2U: After the nomadic region we escorted [the king] to Lhasa. [He] was captured once again in Lhasa at the Potala.**

Q: Again?

**#2U: Yes. [The king] was captured and once again escorted out. [He] was not treated badly as a prisoner. Perhaps it was because of the Tibetan Government. So he escorted [the king] to Tsona. Yarling Wangyal was a great man.**

01:35:20

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Who'd been captured in Lhasa?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: King of Lingsang...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: ...had been captured...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...in Lhasa too, once again.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So this wasn't the King of Lingsang that...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Lingsang, yes, that's the very king who was captured twice. Once in his region and...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Oh, before this episode?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Oh, okay. I'm sorry. In an earlier time?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Okay. So you gathered firewood and...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...sold to survive.

Q: How old were you there, *ama-la*? What age and did you have children with you?

01:36:04

**#2U: Me?**

Q: How old were you then?

**#2U: At the time of leaving the hometown [I] was 25 years old, and must have been 26, 27 or 28 then [at Tsona] and was 30 when [I] reached Gangtok, reached India. There were children and elderly people to bring along. Tsedho's father had a younger sister.**

Q: Elderly? Any of your own children with you at that time?

**#2U: What?**

Q: Did you have your own children?

**#2U: There were three children from the hometown. Pema Ngodup, who is hard of hearing, was 10 years old...not 10 but 5... He was born in the year of the pig...so was 5, 6 or 7 then. Then Tsedho—[we] had been moving here and there--Tsedho and Kartse could sit on horseback. They were placed on opposite sides [of the horse]. We had one load [of children], Sangay Dolma's family had two loads...the Rinchenling family had only one daughter, Ringutsang, who was the leader had two children, which is one load. Each family had two, three or four loads of children. [The children] were loaded on yaks and horses.**

Q: About how many people were in that group that was...this is a group of nomads who fought off the Chinese and they went over the mountain pass at Mon Tawang and then how many...Was it a large group, a hundred people or fifty? What size and how long did they stay there?

01:38:40

**#2U: There were many, around 30-40 families when we fled. Then some were left behind in the hometown. In the beginning there were around a hundred families. After a while some went back for the harvest.**

Q: Yes?

**#2U: [Some said,] “Let us not go this year but we will leave after the harvest in autumn.” Though everyone wanted to continue, it was not allowed. Due to this, time was lost.**

Q: Did some go back?

**#2U: Some went back home because there was good grass for the animals and remained there. There were the monks in the monasteries, too. Some went back and stayed another year while we left. Instead of returning home we moved towards Chukho where Ling Gesar was born. When the Chinese pursued we were near the border. [We] managed to escort the King of Lingsang. So it was good.**

Q: How long did you stay in that particular location across the river, right?

01:40:29

**#2U: In the beginning?**

Q: After crossing the Yangtze River...

**#2U: After crossing the Yangtze...after crossing the Yangtze [we] remained for the winter on the other side of the Yangtze. After crossing a mountain pass one reached the Northern Plateau. I forget...**

Q: The Northern Plateau?

**#2U: What?**

Q: The Northern Plateau?

**#2U: No, after crossing the Yangtze...even on the other side of the Yangtze we were still driving the animals. There was plenty of grass on this mountain pass and we spent a month, spent winter there. Then when summer was beginning...when the New Year began in the springtime, in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> lunar month...Around this time of the year we got ready to move when the Chinese appeared from the Northern Plateau and saw [us]. There were Chinese spies watching our moves.**

**Yarling Wangyal said, “We should exchange the animals for horses and then proceed. It is not right to travel this way.” We replied, “What is left to eat if the animals are sold?” With animals, one had to travel slowly. So the Chinese attacked at Lukhang *dukha* and there was no time to even put on the shoes.**

Q: Did Yarling Wangyal suggest that the animals be sold?

01:42:14

**#2U: [Yarling Wangyal] said, “Exchange the animals for horses. [We] have the responsibility of taking along the King of Lingsang and there are also children. So let us put them on the horses and go. Let us exchange the animals.” We replied, “What will we eat after selling these?” His wife was there, the wife of Wangyal, and she was pushed, “Tell him what will there be for food if the animals are sold? We have been using curd and milk so far. What will there be to drink?”**

**Grandfather said, “The animals must be sold. If the animals are not sold we will not be able to escape.” “What will you eat after selling these, you bad man,” exclaimed the wife. [The animals] were not sold that day, the next day or the day after. Then [we] continued the journey and at Lukhang *dukha* it was gone within a day. There was not a cup left, not even shoes.**

Q: Did the Chinese appear?

**#2U: The Chinese appeared. At Lukhang *dukha* it was said that [we] had to go across the river towards Kundeling. After Zangri Kharmar one would reach Lhasa. There was a boat on the river, and getting ready to leave, the animals were driven in the water. Half the provisions amounting to two or three boatloads had reached the other bank. Some of us were on this side while some had crossed over to the other bank. The herders were grazing animals up there.**

**The father of the Rinchenling family had crossed over to the other side. He was older than my father. Wangyal was on the opposite bank. There was the sound of *thak, thak, thak*. We cried, “Who is doing that? Someone seems to be beating his chest!” The herders had seen the Chinese come, but those trying to cross the river could not hear. There was firing. Then [we] fled leaving behind the belongings. The Lingsang and Yarling families possessed *dzi* and corals that were worn on the neck and loaded on the yaks, but that day they got left there. Everything was gone.**

01:44:27

**[We] just about managed to escape from there while the herders were captured. One girl herder was killed and another captured...two boys were captured. Then an elderly lady was captured. The elderly lady’s tongue was pulled out and wool flakes that had been plucked off the clothes were stuffed in the mouth. The tongue was pulled out and wool flakes stuffed in, but she could breath and did not die, and was left in this state for two days on the mountain pass. It was said that one of the herders was shouting and seemed to be hurt and later died. The two boys were never to be seen again. Perhaps they had been killed.**

**The Chinese sent this elderly lady [after us] about a month after we had reached Tsona. It seems after three days the woolen flakes were removed from the mouth and [the elderly lady] was given food, given food and allowed to stay for 4-5 days. Then was told to go with**

a message to the King of Lingsang. “Come back and your animals and belongings will be returned.” She was sent there. It was around a month after we had reached Tsona that she was released from Lhasa.

Q: Where did she arrive? In Tsona?

01:45:49

**#2U: She had been captured by the Chinese in Lhasa and kept there. A month after we had reached Tsona [she] came there, the poor thing, and died in Missamari [India] due to fever. “Wangyal and the King of Lingsang, come back. The animals and valuables will be returned.”**

Q: Who brought the message?

**#2U: The Chinese.**

Q: Who did the Chinese say this to?

**#2U: To the elderly lady that had been captured.**

Q: The elderly lady?

**#2U: Yes. The elderly lady was released after being in prison for a month. Initially, she was captured when grazing animals and then sent [to follow us]. Around 10, 15 or 20 days after reaching Missamari [and she] died from fever.**

Q: Did you see His Holiness [the Dalai Lama] along the way, *ama-la*?

01:49:07

**#2U: Who?**

Q: Did you see His Holiness along the way?

**#2U: Along the way? We escorted His Holiness along the way.**

Q: Where did you see His Holiness?

**#2U: The Chinese had captured His Holiness in the Potala, where he lived.**

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Earlier you spoke about seeing His Holiness in Tsona.

**#2U: Yes, [I] did. The men of *Chushi Gangdrug* escorted [His Holiness] from the Potala to Tsona. He wore layman’s attire like a cap and coat and was escorted out. We were staying in Tsona then. There was a monastery in Tsona called Gonpa Tse that belonged to the Gelug tradition. It was a small monastery in Tsona located a little away from where we stayed. [His Holiness] stayed there for a week.**



Q: A week?

01:50:09

**#2U: Yes, stayed a week or two in secrecy for the lama was tired and needed to rest. A lot of thought was given as to how to escape from there. If one took the lower direction the road was so bad that a horse could not pass through and His Holiness could not go on foot. Then there was a mountain pass called Lipila.**

Q: What's the name?

**#2U: Lipila. If one took this route it led to the Indian border. We went to create a path on this pass by digging earth and rocks for eight, nine or 10 days. The boys and girls were very hardy then.**

Q: What kind of work?

**#2U: Making a path, a path for horses to pass through. His Holiness could not go on foot and there were no vehicles. When the horses could not go over the mountain pass, [a path was created for] horses to move across and then the people. [We] worked for 6-7 days to create the path. We were all hardy young boys and girls then and started work early in the morning, worked on the mountain pass.**

**The other side of the mountain pass was good. The region is part of Mon Tawang. There was a dangerous abyss. The path created was enough for the pack animals belonging to the people of Tsona to pass through; the animals passed through. The animals just about managed to pass through on this route. Then it was the turn of the horses and they too managed to get through. Until then [we] worked there for 2-3 weeks. Once the horses could move across, then one day His Holiness left.**

Q: And then were you able to see, were you able to stay and see His Holiness pass through on the road you had made?

01:53:36

**#2U: His Holiness the Dalai Lama stayed in the monastery called Gonpa Tse that belonged to the Gelug sect. Then we created a path on which pack animals and horses passed through and then His Holiness left one day. "[His Holiness] will be passing and you are to stand in line holding ceremonial scarves," said those people in charge at Tsona. Then we stood along with the people in charge at Tsona holding ceremonial scarves. [I] had no knowledge about His Holiness.**

**The lamas were wearing yellow caps and riding *de andho*. *De andho* means large mules like horses. [The lamas] passed by wearing similar caps. [We] stood in line wishing to see His Holiness, but everyone was wearing similar caps and one did not know what His Holiness looked like. All looked similar. What to do? One just did this [joins palms and touches forehead], watched [the entourage leave] and prostrated. Then the lama was gone.**

At a place called Dada was a nunnery through which the lama passed. It was a little away from us. It was said that an old lady there cried, “I did not see His Holiness.” His Holiness heard and said, “Bring the old lady here.” He blessed the old lady and she left. Otherwise, nobody knew because all the lamas had similar yellow caps. Then [the group] crossed over the mountain pass. We did not recognize who was who. The soldiers said that [His Holiness] was amongst the group. “[His Holiness] is in the group. Look and bow.” Everyone had on similar caps and [I] did not know which was His Holiness and he was gone.

01:56:34

The old lady cried and His Holiness heard and those at that place saw [His Holiness], but we did not recognize who was who.

Then [the group] crossed over the Mangola and the Lipila and reached Mon Tawang and then to Bomdila and into India. Later we took the same route.

From Bomdila [we] reached Missamari. At Missamari...The wife, the queen of the King of Sikkim happened to be the sibling of the Queen of Lingsang—the sister of our Queen of Lingsang—the elder one. There were three sisters of whom one married the King of Sikkim, one the King of Lingsang and one the King of Nangchen.

We did not know about the relation then, but were taken to Sikkim. The Princess of Sikkim, the daughter of the King came there. At that time the mother was alive. [The princess] came to Missamari and made enquiries and said she was related to the Lingsang [royal family]. We were happy. It was asked. “Where do you want to go?” “We want to go to Sikkim.” Then those from Lingsang were taken to Sikkim.

Q: *Ama-la*, thank you so much for such a wonderful and descriptive story of your life in Tibet. I want to thank you for participating in the project and maybe I could end by asking you what is your wish and prayer for Tibet?

**#2U: What?**

Q: What do you hope for Tibet?

01:59:39

**#2U: Us?**

Q: What do you hope for Tibet?

**#2U: What to hope for? [I] went three times to Tibet. My mother’s family is there. “Come back. Whatever you want is available, be it house or animals,” the relatives said. [I] was asked to return home and could live in Karze if I wished. “Go to Delhi and then come by flight.” I replied, “I will not.” It is good that they are rich. Here we have Sakya Gongma Rinpoche, Gyalwang Karmapa, abbots and many great lamas. This area here...initially we were to live in the settlement in Clement Town—lived in a group in the settlement. Then Yarling Wangyal said, “I have escorted the leader of a kingdom. I cannot live in a group in**

a settlement.” There were groups belonging to Golok, Derge and Nangchen [in the settlement of Clement Town].

“I have to find a land somewhere for I have escorted the King of Lingsang, the leader of a kingdom.” So everybody went around in search of land but could not find any. There was a piece of land in Chandrabani, but he said it was too hot to live there and water was scarce. “We have a king and cannot live in a place where there is a lack of water.” It seems to be his destiny to have a protective deity [watching over him]. Then grandfather and a person from Clement Town who used to...[not discernible] called Mehta. They went together and found this area of land partly occupied and partly vacant. And then...

02:02:35

**#2U:** He said that he was escorting a king who was the 49<sup>th</sup> generation of kings. “I cannot simply live with a group, but need to find a piece of land.” So [he] went in search of a piece of land and found this site available and pictures were taken. This piece of land was bought at a cheap price. It was said that there was another area towards that side but it was not feasible. So [we] began to live here. They have constructed a house there [points to left], a small house belonging to Wangyal.

Q: *Ama-la*, thank you very much for your story.

**#2U:** Let us go and have lunch.

END OF INTERVIEW