

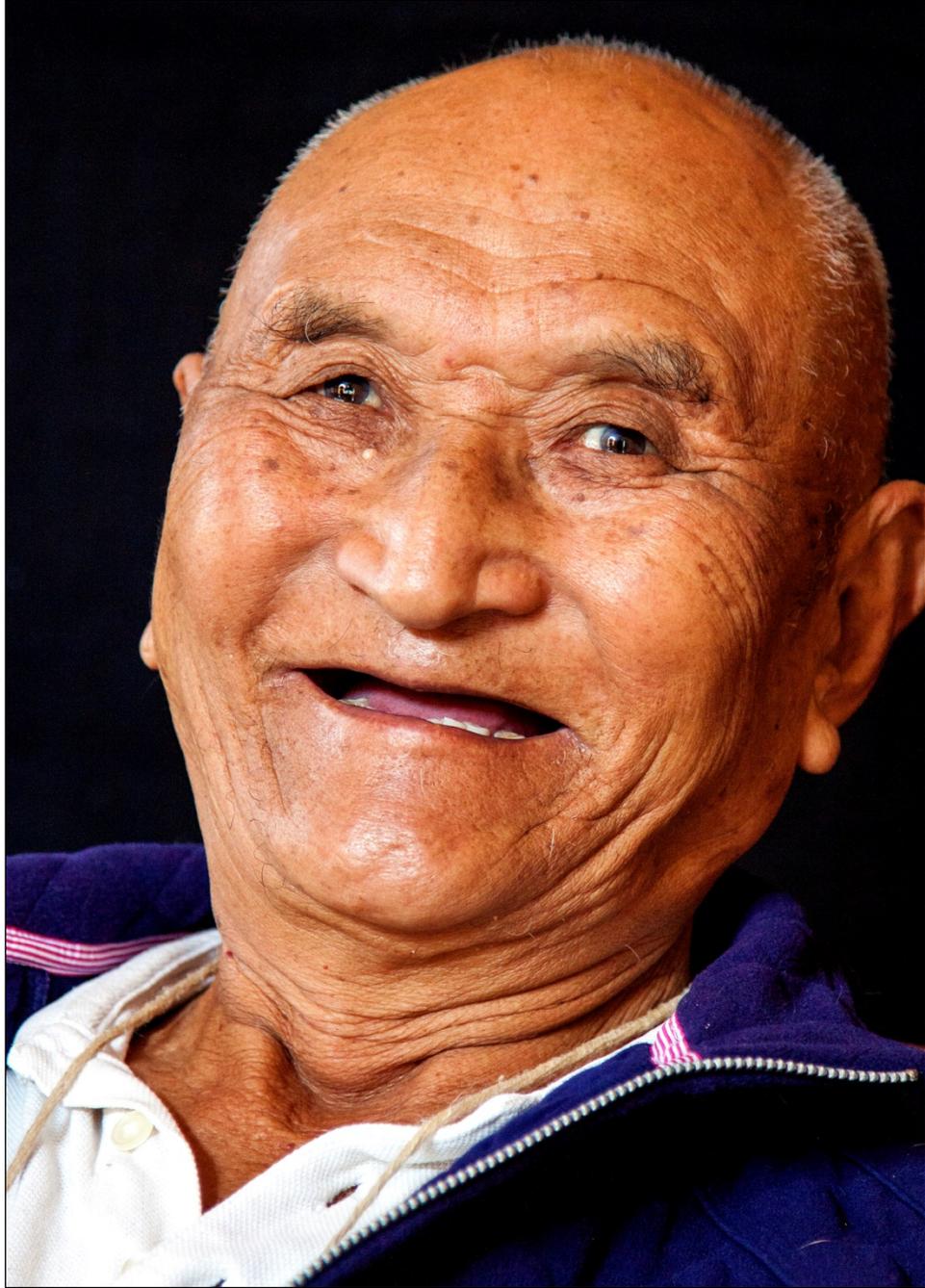
Tibet Oral History Project

**Interview #5B – Lobsang (alias)
December 31, 2013**

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TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #5B
2. Interviewee: Lobsang (alias)
3. Age: 83
4. Date of Birth: 1931
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Lukhokma
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1960
9. Date of Interview: December 31, 2013
10. Place of Interview: Private home, Old Camp 4, Bylakuppe, Mysore District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 2 hr 25 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Pema Tashi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Lobsang was born in Lukhokma in Kham Province. His father was killed in a fight leaving Lobsang with his mother and one sister. They were nomads and Lobsang talks in detail about herding animals and deriving food, drink, shelter, clothing and everything they needed from animals like yaks, *dri* 'female yak,' sheep and horses. The nomads moved the herds each year in summer and winter in order to find food for the animals.

Lobsang fondly recalls the annual festival of incense offerings and *lung ta* 'wind horse' prayer flags. Thousands of horsemen gathered on this occasion to participate in horse racing and target shooting competitions. Race horses were very valuable to the nomads and Lobsang prided himself on being a good rider. Lobsang also talks about the importance of *ba* 'tents made from yak hair' for a nomad family and how they moved their tents between camps.

Lobsang describes the upheaval wrought on the nomadic community when the Chinese appeared in the region. The nomadic men resisted the Chinese army for around three years despite limited arms and ammunition. Lobsang and a group of 100 horsemen miraculously escaped capture and continued towards Lhasa only to learn along the way that Lhasa has been occupied by the Chinese. He recounts his escape to India and establishing of the Bylakuppe Settlement.

Topics Discussed:

Kham, nomadic life, herding, festivals, first appearance of Chinese, invasion by Chinese army, resistance fighters, escape experiences, life as a refugee in India.

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Interview #5B

Interviewee: Lobsang [alias]

Age: 83, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: December 31, 2013

Question: 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?

00:01:08

#5B: Yes, yes.

Q: Thank you for offering to share your story with us. During this interview if you wish to take a break or stop at anytime, please let me know. If you do not wish to answer a question or talk about something, let me know.

#5B: Okay.

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

#5B: I have no problems whatsoever. The Chinese are our enemy and we have revolted and come here. There is no problem.

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

#5B: Okay.

Q: *Pa-la* ‘respectful term for father,’ can you please tell me when you were born and where you were born? What year and where?

00:02:33

#5B: That [I] would not know. I was small and father was killed when I was 7 or 8 years old. There were just mother and my sister. So [I] do not know the day [of birth]. A literate person would know but I do not being a nomad.

Q: Do you know what your age is now?

#5B: [I] am 83 years old now, 83.

Q: What’s the name of the birthplace?

#5B: Lukhokma is the birthplace.

Q: You said your father was killed. What happened to your father?

#5B: There was an internal fight and he was killed. Sometimes internal fights used to take place in our region. And then he was killed.

Q: What happened to the family after father was killed?

#5B: In the family were me and my mother who was pregnant. I was the only [child]. Then when the child was born later, it was a daughter. There were just the three of us in the family and [only two children] from the same set of parents.

Q: How did you survive? What did you do for your livelihood?

00:05:02

#5B: [We] worked as nomads. The nomads [owned] animals like *dri* 'female yak,' yaks, sheep and horses. [We] herded them and produced food, drink, clothing and everything from them.

Q: As a nomad did you travel with other nomads and how many were in your group?

#5B: There were not many nomads. A rich family owned around a thousand sheep, a thousand animals. There were no Chinese then. When I was 7-8 years old the Communist Chinese had not yet arrived. [We] were very happy then with [our] food coming from the animals. Then the fur of yaks and *dri* were shorn and this was spun and woven to make houses. [To interpreter] Please translate this.

Q: You said some of the wealthy had up to a thousand sheep. What about you and your family? Did they own many sheep?

#5B: Mine was not a rich family but middle class. Someone like me owned a thousand sheep, 500 cattle and 15-20 horses. Others owned a thousand sheep or even 3,000. These were very rich. The poor ones owned around 200 animals but none less than this. One depended on them. One cannot survive otherwise because [our] food and clothing came from [the animals].

Q: How many people or how many families were in your nomad group?

00:08:41

#5B: Ours was a vast one. The overall figure would be more than a thousand. The region was vast and [the nomads] scattered all over. [We] moved to the summer area during summer and to the winter area during winter and did not live in the same place through summer and winter. The nomads remained [in one place] for a month and then moved.

Q: In one month?

#5B: The grass was not sufficient if one didn't move in a month.

Q: Can you tell us some activities and work that you did as a young boy, say when you were 6, 7, 8? What did you do?

#5B: Being a nomad there was not any other activity except with the animals. One grazed the animals, grazed the sheep. The reason for rearing many horses was for riding because there were no automobiles and no motorcycles. There were none in the region and no roads. Wherever one needed to go, one rode horses.

Q: And what kind of a horse rider were you as a young boy?

#5B: I was a good horse rider. I was a good horse rider, was good. [I] was very stylish as [I] rode a horse, armed with a gun and wearing a fox-skin hat and an amulet. There were no Chinese in our region then and there was freedom. You were very happy.

Q: What were some...Do you have any favorite memories of things that happened to you when you were that age and riding a horse and a fox hat and carrying a gun? Any special memories you can tell us about?

00:11:29

#5B: I miss those days and when such [video] cassettes arrive from [my] village, I wish to watch it everyday. My village was a happy one and the customs were good. [We] were very happy. It is still there in the mind and [I] wish to watch if such cassettes are available.

Q: What was your favorite time of year and why was it favorite for you?

#5B: In the village?

Q: Yes.

#5B: In the village once a year during summer [we] went up the mountain to offer incense.

Q: Where?

#5B: Up to offer incense where everyone gathered. There were more than a thousand horsemen. They enjoyed a day there at the incense-offering site. That was an enjoyable day.

Q: Was it like a picnic?

#5B: One must go up the mountain to offer incense and *lung ta* 'wind-horse' [prayer flags]. It took place once in a year. That was an enjoyable day. People wore fine clothes, carried arms and rode horses. There would be over a thousand horsemen.

Q: What kind of games or sports did the horsemen engage in?

#5B: There was horse racing and target shooting with guns. That was it for the nomads and nothing else. There was no dancing and such. It was just horse racing and target shooting with guns. These were the best.

Q: Why was it important to be able to have...be a good shot? What was important about that?

#5B: That was a competition for the best target shooter. There was not any prize for the best but one liked being known as the best shot.

Q: How were you? What kind of shot were you?

00:14:49

#5B: I was not bad. [I] was like this [shows middle finger] and not like this [shows thumb].

Q: Can you tell us about the horse races? What did they involve doing? What happened?

#5B: Two horsemen must race to see who finishes first. One gets a name but we did not have any prizes. Whichever horse finishes the race first gets a name.

Q: Two raced at a time?

#5B: Two raced at a time.

Q: Was there a family that became famous for being good horse riders, a family name or clan or anything?

#5B: In the case of horse racing, if one did this year, another won the next year. So it was a different winner depending upon the horses. One paid highly for good horses, which only once a year... We paid 6-7 *goma* horses in my village for a huge, superior male horse. [The winner] changed from year to year depending upon that.

Q: What 6-7 did you pay?

#5B: *Goma* horses are horses that are pregnant. Six to 7 of such were paid for one [racing] horse. There were exceptional horses. They were saddled only on the day of the incense offering and none throughout the year.

Q: When you mentioned target practice, were there any animals you had to shoot in your activities as a nomad in your travels?

00:18:06

#5B: No, there were not. If an enemy arrives, you would fight with the gun. Besides using to fight an enemy, there was not much use of the gun. A man's ornament is the gun, guns and horses. They are like ornaments.

Q: What kind of difficulties did people have where they would want to shoot at their...I don't know...another man? What kind of problems would arise between two nomad men?

#5B: There were some problems that arise on account of lands when large numbers of animals arrive and when grass become insufficient. Otherwise, there were none.

Q: How did somebody decide...was there a chief or somebody that told you which piece of land to use each season or was it whoever got there first or whoever was strongest? What determined the access to the land?

#5B: Yes, there was; there was a leader. Each one had one's own area; each one had a summer site and a winter site and one could not go beyond it.

Q: I see and so difficulties would arise if someone did encroach upon the other?

00:21:06

#5B: And then arguments arose.

Q: In your group that traveled together, how many people were in that group, in that nomad group?

#5B: There was not any set number as at times many nomads converged together. If it was a vast and good area many nomads stayed together. In the case of small areas, there were only one or two families.

Q: Because your father had died and your mother now had you and a daughter, did she remarry or become part of another family so that there could be an adult man to look after her and you?

#5B: No.

Q: At what age did you marry?

#5B: Father was killed when I was 7-8 years old.

Q: At what age did you marry?

#5B: I married after coming here to the settlement in [Bylakuppe,] Mysore. I was not married while in the village.

Q: When did your very beautiful and peaceful nomadic life change? What happened that made it change?

00:23:27

#5B: The change...[we] were happy. Take water for instance...like cream forms on milk, Tibet was a very happy place.

Q: Yes?

#5B: Tibetans were very happy. In particular the nomads were happy. Like ice that forms on water [during winter] everyone was equal. [To interpreter] Can you understand?

While it was so, the Communist Chinese came and mixed it up, mixed it up like blood. It is the Communist Chinese that created unhappiness. Otherwise, Tibet is the heavenly land of the dharma, with a monastery in each *tsokha* 'tribe.' There were nothing less than a thousand or 500-600 monks that practiced the dharma, chanted *mani* 'mantra of Avalokiteshvara' and lived happily.

Q: Did the nomads visit different monasteries in their travels?

#5B: Each *tsokha* had a monastery but nomads were not present there, as [they] were not permitted to live near the monasteries. [They] lived in other areas but could keep their riches and things at the monastery.

Q: What does *tsorwa* mean? *Tsokha*?

#5B: What?

Q: Was there a monastery in each *tsokha*?

00:25:16

#5B: A *tsokha* like Camp Number 2 [in the Bylakuppe Settlement] has a monastery; Camp Number 1 has a monastery. [To interpreter] We did not understand each other.

If you produced a lot of butter and cheese, it could be stored in the monastery. The nomads lived in another area and not where the monastery was located, [they] were not allowed to.

Q: How much contact did the nomad communities have with the Tibetan government in Lhasa or with the Dalai Lamas in Lhasa?

#5B: In order to maintain contact, Lhasa is very far away from our region. It would take a year to reach Lhasa carrying one's pack. Lhasa is not simple [to reach], as there were no vehicles and one carried packs, begging along the way as one traveled to Lhasa.

[To interpreter] Translate this. I will make it short for you cannot translate it, it is too long. [Laughs]

Q: Did many nomads ever try to go to Lhasa? Was that ever held as an idea or something worth doing?

00:27:22

#5B: Oh, if one could go to Lhasa it was considered this [raises right thumb], number one. Due to the great distance to Lhasa, not many could go. There were no vehicles. One carried things [on the back] and had to go begging. It was incredible if one could make it in a year. But even then many did go to Lhasa.

Q: Did you ever want to go, *pa-la*, yourself to Lhasa?

#5B: Even if there was the wish I could not. [I] visited Lhasa on [my] way back to the village but did not when I left the village. I could not travel carrying things [on my back]. [Laughs]

Q: *Pa-la*, many people don't know much about the nomads. So I'd like to help them understand like, were the children given any education like reading or writing? If you got sick, how were you treated? Did you do any daily prayer rituals or is that part of your daily life, Buddhist prayer rituals?

#5B: There was nowhere where [the children] could be given education. There were no such things as schools. [If a child must be taught], it was necessary to admit him as a monk in a monastery. He will be educated as a monk and live as a monk in the monastery. I cannot write my signature even now. [I] use this [indicates left thumb]. Even after coming here I did not learn to write keeping to the nomad's practice. I cannot ride a motorcycle or a bicycle; cannot drive a car. I have kept to the traditions of the nomads, which is the reason I am like this.

Q: If a person became sick, if a person among the nomads became sick how was [he] treated?

00:30:42

#5B: For that you had your own doctors. There were doctors. There were lamas that were very good doctors. One consulted him and was dispensed medicines. A fire treatment was given and also pressure was applied with a metal at the spot of pain that helped very much. One became well instantly. There were incredibly good doctors.

Q: Did the nomads conduct daily Buddhist prayer rituals?

#5B: The nomads chanted prayers. [The nomads] invited monks from the monastery two or three times a year to read prayers. Otherwise, there was not space for any other rituals because we lived in *ba* 'tent made from yak hair' and there were no houses.

Q: Can you describe a *ba* for people who have never seen one?

#5B: *Ba* is made from the hair of yaks and *dri* that is spun into thread and then woven into this size [gestures off camera]. These make up the *ba*. These make up the *ba* and during relocation to another place; the *ba* is divided into halves and carried by two yaks.

Q: How long did it take to assemble a *ba* when you arrived at a new location?

00:33:26

#5B: It did not take much time. There were poles at the sides strung with long ropes. Those were pulled and tied to the knots in the middle of the *ba* [sheets] and it was instant.

Q: How big would be the inside of a *ba* like the size of this room, which is about 12 x 20 [feet]?

#5B: A large one was two or three times the size of this [room]. It was long and wide. A medium size would be about this [room] and then there were small ones too depending upon the status of a family.

Q: If a *ba* was two to three times the size of this room, how many families would live in them?

#5B: Everything from cooking to heating milk and churning milk for butter was done in it. There was not anything else but for these activities in a *ba*. In it were a number of stoves and you heated milk, made butter; all such activities took place in a *ba*. There was no other place.

Q: Does that *ba* belong to one family?

#5B: It belonged to one family.

Q: Did the animals come into the *ba* in wintertime?

00:35:51

#5B: No, the animals were tethered outside. When [we] came down to the winter site, there are forests. The winter and summer sites are different. During summertime one went high up the mountain where there are no forests but pastures and flowers. Summer was a happy time. When it grew cold in winter and the water started to freeze, [we] came down lower where there are forests.

Q: Just to state that this room that we are in is about 20 feet x 20 feet, so a *ba* would be...sometimes this would be a medium size *ba* and the larger ones would be three times the size of this.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Correct.

Q: So *pa-la*, when did things begin to change in your peaceful life as a nomad? What happened?

#5B: The change happened when the Communist Chinese came and created chaos. Then there were vehicles, motorcycles and various things. If not for them, we enjoyed religious freedom and even a little child carried a rosary and knew to chant the *mani, kyabdo* ‘refuge prayers’ and Dolma ‘praises to the 21 Taras.’ The lamas lived in the monasteries.

Q: When was the first time you saw Chinese people?

00:38:49

#5B: It was sometime in the 1940s but I do not know the exact time. It was sometime in the 40s that the Chinese appeared. For a year or two after [they] appeared...initially [the Chinese] said, “We have come to provide security. [We] will give security to Tibet. [We] will bring about equality.” After the Chinese had controlled up to Chamdo, they said, “We will launch socialism, socialism.” When that took place all the leaders fled; all the lamas fled. We did not flee then but remained. Socialism.

Q: But *pa-la*, with your own eyes when did you first see a Chinese person in your area, in your nomad land?

#5B: There was no counting for when [the Chinese] appeared, [they] filled the region. Without time to say a word, within 2-3 days...there was no end to the Chinese; they continued to arrive. They claimed they were good. We Tibetans are foolish and initially believed, “Oh, they must be good.” Later, instead of doing good, [they] did horrible things.

Q: When they arrived in large numbers, were they walking or in cars or were they on horses? What did you see when they first arrived?

00:41:39

#5B: Walking, the majority of the men was walking when they arrived initially. They were constructing roads as they traveled. There was a line of vehicles. There were 200-300 numbers of trucks used for transportation and army vehicles. [They] constructed roads as [they] moved along. They are incredibly bad.

Q: When you first saw them, were you a little boy? What year was it? So you would have been in your 20s? About how old were you when you first saw them?

#5B: I was 22 or 23 years old when the Chinese appeared.

Q: Were you excited to see new people or were you afraid of them or just curious?

#5B: When they said nice things [I] thought [they] had come to help. They said that [they] would bring development to Tibet and do great things. [The Chinese] misled the people; whether leaders or lamas, everybody was deceived when [the Chinese] arrived.

Q: How did you know that they said they were going to help Tibet? Did they give a talk to the nomads? Did they organize you together?

00:44:05

#5B: It was said during a meeting, a meeting of leaders and lamas, “We have come to bring development.” We were the common people. They deceived them [the prominent people] first. [We] would have succeeded had [we] launched a little bit of resistance when [the Chinese] initially appeared. Nobody resisted and they filled the regions up to Chamdo by then.

Q: Where were you when they fought to capture Chamdo? Where were you?

#5B: There was an encounter at Chamdo and Chamdo was lost.

Q: Where were you then?

#5B: I was in [my] region then. I had not gone anywhere in that direction. Then the one called *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] tried to stop them but failed and

[the Chinese] marched towards Lhasa. They did put up a fight; a fierce fight at Chamdo but it was futile because their arms and ammunition were insufficient.

Q: Did you ever see the Chinese with your own eyes? Did you ever see the Chinese shooting or killing the nomads?

00:46:05

#5B: There were numerous nomad escapees in the region of Golok, in Serta, not in our region. There were many escapees, more than 10,000 horsemen in that region. When the Chinese launched the “Liberation,” [nomads] with spouses and animals from every region converged. Many thousands of families came together in one area.

Q: Are the regions of Golok and Serta far away from your village?

#5B: No, not very far away.

Q: I see. It was a different [region]?

#5B: It was different.

Q: Did you say that around 10,000 horsemen gathered there?

#5B: Yes, there were.

Q: Did [they] gather when the Chinese launched “Liberation” or were there earlier?

#5B: People came from here and there when the “Liberation” took place and altogether there were around 10,000 horsemen converged there. There were arrests and killing [in their regions], so unable to remain, [nomads] arrived with spouses and driving [their] animals. There were 2 to 3,000 families. Vast regions filled with escapees.

Q: Which region was it?

#5B: What?

Q: In which region did [the escapees] converge? Serta?

#5B: Region...They converged when the Communist Chinese in nineteen hundred...when was it...in the fifties.

Q: The place of convergence...

#5B: Serta.

Q: Were you in that gathering?

00:48:05

#5B: I fled later. Initially [the Chinese] stated that the leaders and lamas would be captured. So our leader Gundhatsang fled to Serta. In my birthplace of Lukhokma, Washi Hwarchen was the leader. So he and his son both fled. All of them reached there earlier. We fled later when everybody was going to be captured and imprisoned. So [we] dare not remain and fled towards Golok.

Q: Who fled with you? Were you with your mother and sister or other people?

#5B: Mother was not there. [I] left mother and fled.

Q: Yes?

#5B: [I] left mother behind, for I was going to be captured. There were 10 people with me.

[Discontinuity]

#5B: We 10 men were together. When [the Chinese] were about to capture us, [we] fled towards Golok.

Q: ...captured in your home area and then you fled to Serta?

00:49:53

#5B: Yes, and there were many escapees in Serta then. Our leader Gundhatsang was there and Washi Hwarchen, the leader of my birthplace was also there. [The leaders] were not killed then. Everybody met there.

Q: Did the Chinese ever arrest people? Where would they put them if they captured and arrested them because you know, you're on the plains? There are no great buildings. So, where would they arrest people and hold them if they caught them?

#5B: [The Chinese] led [them] away, led to the district headquarters or China or thrown in prisons in Minyak.

Q: Where is Minyak?

#5B: [Speaks before translation] The largest prison of Kham province is in Minyak.

Q: Where is Minyak? How far away?

#5B: One came across Minyak if coming from Dhartsedo towards [Lukhokma?]. Coming from Dhartsedo towards [Lukhokma] is Minyak.

Q: How far is it from Lukhokma?

#5B: It isn't very far from Lukhokma. Lukhokma is a nomadic site and further away is Yukhoktsang, then Tsarnangtsang. These regions lay side by side and traveling further away was Minyak.

Q: Before they took people to prison, did they ever do any public beatings of people or of officials or lamas in front of the other people to intimidate them or show them their power?

00:52:42

#5B: Such things were not done at that time but happened later. When the great Cultural Revolution took place, everybody was beaten and that is when all people were harmed.

Q: When? Cultural...?

#5B: The great Cultural Revolution brought hell on earth. Hell on earth is something that cannot be seen but it happened.

Q: You went to Serta in 1954. Who was there? What was going on? If we could look and see Serta what could we see at that time?

#5B: There was fighting in Serta, fighting the Chinese. There were numerous escapees, in the number of several tens of thousands. [They] were fighting but could not overcome [the Chinese] due to the lack of arms and ammunition. Their [the Chinese] arms and ammunitions were plenty like dust and stones. We did not have blacksmiths or factories to manufacture them. If one possessed a thousand bullets worn around the waist that was easily spent. [The Tibetans] did put up a fight but could not defeat [the Chinese].

Q: They had as many arms as there were stones and dust on the ground. Were they actually killing people right on the spot?

00:54:57

#5B: Not just killing people, most of the prominent people in Kham were killed then. I am a Khampa 'native of Kham' and the best people of Kham were killed there. Thirty to 40 people were being killed in a day. The Chinese and the Tibetans were fighting face to face. There was no use fighting when our bullets were spent and one ran away on horseback. Chinese were also killed but you killed a hundred and a thousand emerged. There was no use killing a hundred; there was no use killing a thousand, whereas in our case if one got killed, that was one [man less] and if two were killed it was two [men less]. The number reduced. In that way, all the very best and the bravest were killed there.

Q: What was the feeling of the Khampas at that time? Were they determined to fight to the end? Did they feel like they should surrender to save the people who were still living? What was their attitude?

#5B: There was no thought of surrendering. If you surrendered, they [the Chinese] will cut you into pieces. We have not harmed them even as little as the tip of a needle. The Tibetans are unfortunate and humble. If you fell into their hands, they would label you a rebel and using a knife will make mincemeat of you. Rather it would be better to die.

Q: The Khampas were using guns as their major weapon? And what were the...any other thing they were using and what were the Chinese using to ward you off?

00:57:41

#5B: One was armed with a gun and sword, even two swords of different length. However, [the gun] was useless once the bullets were spent. Then one rushed with the sword. They shot from the guns and [the Khampas] charged on them brandishing swords and everyone was killed.

Q: Can you continue and tell us what happened, what you saw especially with your own eyes of this terrible devastation?

#5B: While putting up resistance, we had nothing to eat or drink. There was not even this much [indicates handful] of *tsampa* ‘flour made from roasted barley.’ [We] had revolted against the Communist Chinese. Even then [we] were living there without *tsampa* and tea leaves to prepare tea. [We] ate the meat of animals and survived in this manner for a few years.

Q: Do you know about how many Khampas were killed and how many survived?

#5B: Around a hundred of us horsemen escaped and none else. During one encounter with the Chinese, though there were many tens of thousands of Chinese, they could not overcome [us]. The Chinese went back. [We] resisted and the Chinese could not defeat [us] then. Then two or three months later many tens of thousands [of Chinese troops] arrived and we had exhausted our bullets, exhausted the weapons. And that day we lost our land, could not overcome [the Chinese]. The very best people were killed. Everyone else was killed.

Q: Did the Chinese ever take any prisoners into captivity or did they simply kill them and leave them there?

01:01:10

#5B: The Chinese failed to defeat us during the first encounter and they returned. When [they] came again, we lost, and then lost [our] territory. After the loss [we] fled to Lhasa where the *Chushi Gangdrug* was. We lost our territory around 1948.

Q: It must be the ‘50s.

#5B: Was it the ‘50s? It was near about that. Lhasa was lost in the ‘50s, right?

Q: It was ‘59 that Lhasa was...

#5B: Oh, yes, Lhasa was lost in ‘59. We lost our territory in ‘58, just before the start of ‘59. [We] put up resistance but failed and the Chinese killed most of the prominent people. We were just over a 100 horsemen that escaped while the rest were either killed or captured. The 10,000-20,000 horsemen fell into their [the Chinese] hands.

Q: This was a great loss of your people.

01:03:19

#5B: Yes, it was and the dead included the finest men. They were courageous, that is what we call courage. On that day they combated to kill any number of Chinese at the risk of their lives. That is called bravery and not what is said these days about that one being brave and this one being brave. We call those that fought the Communist Chinese and were determined to kill them as courageous.

Q: What happened to those 100 people? Did they go on to join the *Chushi Gangdrug* in Lhasa? What happened?

#5B: I will narrate in sequence. On the night of the attack we were over 10,000 horsemen. Everybody was on flight in the night. We were in the lead and it was raining at night as we trekked. More than 10,000 horsemen trekked close by a high mountain in the night. They [the Chinese] shone some sort of light from the mountain. When the light shone from four directions, it seemed like daylight. And then [the Chinese] fired such that it was like rain. It was our destiny that over a 100 horsemen escaped through a narrow valley. Except for them, the rest fell [under the Chinese]. In the group were the top chieftains Changon Tepo, Washi Rinzin Dhondup, Tonkho Ngeton Gyamtso, Burpa Wangyal. They were six, seven or eight top chieftains that were all led away and killed.

Q: Seventeen?

#5B: Yes, there were 16-17 chieftains. They were all taken away and then killed there. [They] could not flee to India nor were [they] put in prison. They wished to kill themselves [rather than fall into Chinese hands]. I told you earlier that falling into their hands would mean being cut [indicates cutting body], rest for a while and then cut again. It was best to die and one must be able to do so.

Q: When you say cut up into pieces, was that something that they actually did or are you just implying that they would be slaughtered with guns?

01:07:28

#5B: [The Chinese] will not cut up one to die. [They] will cut and wait a while so that the person did not die. Then when he regained consciousness, will be cut up again. In that manner, I swear [the Chinese] will not let one die easily. [We] have never harmed the Communist Chinese even as little as the tip of a needle. Poor things, the Tibetans are humble. [The Chinese] could do whatever they wished.

Q: You said that if the Chinese caught them, they'd cut up...

#5B: Yes, they will.

Q: Did such cases occur?

#5B: None fell into [the Chinese] hands for such cases to happen. All of them were killed while fighting. They fled from Serta towards Dhokhok, a very bad place and everyone got killed. And many were captured there, captured and taken to Minyak. There were men; fine men that we used to cook together that were taken away. We became separated. When I went back a few years ago, I met them who had been in prison for 20, 18 and 19 years.

Q: Where did the fleeing nomads go when they finally...you said they got into a valley, they were fortunate enough to get into a valley. Where did that valley take them and where did they go to eventually?

01:09:51

#5B: And then...there are no farmers in the nomadic region. Once you get away from the mountains of the nomadic region, it is open ground. We came into such a place. All the rebels had been driven away and we were the ones left. That is your destiny and not because of your greatness. It is your destiny. We decided to join the *Chushi Gangdrug* not having heard about the destruction of Lhasa.

Q: And is that what you did?

#5B: There are many [incidents] before that. Is there time for all? Then as [we] proceeded in the evening, there was a monastery called Sera Gon where the Chinese were put up. We had an encounter during which two or three of our men were injured but none killed. [We] killed numerous Chinese. The Chinese could not overcome us. Then [we] advanced further. [To interpreter] Translate this to her. It would be better not to make it lengthy, right?

Q: And then?

#5B: And then as [we] advanced there was no place that was free of Chinese. Chinese in groups of 30, 40, 50 spread out into the mountains. We encountered them and lost some of the men. Now [we] had to cross the Drichu 'Yangtze River' in Derge. In our province of Kham there are five rivers called Gyamo Nguchu 'Salween River,' Derge Drichu, Dhachu 'Mekong River,' Nguchu [tributary of the Yangtze] and Serchu. These five large rivers are the rivers of Kham. We had to cross the Yangtze but that was possible only in boats. One could not do so on horseback. [To interpreter] You can translate this.

Q: There's the Yangtze and then...?

01:12:41

#5B: Yes, there is the Yangtze and Salween. There are many large rivers in our region. Do you understand? The first one is the Salween, then the Yangtze, Mekong, Nguchu and Serchu. There are five rivers in the province of Kham. The rivers flow towards China.

Q: There's one called Serchu, right?

#5B: Serchu that flows close to Amdo.

Q: The Yangtze...

#5B: The largest river is the Yangtze.

Q: [You] reached the Yangtze and had to cross...

#5B: [We] had made a boat using animal hide to cross the Yangtze. However, the boat could take only 4-5 men at a time. Then the 100 horsemen crossed the Yangtze and believed there were no Chinese then [on the other side].

Q: Were there Chinese or not?

01:14:18

#5B: Oh, it was full of Chinese! Of course, it would be for Lhasa had been captured. We never heard it. Being rebels [we] had no contact with anyone.

Q: Did the 100 men reach the other side of the Yangtze 4-5 at a time?

#5B: Yes, everyone reached the other side of the Yangtze. [We believed], “Now it is fine. There are no Chinese.” [Laughs] “There are no Chinese!” However, the number of Chinese became more and more. Wherever [we] went there were Chinese present.

Q: This was before the attack on Lhasa. So what year would we be talking about, two years or a year before the attack? What time, five years?

#5B: The attack had happened. We had not heard about it.

Q: Was it '59?

#5B: It was '59 and Lhasa attacked. It was at the same time the Chinese attacked us. The attack in Golok and the attack on Lhasa took place around the same time.

Q: So it's 1959 we're talking about.

01:16:21

#5B: After crossing the Yangtze [we] thought, “Now there are no more Chinese. [We] are happy. Everything is well.” Ten to 15 days later, Chinese cavalry appeared and surrounded [us] at the Yangtze. [We] were helpless but by the grace of God and one's destiny, everyone rode their horses into the Yangtze and fled across. There were no casualties. That day [we] fought the Chinese and captured many horses and many weapons. We fought and captured 30-40 Chinese horses and weapons. We were happy that day. The Chinese could not kill anyone from our side while we killed numerous Chinese. Once again [we] were on the other bank of the Yangtze.

Q: Did [the encounter] take place after crossing the Yangtze?

#5B: We had crossed it earlier and once again reached the other bank. [We] could not escape from the Chinese. There were Chinese everywhere.

Q: Again? Not a cavalry but another whole group?

[Interpreter interprets as: Did [you] return later or turned back on encountering the cavalry?]

#5B: When [we] encountered the cavalry, had [we] not rushed into the Yangtze on horseback, everyone was certain to die. Then [we] battled and captured 40-50 Chinese horses and several weapons. There were no casualties from our side while numerous Chinese were killed. Then we were on the other side of the Yangtze.

Q: Did you not turn back once?

01:18:34

#5B: No, [we] crossed to the other bank and as [we] continued there was not any place free of Chinese. There were 30-40 Chinese everywhere going in search of rebels. We encountered them and could overpower them. [They] could not fight fiercely.

Q: Did [you] retrace [your] steps?

#5B: And then we continued in Derge on to Harko until the end of the Yangtze. We reached the end of the large river. The water reached only up to the hooves of the horses. [We] crossed there and continued to have skirmishes with the Chinese along the way. [We] lost a few men but not many. Then [we] arrived at the place called Tso Kyarang Ngorang. It is a vast nomadic region with Tibetan wild asses and wild yaks. We arrived at that region. [To interpreter] This much will do or [you] might make mistakes. Do not make any mistakes or it will be a waste. [Laughs]

Q: What happened there?

#5B: Tso Kyarang Ngorang lies in Kham Province. Tibetan wild ass and wild yaks occupy this region. Wild yaks are like [the domestic] yaks and graze in groups of 50, 60, 70 or 80. These are like our yaks and *dri*. The wild ass lives lower down in the pastures. [We] reached this place of the Tibetan wild ass and wild yaks through Achen Gangrigyap. [We] found the Chinese even here. There was not any place without [them].

Q: At this point, how many men are in your group? How many are left?

01:21:43

#5B: [We] had not lost many men. When [we] reached there, [we] lost five, six or seven men. Do you want the names of the dead? Perhaps it is not necessary.

Q: I'm trying to understand how many were in the group that is still travelling? And are you traveling towards Lhasa? Is that where the journey is taking you?

#5B: [We] were planning to go to Lhasa and see His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We were traveling happily planning to go to Lhasa, join the *Chushi Gangdrug* and see His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We will be happy, [we thought]. [We] were moving towards Lhasa.

Q: And how many people were with you?

#5B: There were around a 100 men then, around a 100 horsemen. Many were left behind and many died. Then [we] arrived at the place called Amdo Torma, which is a nomadic region near Lhasa.

Q: Amdo Torma?

01:23:14

#5B: Amdo Torma where there are many families. We planned to join the *Chushi Gangdrug* and were journeying towards Lhasa feeling happy. When sought information, they replied, “Lhasa has been destroyed.” [We] asked, “Lhasa destroyed? How was it destroyed?” “It has been many months since Lhasa was destroyed. Do not go towards Lhasa for it is full of Chinese. All the nomads are being formed into communes.” [We] asked, “What has happened to His Holiness the Dalai Lama?” “Nobody knows if His Holiness has been captured or killed or has escaped.” [We] came across this [information] and felt very sad.

Now [we] were unhappy with nowhere to go. If [we] were to go to India, [we] did not know how to get there.

Q: What did you decide to do?

#5B: Then [we] continued journeying with the aim to go to India. Even then there was not any place without the Chinese. They were searching for the rebels in groups of 20, 30 or 40. [We] did not come across any large groups. [We] could see Mount Kailash in the north. After leaving behind Mount Kailash, we arrived at the border of Mustang. [We] arrived in the place called Mustang. [Laughs]

Q: That was very much the northern route way above Lhasa, all the way into Mustang.

#5B: Yes.

Q: How long did that take, *pa-la*?

01:26:24

#5B: Of course, it took a long time. When the Chinese attacked, when the Chinese attacked us in Golok, grass was just beginning to sprout, and when we arrived there, the waters had frozen. One could walk across large rivers. It took that long.

Q: [You] left Golok...

#5B: When [we] left Golok it was summer and the grass was just beginning to sprout. That was the time of the attack there. Later when [we] were traveling nearby Lhasa, all the waters had frozen.

Q: The waters were frozen?

#5B: The waters were frozen. It took us that long. That is how time went by.

Q: Did you ever along that journey find out what had happened to His Holiness the Dalai Lama? Did anybody tell you the news?

01:27:57

#5B: Once [we] reached Mustang, [we] felt assured to be away from the Chinese and then heard the news that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had arrived in India. Then we felt the dawn of day on hearing that His Holiness had arrived in Lhasa. Oh no, that [he] had arrived in India and was living in a place called Dharamsala. One heard the news then and then we felt, "It matters not if we have no riches or no food. [Our] families are left behind and [we] have struggled to come here but His Holiness has escaped and so that is good for us." I felt very happy.

Q: Why did you and all of your companions love the Dalai Lama so much?

#5B: [We] love and consider [His Holiness] like our parents. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is our father and mother. We rebelled in the village and left with the sole thought of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the hope that our dharma will not be destroyed. Everyone wished for freedom to practice the dharma. They are the destroyers of the dharma. The Communist Chinese are destroyers of the dharma, while we wish for the dharma to flourish. So that is the difference.

Q: *Pa-la*, earlier you said, "Do you want me to tell you the names of the people who died?" and I think that would be very good for us to have a record of the names of people you can remember that were in your group that fled or were forced to flee from the Chinese income. Can you tell us as many names as you can remember?

#5B: Okay. When [we] left from there the Chinese killed Patak.

Q: Patak.

#5B: Patak and then Tenga was slain. Another one called Amchok was killed at the Yangtze. Then Gundha Ngacho was killed, the father of Thambu. Similarly 5-6 was killed then while the rest escaped.

Q: Was there anybody who was the leader of that group while you were making that escape?

01:31:46

#5B: The leader was the Gundhatsang. The brother of Gundha Ngacho was able to reach here. [His] sons have reached here. These were our leaders.

Q: Gundha Ngacho...?

#5B: Ngacho died, was killed there. He had a sibling called Tenzin who succeeded in escaping and so did Thambu who was a youth then. They were the leaders.

Thambu lives in the United States, in New York. His paternal uncle, a monk has passed away.

Q: *Pa-la*, just to recap some dates. I want to understand, the “Liberation”...When you went to Serta that was in 1956 and about 20,000 horsemen were resisting the Chinese army under 18 chieftains for like 3-4 years. Is that correct?

01:33:40

#5B: I escaped [from my village] in 1956. They had gathered; there were many that were revolting. I was going to be captured during the “Liberation” and fled.

Q: [You] fled and reached Serta?

#5B: Fled and reached Serta.

Q: Was it 1956 when [you] arrived in Serta?

#5B: It was '56.

Q: Then [you] fought in the resistance for around three years?

#5B: Yes, there was fighting.

Q: And then on your journey you heard that Lhasa had been attacked: you didn't know what had happened to the Dalai Lama until you got to Mustang?

#5B: That is right.

Q: I know there was great relief when you heard that His Holiness was alive, but I'm wondering how many men were with you when you got finally to Mustang?

#5B: There were 70-80 but once at the border everyone went their own way. Some joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* army there. We were only 60-70 men that continued but owned no riches, no food and were not permitted to bring horses or weapons. [We] left everything but were happy that His Holiness the Dalai Lama was living there. We were beggars owning nothing and came to Kalimpong and Darjeeling [West Bengal].

Q: You didn't join the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

01:35:40

#5B: No, [I] did not.

Q: Was it Kalimpong?

#5B: Kalimpong and Darjeeling. First [I] went to Kalimpong and then Darjeeling.

Q: How did you get from Mustang to Kalimpong?

#5B: From Mustang [I] went to Pokhara on foot. There was a crude airplane at Pokhara that flew to Gorakhpur. It was a very crude airplane. There were Chinese there. Many Chinese planes used to land in Pokhara at that time. We hid in the forest when the Chinese appeared.

Q: Who took you in that plane?

#5B: [I] have no knowledge who it was. It must have been some sort of aid. It must have been His Holiness the Dalai Lama's advice because we had no money to pay. The plane dropped [us] in Gorakhpur.

Q: Tell us what happens to you now. You are in India, what is that like? The climate is different; Tibet has been, in a way lost to the Chinese, what do you feel in your heart when you got to India?

01:38:15

#5B: I was deeply worried about [my] mother and sibling who were left behind. They had nobody, as I was the only son. My mother was certain that I was dead. She never believed [I] would be alive. [People] were being killed fighting the Chinese then.

Q: So it sounds like you saw your mother again but before you tell us about that story, how long were you in India and what were you doing there?

#5B: [I] will speak about this first. While in Darjeeling, [names] were being registered for the settlement in Mysore [Bylakuppe]. We stayed in Darjeeling for six months, for six months. Then [we] registered for the settlement and came to the settlement in Mysore.

Q: And how long did you stay in Mysore?

#5B: [Speaks before translation] Then we arrived in the [city of] Mysore without riches and food but the Indian Government provided food. During the two or three days stay in Mysore food was provided. India is very beneficial to us Tibetans. Then as we journeyed further, Camp Number 1 had already been established. There at Camp Number 1, you looked up and saw the bamboo, you looked down and saw the earth and there was nothing else to see. Elephants and wild animals abounded in the area. The Indians are really very beneficial for [they] had pitched 100 tents in each camp and fenced with bamboos. Our Camp Number 2 consisted of 100 tents near the lake. Such had been kept in readiness.

Q: What did you do when you were in this camp?

01:41:48

#5B: [Speaks before translation] Then the Indian Government organized for us to cut the trees, cut trees. Trees must be cut to make way for agricultural land. We were paid two rupees at the start, paid two rupees a day. The two rupees could cover a lot. A kilogram of meat cost half a rupee; a kilogram of maida 'white flour' cost a quarter rupee. It not only

covered food expenses but there was surplus. We hoped to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama soon and were very happy as though the sun had risen.

It was like that. Then if we wanted to buy provisions, [we] went to Kushalnagar. Everyone sang as [they] carried the supplies. We were the people of Tibet and did not have any worries about carrying stuff. Each person carried a bag of *maida* weighing 40 kilograms. [We] came back and danced for [we] had seen His Holiness the Dalai Lama, had a place to stay and were far away from the Communist Chinese.

Q: You were very, very relieved to be alive and to be safe but also to have His Holiness with you in India.

#5B: Yes, that is the most important one.

Then it was announced that His Holiness the Dalai Lama was visiting. Now we were overjoyed as [we] would see [him]. In the center of camp was a circular ground. The Indians plaited a many bamboo sheets and made a hut in the center of the ground. [Laughs] The hut was lined with cloth sheets. Then His Holiness the Dalai Lama arrived, and the sun shone for us. He has given us encouragement, advice, teachings and everything.

01:45:30

And then we became happier and happier. [We] grew happier and happier and the house constructions were nearly done. Camp Number 1 and 2 had arrived and then 3, 4, 5 and 6 were established. The work of cutting wood was completed. Then His Holiness came for a visit again a year or two later and gave the Kalachakra empowerment at the palace. [We] got the chance to see [His Holiness] and were satisfied.

There was plenty to eat and drink. The foreigners are very beneficial. India is very beneficial. There was enough to eat and drink and then [I] met [my] wife. Then *khorma* ‘samsara, the vicious cycle of existence.’ [Laughs]. One joined the life of *khorma* and [I] met [my] wife.

We had six children. From the six children there is only one daughter. [To interpreter] You know that. Now they required food, drink, clothes and it was quite difficult. Due to the benevolence of the gods, I was healthy and they have all turned out very well.

Q: How did you decide to choose this wife? Was it arranged or did you see her and like her?

01:47:40

#5B: No, no. We met each other. She was a nomad from the place called Tomdha. Now we were meeting here. I had no father, no mother, no relatives, no one to arrange a marriage. [Laughs] A nomad met a nomad.

Q: Did you have to court her and impress her with your abilities?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: [Laughs] I don't know the word for that.

Q: Okay. Did she say yes she would marry you when you asked her, right away? Did she say right away?

#5B: Of course, [she] did. And that is why we are compatible. I needed her and she needed me. And then we [joins fingers]. [Laughs]

Q: I got it. I got it. What qualities did she have besides that she was from Kham that you admired? What was it you admired?

#5B: [Speaks before translation] Must I mention the names of the children here? Is it required?

Q: No, that's better not to.

#5B: [Speaks before translation] It is not required? Okay. I thought you needed it. Okay.

Q: Did you get your own place here in...where are we now, in...?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Bylakuppe.

Q: Bylakuppe. Did you get your own house for your wife and children?

01:49:46

#5B: The Indian Government constructed houses at that time, each one housing five people. We were allotted one such.

Q: If you want to tell us the names of your children, that would be fine with us if you wish to.

#5B: I feel the names should be mentioned, right?

Q: Right.

#5B: The oldest son is called Rinzin Dorjee. He lives in...should the place be mentioned?

Q: If you want to mention, [you] can.

#5B: He's in Belgium, Belgium. The next son lives in Canada. He's called Sonam Dorjee and his wife's name is Tsering Dekyi. The names must be mentioned. They will be content and feel, "Father has mentioned [our names]. That is good." Otherwise, there is no reason for me to mention. It is very important [for me] to get a copy of the recording, so that they can see it. Well, that is the couple. Then there is another son who lives in Sera [Monastery] here. He has completed Geshe Lharam 'Doctorate in Buddhist philosophy' and is Sera Monastery's reliable member. He is the one that takes care of us.

Q: His name?

#5B: Chonphel Norbu.

Q: Yes?

#5B: Chonphel Norbu. You got it. Be alert.

Q: Okay.

01:51:38

#5B: The next is a daughter who is Tenzin Zega. Her older son's name is Tenzin Norphel. Then the daughter is called Kyiga Lhamo and the younger son's name is Tenzin Sonam. That comprises [the children]. Their father is English. I cannot pronounce his name. [Laughs] Then there is a son called Tenzin Gawa who has a wife called Zompa. [He] is already taken a wife. The youngest son is Dhondup, Dhondup Tashi. He has taken a wife in England whose name is Tsering Yangzom. So in that way, each one is standing on his/her feet.

Now I am content and the old man is at death's door. At this time of death, [I] got the opportunity to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama. When [His Holiness] visited Sera Monastery last July—my son is very helpful. My son in Sera is very helpful—[he] took my wife and I for an audience. [I] held His Holiness' hand, touched heads and [His Holiness] said, "Oh, poor thing, poor thing." The sympathy is because we are old and have struggled so much.

We are very fortunate to receive such an audience. As [we] touched heads, His Holiness asked my son, "Are they your father and mother?" [He] replied, "They are my parents." "Oh, that is very good. Let's take a picture together." His Holiness said that. He stood in the middle with both of us [husband and wife] on one side; a picture was taken of His Holiness in the middle with our family of three. I was still holding [His Holiness'] hand. [I] did not let go of [His Holiness'] hand, really [I] did not. I was happy and sad. I am so very fortunate to see His Holiness right there. Otherwise, one gets to see [His Holiness] only from a distance. Now my mind is content. I have no worries whatsoever. [To interpreter] Now translate this. Now we are almost at the end of the story.

Q: Lovely story. Beautiful.

01:55:47

#5B: These days the Communist Chinese are talking about a Chinese border and an Indian border. There is a border talk going on. There is no Chinese territory [near India]. I, a humble man have heard such [news]. [The Chinese] are seizing [our] land. There is no Chinese territory [near India]. This is Tibetan territory. Tibet and India lie side by side. If they [the Chinese] want to talk about their territory, they must go to Lhasa, then from Lhasa to Chamdo, Chamdo to Karze, Karze to Dayab, Dayab to Dango, then to Tago, then directly to Gadak and Dhartsedo, and beyond that is their territory and not on the other side.

You are helping His Holiness the Dalai Lama and that is beneficial. We are not in a position to do anything, being humble people. The Communist Chinese oppress [us].

In the old days there was real security. It is not as if we did not have any security in Tibet. There were dense forests in every region that one is not allowed to cut. The mountaintops were protected; the water sources were protected. We did not destroy them. Look at these days. The Communist Chinese not only transport soil but even the rocks to China. Poor Tibet.

Thank you for extending help to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Now we have to pin our hopes on you, the foreign people because we are not in a position to do anything. How many people are immolating themselves these days! One feels pain when touched by fire. They are desperate, desperate. The Communist Chinese destroyed everything, destroyed the dharma, destroyed the teachings of the Buddha and everything. They cannot endure it and feel it is better to die and do so. Please [extend help]. Thank you.

01:58:46

I went to the village and while there looked around the mountains. In the past the whole region was covered in forest. Now there is not even one tree left; all have been cut. When asked where they had been taken, [I] was told, “To China.” Roads have been constructed where there were none. Presently [they] are destroying even the mountains. There are many mineral resources. Mining the mountains will bring upon harm. The Chinese destroy everything; [they] transport not just the earth but even the rocks to China. One must feel sympathy and pity for Tibet. It would be good if the world will observe this. Surely the name of Tibet is there in the world. Tibet is a part of the world. Hence, one must extend help, which is what [I] wish to say. This is the most important point.

Q: How do you think the world could help Tibet?

#5B: [The world] must help His Holiness the Dalai Lama to be able to go to Tibet. That is important. They [the Chinese] have labeled [His Holiness] as “reactionary Dalai.” There is no reason to label [His Holiness] as “reactionary Dalai.” He is the Buddha, Buddha. Calling [him] “reactionary Dalai” [His Holiness] cannot return to [his] fatherland. The best thing would be if [His Holiness] has the authority to return to his country.

Q: Were you able to go back to Tibet?

#5B: I went twice. When [I] went the first time my mother was alive. [I] met mother. Mother was 81 years old then. When Mao Zedong died, clearance was given for issue of travel documents and I immediately went to see mother. I already had all the children but left them and went to my mother. When I met mother she was 81 years old. [I] have a sister and she has many children. At that time the commune system was going on; it had not been dissolved. The Chinese had distributed separate grazing areas for animals like *kamrak* ‘non-milking animals,’ yaks, sheep, horses and milking cattle and they took away all the butter and cheese. Our [people] had no authority. Mother died after [I] returned. She died at the age of 84.

02:03:02

Believing that my children should get to know their many relatives, [I] went to Tibet taking along Sonam Dorjee. [We] met everyone. My sister was living then. [They] had prospered. The commune was abolished and [animals] distributed individually. [They] were living happily and owned many animals. And then [we] came back.

Q: When you went that first time, how old were you? Let's see...it was when Mao Zedong died, right after that? Do you know what year that was that you traveled there?

#5B: [I] do not know. I do not know such things [like years]. [I] do not know anything. When Mao Zedong died it was 1976-77.

Q: What did you find when you went that first time and you saw your mother? What had happened to her during the years you were gone?

#5B: What had happened was...there were only my sister and mother in the family. We were three in the family and I had fled while they were left behind. Both of them were certain I was dead. The Communist Chinese formed the commune system and one was not allowed to chant the *mani*, was not allowed to light butter lamps and could not invite monks to read prayers. All these were banned and doing any of these would mean being punished. There were *zee* made of wood like this [gestures off camera] that had a cap.

Q: What? *Zee*?

02:06:23

#5B: *Zee* that are like the metal containers but made of wood. [Mother and sister] created a hole in it and placed a *lhapi* when darkness fell. Mother and daughter prayed, "May he be born in the blissful realm." And they cried. They could not do otherwise because the Communist Chinese might chop [them]. It happened like that.

Q: What did [you] say about the wood? What's there inside it?

#5B: There was a *lhapi* in the wood [container].

Q: What's a *lhapi*?

#5B: Butter lamp. [Mother and sister] placed a butter lamp within [the wooden container]. Keeping a butter lamp here [gestures off camera] would mean everybody spying it and saying, "You have lit a butter lamp." Then both of them would be captured and beaten. So they placed it in the container, created a hole in the lid and prayed taking my name, "May he be born in the blessed realm."

Q: What had happened to your mother? Was she subjected to any difficulties because you had been one of the revolutionaries?

02:08:17

#5B: Of course, [she] was subjected to difficulties. [She] was among the *tanga*. *Tanga* were those with serious crimes, *tanga*. Both mother and daughter were among the *tanga*. We have the *zeewo* patients here. [They] were similar to the *zeewo*.

Q: What's *zeewo*?

#5B: *Zeewo* means [a leper] without treatment who develops sores and the hands and legs fall off. The *tanga* were similar to such people. They [mother and sister] were given half the animals [they owned] and were kept among the *tanga* for a year. They said that they were very happy. A year later they were pushed into the commune with everybody. In that way, [the Chinese] did not treat the revolutionaries well. I was the revolutionary and they suffered for it.

Q: What was your mother's reaction to hear that you were living in India and that you had a wife and family? How did she hear that news? How did she take that news?

#5B: [She] had never heard [that I was living in India]. I left from here all of a sudden when the Chinese [Embassy] in Delhi issued travel permits upon the death of Mao Zedong. [The officials] were very disruptive then. If one applied for a permit in the morning, it was issued that evening in Delhi. Besides they said, "We are siblings meeting each other. This is incredibly good." What liars they are! They observe whatever word we utter. We would know that. [The Chinese] put up listening devices in many directions and then observe what we speak. There were such devices set up in Lhasa and also at the District Headquarters in our region. We knew it and did not speak. Who will trust them? They are the ones that destroyed temples, lamas and many thousands of monasteries! Yet they hold our hands and say, "We are siblings meeting each other."

Q: Did they continue to be friendly to you while you visited your mother that first time and noticed the changes? Were you ever in danger of being arrested by them?

02:12:21

#5B: There was not any danger because we were from India, a subject of India. Arresting [me] would land them in trouble. We also knew it. We were subjects of a foreign country and not their subjects. We had escaped them. [Laughs] When I went to the District Headquarters of Tongo, I spoke to the senior district official. [He] said, "You should come back to your village. If you return to your village, you will get all the rights of a nomad if it is your choice or the rights of a farmer if that is your choice. It is no use living in an alien land." I would understand whether his talk is good or bad. "Thank you. [I] am grateful to you. I know what my village is like. When the time comes for me to return, I will come. I cannot come before the right time," I replied. He did not like this. The district authority said that to me.

Q: You did not want to be fooled into thinking that it felt like the same place.

#5B: We cannot be fooled because we know their strategies. We know what they did to us in the 1940s. They have never done a single good thing. It was only destruction, destroying the dharma and destroying all the monasteries. They have never done any good work.

They spoke nicely and cordially but were observing what we would say. There were listening devices placed in every direction. It was so in Lhasa too. When returning to Lhasa we were 50 men from Kham traveling together. In the group were nomads and farmers. When we reached Lhasa [Chinese officials] said, “We have a guest house for you. This is incredible [because we are] siblings meeting each other.” There was a large building where preparation had been made for our stay, for the 50 people.

Q: [You were returning] from the village to Lhasa?

02:15:35

#5B: Yes, returning to Lhasa. [The officials] said, “Earlier when the great Cultural Revolution was launched, there was a lot of destruction and great difficulties. However, these days one has the freedom to practice religion. What do you think?” With us was Barchung, an old nomad who was a wise man and a glib talker. He was asked, “Can you say something?” We had agreed not to say anything. No one spoke because [points around the room to indicate listening devices]. Such were placed in all directions. [We] knew it.

Q: What had been placed?

#5B: There were listening devices fixed in all directions. We knew it. They [the Chinese] had fixed [listening devices]. Barchung Sorgyem, a nomad was asked to speak. We were in the guest house that was grand and asked for opinions. “It is not like the old system. What do you think of the present? Is it good?” [The Chinese officials] asked. No one spoke because we had agreed not to talk.

No one spoke. When nobody spoke, they became suspicious and asked, “We have said a lot but you are not speaking at all. What can it be?” Then Barchung Sorgyem who was one of us stood up and said, “Okay. We left for another country due to the misery and not because we wanted to.”

Q: Yes?

02:18:03

#5B: “We fled to another country due to the misery and not because we were happy to leave. [We] went to India unable endure the suffering inflicted by the Communist Chinese. Recently when travel permits were issued, we availed it, as we are happy to come to our village. While journeying from the village to Lhasa, as we approached nearer and beheld Lhasa I felt sad.” He was a wise man. He said that he felt, “Oh, Lhasa’s air is enveloped in dust. Why it is it so? Then as [we] advanced and reached Lhasa, feces filled the area around the Jowo ‘statue of Buddha Sakyamuni.’ Covered in feces because there are no toilets. The path around the Jowo [Central Cathedral] is covered in feces.”

There is the Jowo but no one knows if it is the real one or not. It does not seem likely. Besides the door leading to the Jowo is shut and nailed. They [the Chinese] have demolished it. It was not there when we went the first time.

Q: The Jowo wasn't there?

#5B: The Jowo was there but we felt it was not the old Jowo. It might not be. They have made another. They have the ability to create various things. [Barchung Sorgyem] said, “[We] went to the village and then traveled here and have visited Sera [Monastery]. There are just a few [monks] in Sera. [We] visited Drepung [Monastery] and saw a few [monks]. Then [we] went to Gaden [Monastery] that is totally destroyed with no buildings.

Q: No buildings?

02:19:50

#5B: There were not. Gaden is destroyed. [Barchung Sorgyem continued], “Then we visited Bhod [Kham region] where not even rocks and earth from monasteries remain. There used to be 100-200 monasteries.”

Q: Yes?

#5B: There used to be 100-200 monasteries.

Q: At the Potala?

#5B: Not at the Potala but in our region in Kham. There used to be 100-200 monasteries. Each region had its monastery. None of them survive, not even the rocks. Everything is vacant. “[We] felt sad. What has been done is utterly distressing. You state that now there is freedom of religion and that you will reconstruct the buildings. That is very helpful,” he [Barchung Sergyem] said but they [the Chinese] did not like it. [They] would not like it.

Q: Who's the one that gave this reply? Barchung...?

#5B: The one called Barchung Sorgyem.

Q: Sorgyem?

#5B: Yes. [He] is a nomad from the region of Golok. He is a very smart man.

Q: What was the reaction of the Chinese officials to this very honest, brave statement that he made?

02:22:34

#5B: They did not have anything to say. “This time I have not been able to extend good hospitality to you. When you visit next time, [I] will have *tsampa* and meat ready, as is the Tibetan custom,” [the official] said. There was nothing when [I] visited the next time. [Laughs]

Q: I think this is been such a very, very good story, *pa-la*, and you taught us very much about Tibetan history and the Khampas and the struggle. We very much appreciate your sharing your personal life with us and the efforts of your fellow countrymen to save Tibet and we hope that your prayers will be answered that the Dalai Lama will return and that Tibet will have religious freedom and the people will be free.

#5B: That is our biggest hope, right? That His Holiness the Dalai Lama can return to Tibet, this is what we need. These days many people are immolating themselves in Tibet. They do not get the chance to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama. [The Chinese] have given a bad label to His Holiness, labeled [His Holiness] as “reactionary Dalai.” Why should they label [him] as “reactionary Dalai”? What reactionary activities did he do? [His Holiness] has not done anything. He will not.

02:24:35

[His Holiness] should be able to return to Tibet for which he requires help and support. If [he] were to go [to Tibet] documents must be prepared and forwarded to the world and [supported] by the United Nations, everyone, and the United States that are all great. Every country including Europe and India has been very beneficial to us. It is only China that is the enemy while every other has been helpful. [Joins palms] Helping His Holiness the Dalai Lama is beneficial and we have no one but His Holiness the Dalai Lama whether in life or death.

END OF INTERVIEW