

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #64M – Tsering Tashi (alias)
April 8, 2010

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TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #64M
2. Interviewee: Tsering Tashi (alias)
3. Age: 69
4. Date of Birth: 1941
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Lhoka Danang
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: April 8, 2010
10. Place of Interview: Kalachakra Hall, Camp No. 3, Doeguling Settlement, Mundgod, Karwar District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 3 hr 01 min
12. Interviewer: Rebecca Novick
13. Interpreter: Namgyal Tsering
14. Videographer: Ronny Novick
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Tsering Tashi became a monk at Gaden Monastery at the age of 8. When he was 14 years old, he accompanied his teacher to collect offerings for the monastery in far off nomadic regions of Kham and Amdo for three years. He recounts his first experience with Chinese soldiers in Chamdo—how they appeared, their behavior and the gradual changes in their attitude towards the Tibetans. He witnessed their repressive policies and torture sessions targeting the wealthy and village leaders. Along with many people from Kham, he and his group fled to Lhasa.

Tensions were also rising in Lhasa and the monks of the three great monasteries were given guns by the government to protect their monasteries. In 1955 His Holiness the Dalai Lama had distributed protective amulets to all the monks of Sera, Drepung and Gaden monasteries and Tibetan soldiers. Tsering Tashi believes the Dalai Lama had anticipated fighting with the Chinese and gave the amulets to protect the Tibetans from being wounded by bullets.

Tsering Tashi joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* Defend Tibet Volunteer Force, but he received no training and had no gun. After being defeated by the Chinese army, he and many *Chushi Gangdrug* fighters made a difficult escape to India. He became a road construction worker in India and explains how he helped purchase the first vehicle for His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Topics Discussed:

Childhood memories, monastic life, first appearance of Chinese, invasion by Chinese army, resistance fighters, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas, escape experiences, life as a refugee in India.

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Interview #64M

Interviewee: Tsering Tashi [alias]

Age: 69, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Rebecca Novick

Interview Date: April 8, 2010

Question: Could you tell us your name one more time?

00:00:17

Interviewee #64M: Tsering Tashi.

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record the experiences of older Tibetans to share with the younger generation of Tibetans, with the Chinese people and with people in the outside world so that the true history, culture, beliefs and experience of the Tibetan people can be properly documented.

#64M: Okay.

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

00:01:15

#64M: Yes.

Q: Thank you very much.

#64M: Okay and [I] wish you all *Tashi Delek* ‘greetings.’

Q: If you want to take a break at anytime, just let us know.

#64M: Okay.

Q: If you don't want to answer a question, that's fine, you don't need to.

00:01:47

#64M: Okay.

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

#64M: In general I will not face any problems. I do not have any relatives in India; all the relatives are left behind in Tibet. Since 2008, I even stopped calling them over the telephone because by maintaining contact with them, they will face problems. I will not have any problems. Due to that I do not maintain contact with them.

Q: Thank you very much for agreeing to share your story.

00:02:28

64M: [I] wish to say *Tashi Delek* to everyone and thank you.

Q: *Pa-la* ‘respectful term for father,’ can you first of all just describe a little bit of your early life in Tibet—your very early memories?

#64M: I was born in Lhoka Danang in Utsang. The name of our village was called Tashiling, but I do not want to mention the name of my family at present. I lived in Lhoka with my parents from my birth to the age of 8.

Q: What was your life like? What did your family do?

00:03:48

#64M: The livelihood of my family was agriculture and nothing else.

Q: You did not raise animals?

#64M: No.

Q: How old were you when you became a monk?

00:04:03

#64M: I became a monk at around the age of 8. [I] joined Jangtse [Division] of Gaden [Monastery]. Since then, from the age of 8, I never saw my parents.

Q: Age of 8?

#64M: [I] did not get to go home or meet my parents.

Q: Why? Why did you not see...

00:04:43

#64M: To tell you the reason—I became a monk at the age of 8 and lived in the monastery until the age of 14.

Q: For 6 years.

#64M: Yes, 6 years. In the monastery there are *khangtsen* [smaller community in a monastery in which monks of one geographical area live] and *mitsen* [a group of monks from a particular region]. [Responsible monks] had to travel for *buldhue* ‘collecting offerings for a monastery’, which I spoke about last time [during the pre-interview] which you [interpreter] may not know. There was the custom of going to Golok and the regions of Dhemen in Amdo. The *khangtsen* sent my teacher on *buldhue* there and I was taken along.

Q: What did one do during the *buldhue*?

00:05:20

#64M: *Buldhue* is like what is being done here by a *datsang* ‘section in a great monastery’ or *khangtsen* by travelling to foreign countries and doing various things like creating *mandala* and performing prayers. Whatever collection is received for it, it is offered to the *datsang* or *khangtsen*. Since that is *dhue* ‘collecting’ the *bul* ‘offering,’ it is called *buldhue*.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Okay. So we’ll go back to that. He never really explained why he never saw his family ever again because that’s only until 14 but we’ll go back to that. Maybe he didn’t want to answer the question.

Q: So you went with your teacher for the *buldhue*, where did you go?

#64M: We first left Lhasa in 1956. The Chinese had already built drivable roads to Lhasa then.

Q: From where?

00:07:07

#64M: From China. [They’d] built drivable roads to Lhasa in ’56. We traveled by a vehicle to Chamdo through Kongpo. We spent about a month in Chamdo. The money that we’d brought with us from Lhasa was Tibetan currency. However, from Chamdo Tibetan currency was not valid, so we had to exchange them for Chinese paper currency at Chamdo. We spent about a month in Chamdo.

Q: Did you go to China from Chamdo?

#64M: [We] went to Dege from Chamdo.

Q: Was Tibetan currency not valid in Dege?

00:08:09

#64M: No.

Q: So you considered the border with China to be in Chamdo?

#64M: Actually Chamdo is not the border. However, since a long time ago the Chinese had demarcated the regions to the east and west of the Drichu [Yangtse] River. Chamdo was one of the larger towns and moving eastwards from there was towards the direction of Kham and Dege. It was such that Chinese currency and not Tibetan currency was valid beyond that side.

Q: Was the Tibetan currency valid only until Chamdo and not beyond that?

00:09:09

#64M: Yes, it was not valid beyond that.

Q: Was that in effect since long?

#64M: It was not [in effect] so long ago. After the Chinese arrived in 1950, since then it was so but earlier to that Dege, Ganzi, etc. were Tibetans [parts of Tibet], were part of Kham and not China. Later there was the talk about the [demarcation of regions on the] two sides of the Yangtze River and this came into effect then.

Q: But you considered that an occupied region of Tibet, yes?

00:10:15

#64M: No, never [it was never a part of China]. The Chinese entered Kham in '49 and '50. There were never any Chinese in those parts except Tibetans.

Q: But by 1956 the border that China considered to be the border of China and Tibet was Chamdo and you had to exchange currency in Chamdo?

#64M: [Speaks before interpretation] Not Chamdo. The main border [the Chinese] considered was the Yangtse River.

Q: The place where you exchanged currency was Chamdo?

00:11:04

#64M: Yes.

Q: I'm interested in this exchange of currency. So you had Tibetan notes and coins with you?

#64M: There were many Tibetan currency units just like we have here in India. Earlier we had 1, 2, 3 *paise* [coins in India]. Likewise there was the *karma* in Tibet. Then there was *shokang*, like 5 *sho*. There were paper notes like 2, 5, 10, 25, 50 and 100 denominations.

Q: Karma?

#64M: There were *karma* and *chikay*.

Q: Was it mostly coins? Were there no paper notes?

00:12:25

#64M: There was a currency unit called *sangsum gomo*, whose value was 3 *gomo* and was made out of an alloy of silver and copper. Then there was 10 *ngusang* that was also made of an alloy of copper and silver. There was *tanka karmo*. *Tanka karmo* called *ngagor* was newly minted later for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's *dakor* vow ceremony during the Monlam 'Prayer Festival.'

Q: During the Monlam? What was the ceremony for His Holiness?

#64M: It was during the time he took the *dakor* vows. [The coins] were totally made of silver.

Q: You had this Tibetan money when you got to Chamdo. Then you went to a Chinese person and gave them Tibetan money and they gave you Chinese money in return?

00:14:15

#64M: I am not able to say for sure what the exchange value was at that time. I only knew and can recall that money had to be exchanged, but do not remember what the exchange value was.

Q: No, no, no. There was a person who you went to exchange the money with. Like you can go and change money in India, right? Like the same thing—like you can go and change?

#64M: We had to exchange [the money] with people who were going to Lhasa—those who were traveling from Kham to Lhasa.

Q: Were there no exchange centers?

00:14:52

#64M: There were none like that. We gave the Tibetan currency to those who were going to Lhasa and [the Chinese money] was received by those that were travelling towards Kham. That was how money was exchanged.

Q: So when you crossed the border, what the Chinese considered the border to be, was there a post and then you had to show documentation? What did the border look like? Was there border control? How was it enforced, the border? Or you know, could you just sort of walk across?

#64M: At that time it was not like that. When we left Lhasa, it was our intention to travel beyond the Yangtze. Therefore, [we] had to receive documentation from the Chinese office in Lhasa permitting [us] to go there.

Q: Where? Right in Lhasa?

00:16:19

#64M: Yes, right in Lhasa. [We] had to provide information like the number of people, age just like it is recorded in the certificates here, the places to be visited and everything. One could not proceed without receiving the documents.

Q: And who was policing the border? Was it the People's Liberation Army who was policing the border?

#64M: They were all soldiers. The document had to be produced on the way from Chamdo and then at Dege. There was no bridge over the Yangtze then. Barges had been built and two or so vehicles were ferried across. Roads were constructed over the other side but there was no bridge over the Yangtze. So whether it was someone going to or coming from, they were inspected there.

Q: Who did you have to show this documentation to? Was it army? Was it military or was it police?

00:18:11

#64M: They were all soldiers.

Q: What color uniform were they wearing?

#64M: They wore army uniform.

Q: Color?

00:18:22

#64M: The color they wore then was yellow.

Q: Did you notice any particular difference between the Tibetans living in this area and the Tibetans from your region?

#64M: We had to spend a night there when we reached the Yangtze. The name of the place was Kangto Dukha. The Chinese showed a great liking to me because I was 14 years old then and not an adult. And I was dressed in the Utsang costume. They called me Lhasa's *wawa*. In Chinese language *wawa* meant Lhasa's child. When some of them smoked cigarettes or ate *kotse*—which was something the Chinese ate—they asked us to teach them the Lhasan language. [They] asked what the word for head and eyes were and wrote them down in their notebooks. They greatly liked [me] then.

Q: The relationship between the Chinese people here in this region and in Chamdo and the Tibetans, how was the relationship at this time? How would you describe it?

00:21:26

#64M: [I] cannot say much about that time because I was small in age and did not take notice. In general they [the Chinese] lived separately in the army camps and the Tibetans lived in the villages. [I] did not take that much notice.

Q: So we are talking about 1956. Had you heard about the fighting that had started in eastern Kham between Chinese and Tibetans?

#64M: It was '56 when we reached there. On the other side of the Yangtze lay Dege. Dege Gonchen where there was a huge quantity of Tibetan printing blocks was very famous. We spent a night there. Oh, I forgot to relate something earlier.

When we arrived in Chamdo, we met a boy and a girl. All of us were travelers and we spoke to each other, "Where are you going?" We replied, "We are going to Dege, Dhenkho and then to Yushu." When we had this conversation, they said that they'd run away from there. Their home was in Dhenkho [and they said], "Please, you must go to our home and tell mother and the others that we have left for Lhasa. Please tell them that we are fine." [We] were asked to convey this message. I forgot to relate this earlier.

Q: Were they in a desperate situation, this boy and girl?

00:23:58

#64M: The reason at that time was that in general the Chinese had appeared in Tibet in 1949; the Chinese conducted a lot of *thamzing* ‘struggle sessions.’ People in small or large numbers fled to Lhasa or to the hills. However, the first place where the Chinese implemented Reformation in Tibet was at the place called Dhenkho.

Q: Where is Dhenkho?

#64M: Dhenkho is located a little further away from Dege. The girl and the boy I told you about requested that [we] visit their home without fail. When we arrived in Chamdo, it was the period when the Reformation was being carried out [in Dhenkho].

Q: Were they fleeing out of fear?

00:24:39

#64M: They’d fled out of fear. They’d asked us to go to their house and we needed a place to stay and that was the route to take. [We] went looking for the family in that town. Reformation was going on and it was a most difficult period.

Q: What did they tell you about what they’d seen, what they’d been through?

#64M: They said, “The Chinese are enforcing Reformation in our village. So it has become impossible to remain there, which is why we have run away.” However, we saw it with our eyes. When we went to their house at that time, [we] found the mother in the home. The father had already been captured by the Chinese. What the Chinese initially did was that they said, “All the leaders of this village are invited to a party tonight. Everybody must come.” They extended an invitation. When the leaders arrived, all of them were captured and taken away to unknown destinations by the Chinese. There was no knowledge about their whereabouts.

Then they [the Chinese] praised the poor people who used to beg, “The *ngadak* ‘leaders’ have given you so many problems in the past. After the arrival of the Communist Chinese, you are the leaders. From this day onwards you are the leaders.” That was how they were appointed.

Q: So you took the message to the mother. How did she respond to the message?

00:27:49

#64M: When we arrived at their home in the evening, there were about 10 Chinese living there. They [the family] owned a double storied house and the mother was living on the ground floor. It was a large house and there might have been 8, 9 or 10 rooms, but I am not certain about the number. We were rented a room to stay. The mother was the only one downstairs while there were quite a large number of Chinese living upstairs. We possessed the certificates [travel documents] and they [the Chinese] asked us to produce the ones we’d brought from Lhasa to them and they did not utter a word to us.

There were three adults in our group and if they interacted with the mother, they [the adults] were skeptical about what the Chinese might do. I was small, 14 years old then. [The elders said], “You go and tell her this and this.” So I went and told the mother, “[We] met your son and daughter in Chamdo. They asked us to go to their home without fail which is why we have come here. You do not have to worry about them. They asked us to tell you that they have left for Lhasa.” [I] gave her this message. “What is the situation like in Lhasa now?” She asked because it was a tumultuous time in this region. [I] replied, “Lhasa is like what it was earlier. There is nothing [happening] in Lhasa.”

Q: And what happened then?

00:30:23

#64M: There used to be a servant and a maid servant in that family. They were told, “From now onwards you cannot consider yourselves as servant and maid servant. Once the Communist Chinese arrives everyone is equal. How many years have you worked here?” All the household belongings were divided equally and the servant and the maid servant were sent their separate ways. “From today onwards none can say, ‘You are the boss or you are the servant.’ From tomorrow you cannot even talk to your boss or even acknowledge [him/her] as your boss.”

Q: Did you see them saying that?

#64M: No, they’d already been told that. The servants had already been sent off when we arrived; only the mother was there. There was a huge open area where everyday...it was called *khukhue* and I can never forget this. We stayed in their home for 7 or 8 days. The red flag was raised and everyday there was a meeting [at the *khukhue*]. During the meeting, it was questioned how [a particular] wealthy family oppressed the poor earlier, what weapons the family possessed, how many horses and such things. After asking that, the weapons were collected. Even if it was a long sword, it was taken away.

Then as I told you earlier, when the poor who were like beggars were appointed [as leaders] they charged that they [the rich families] did this and did that; that they owned such guns. Everything was revealed and then the *thamzing* began for them [the wealthy families].

Q: Did you witness any *thamzing* sessions?

00:33:07

#64M: We could not get close to the area where there was the red flag and interrogations going on. [I] did not particularly witness anyone being beaten. However, they said that *thamzing* took place everyday at this place.

Q: How many flags were there at that open ground?

#64M: There was only one red flag.

Q: Was it big?

00:33:31

#64M: Yes, it was. It was the red flag of the Chinese army. The meetings were held there and enquiries made as to what a person had done. *Thamzing* began from there on. When people learned about the *thamzing* and the Reformation, some of those who owned good weapons fled into the hills and gradually to Lhasa.

Q: Did any Tibetans try to...try to once they knew you were from near Lhasa, you were from Lhasa, you'd come from Lhasa. Did they ever try to give you information to take to the Tibetan government about what was happening in this area?

#64M: That never happened. At that time since the Chinese had built roads, one could reach there [Lhasa] in four or five days but there were no telephones, nothing then. So it was very difficult to hear such news.

Q: Since you were from Lhasa, did any Khampa ask you to take a message Lhasa?

00:35:34

#64M: How do you mean? Do you mean when [I] left Kham [for Lhasa]?

Q: You had arrived in Kham from Lhasa and there was a lot of turmoil in the Kham regions. Did anyone ask you to give this information about Kham to Lhasa?

#64M: I was not returning to Lhasa. I was staying there [in Kham]. If I was returning to Lhasa, it was possible someone might send a message just like the boy and girl send a message through me for their home. Since I was staying there, no one send a message.

Q: You settled there 7 days though, just one week. That's a short time.

00:36:23

#64M: We had a lot of articles, so [we] hired some transport animals and went to Ga Chekudo through Zachukha.

Q: In which direction is that?

#64M: That is in the direction of Kham and there was Amdo on one side.

Q: Where did you go after one week?

00:36:55

#64M: To Ga Chekudo through Zachukha. You know Gapa? That was the region.

Q: Can you tell us what else you saw in terms of the policies that were being implemented by the Chinese? What effects of these policies did you see on Tibetan people?

#64M: Just as I told you earlier, we spent 7 days in Dhenkho. Then as [we] journeyed on, the Chinese were not implementing Reformation along the way. Zachukha and Chekudo were as usual. There was no Reformation and nothing happening to the people then.

Q: Were the Chinese present there?

00:38:15

#64M: Yes, there were Chinese present. There was a quite a huge number of [Chinese] in Chekudo but there was no unrest as such.

Q: When you saw the difficulties that were being faced by the Tibetans, you know in Chamdo, were you surprised by what you saw? Was this completely new information for you?

#64M: I was young in age at that time and there was not much thought. However, I did not like the Chinese even when I was 11 or 12 years old because they were a different race. When I look back now I see that I had demonstrated that I did not like the Chinese and opposed them. There were many Chinese houses in Lhasa and early in the morning we used to go and fling stones at the Chinese houses and break the glasses and also threw stones at the [street] lights. When I reflect now, I realize that I had demonstrated my dislike for the Chinese and opposed them. I did not feel anything at that time [in Kham].

Q: This was when you were a monk?

00:40:31

#64M: Yes, I was a monk then. We are Tibetans and as Tibetans, due to the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama we have compassion. When the Chinese first appeared in Lhasa, they arrived bearing loads. Their mouths were covered in sores and they carried loads [indicates carrying load on back] and a small bag of *tsampa* ‘flour made from roasted barley.’ They lay in every nook using their guns as pillows due to exhaustion. Though we were little children then, if [we] had the thought of killing them, they were easy targets.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So how did it go from that situation to him feeling so bad towards them that he wanted to break their windows? What changed in his mind, in his attitude towards the Chinese? Why did his attitude change from sympathy to feeling that...really not liking them?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...because of the different race, he doesn't like the Chinese people.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Could you ask him that question?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah, he said that to me. Because they are a different community or different race, like that...so I don't like the Chinese people...not being a Tibetan.

Q: Did you have any bad experience with Chinese people in Lhasa?

00:42:24

#64M: They were just arriving at that time and everybody felt sympathy. Their clothes which were brown were torn and every one of them had their mouths covered in sores due to the wind and high altitude. Everybody felt sympathy and none said anything unpleasant against them even though we were little children.

Q: Okay, but you didn't feel this way. You didn't feel sympathy towards them?

#64M: When they initially arrived, as I told you earlier their mouths were covered in sores and one felt sympathy. Even though we were little children, we were the people of Chenrezig ‘Avalokitesvara, emanation of the Bodhisattva of love and compassion and the patron saint of Tibet’ and felt sympathy for them and not otherwise. However, after they lived in Lhasa for a few years, I showed my dislike for them as I related to you earlier about throwing stones on their houses.

Q: Initially you felt sympathy for them and later you felt such animosity that you actually wanted to damage their property. So would the only reason that you wanted to damage their property was because they were different to you?

00:45:02

#64M: At that time except for the difference in race, we did not take much notice of what their policies were or whether they had invaded Tibet.

Q: Okay, but there’s a difference between race and policy. You just use the word policy, because that’s a completely different thing—not race.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: (It was the) difference of race and I never thought that they have a bad policy. Never thought that they had such a policy—after that they were going to do this all.

Q: So what policies were you upset about?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Means?

Q: You said you never thought they were going to institute such policies, so what policies were you upset about?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Means capturing the nation or giving problems to the Tibetans in Lhasa later on. I never thought that the Chinese will come and settle.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: But this was earlier. When was he breaking the windows?

Q: Which year was it when the Chinese appeared in Lhasa?

00:46:12

#64M: [Tries to recall year] I cannot say exactly. Perhaps it was around 1952 when the Chinese initially arrived. Perhaps ’51 or ’52—I am not exactly sure.

How [I] came to know that the Chinese had arrived was that I was living in Gaden Monastery then. Gaden Monastery is located atop a hill. Chinese were walking down below on the ground. An ex-abbot lived on the upper floor of our quarters and whenever he went anywhere, I used to hold his hand. He liked me a lot. [I] escorted him behind the *khangtsen* and when he saw them below, he asked me to fetch the binoculars which were owned by another monk. He looked through it and remarked immediately, “This is not good.” That evening he took a circumambulation of Gaden [Monastery] and passed away that very night. I can remember clearly this arrival of the Chinese at Gaden Monastery from Lhasa.

Q: When you went to break the windows, was it people's houses or was it shops' windows that you were breaking?

#64M: No, this was not seen by them [the Chinese]. We used to go early in the morning to attend the Monlam and [we] did that on the way to the Monlam early in the morning. This was not done in sight of the people or the Chinese. [We] would not dare do it if we'd be seen then.

Q: Was it shops or houses? Home or shops?

00:49:49

#64M: They were houses.

Q: Was it with a stone?

#64M: With stones.

Q: What policies or actions of the Chinese were you upset about?

00:50:21

#64M: When the Chinese first appeared in Lhasa, there was nothing bad about them. They were very good and if they gave any work to the people, they paid in *dhayen* 'Chinese silver coins.' There are no humans who do not like money. Since there's no one that does not like money, everyone remarked that the Chinese were good. Initially they were like that. If they needed some transportation service, they paid in *dhayen*. They did not treat [anyone] badly initially.

Q: When you love somebody, you usually don't break their windows [laughs].

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Not himself but the local people.

Q: I know, but my question was not about what other people thought but what you thought. What policies or actions of the Chinese were you upset about so much to the point that you wanted to break their windows? You don't break people's windows unless you are upset, yeah?

#64M: That was during the initial period of their arrival. My breaking the windows pertains to a few years after the arrival of the Chinese in Lhasa when they gradually became worse. However, we did not know the exact situation then but [I] was doing that as a sign of dislike.

Q: What did you see happening in Lhasa? What did you see happening in Lhasa?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: When?

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Anytime. He can talk about anything he saw...the effect of the Chinese.

[Question is interpreted.]

00:53:00

#64M: It's just as I told you earlier. I left for Kham when I was about 14 years old. I would not know what occurred in Lhasa during the period that I was living in Kham. I lived in Kham for around three years.

As I told you earlier, we were in Ga Chekudo for about a month. A month later, we traveled among the nomad communities. In Tibet the nomadic [region] was very vast consisting of Gerze, Gerge, upper and lower Yushu and for months on end one journeyed across the nomadic region. The nomads were economically sound and their economy centered on their animals; the sheep and goats. Since they were highly pious people, our main area of *buldhue* was lower Yushu. So we traveled there.

Q: Was this quite common, the practice of *buldhue*? Travelling around fundraising, was this quite common practice?

#64M: Yes, some of the monasteries embarked [on *buldhue*]. From Gaden [Monastery], Shartse and Jangtse [Divisions] ventured as well as some of the *khangtsen*. From Sera [Monastery], the Je and Mey [Divisions] went for [the *buldhue*]. However, they set off for different places. Most of them left for Golok in Amdo.

Q: How did it work, like when you arrived in an area, what did you do? Did you go house to house, tent to tent?

00:55:44

#64M: The *buldhue* was mostly sought from the nomads. There were no monasteries in the nomadic regions and none to perform prayers [for the nomads]. So those of us who ventured for the *buldhue*, whichever of the great monasteries we belonged to, whether we were four, five, six or seven people, selected a family as the main place to stay. Then [the nomads arrived] at this place to request, "Please come to my [home] tomorrow [to read prayers]." There might be 15-16 [families] in one nomadic group. Then we'd leave for another nomadic site. It was a very busy schedule. [One would] say "Please come to my [home] tomorrow" and another would say, "Please come to my [home]." There was never any worry over not finding the opportunity to perform prayers. It was like that.

Q: So what were some of the most important things you felt that you learned during this journey?

#64M: In general, there was nothing different. Every nomad was the same. The nomads' [life] centered on the animals and they did not have houses and lived in *ba* 'tent made from yak hair.' The nomads depended solely on the animals. Long ago before the Chinese appeared in Tibet, they depended solely on the animals. They wore the skin of the animals as clothes and ate curd, milk, meat, cheese and butter. Their livelihood depended upon it. Therefore, the nomads owned huge numbers of animals. They were almost countless and very amazing. The hills were covered in grass. In the nomadic regions of Yushu, you would

not even find a stone of the size of your finger. It was a vast pastureland. There existed such happy [beautiful] regions.

Q: So did you live with them in their tents?

00:59:31

#64M: We lived in tents when we lived there for about three years.

Q: So did you enjoy that?

#64M: It was very enjoyable living in the tent because though it rained in Tibet, it was not in such force as it does in India. It drizzled and lying in the tent with the spray on your face was most enjoyable. There were pasturelands and flowers everywhere. The air was clean, the water was clean and everything good. So it was most enjoyable. It was amazing. When I think of it now, how I wish I could arrive in such a place!

Q: Did you feel that the nomad's life was a very pure life; a pure kind of life?

01:01:03

#64M: In general everybody earns their livelihood in different ways. The farmers must earn their livelihood from the fields and the nomads from theirs. However, the worst in Tibet was the danger of heavy snowfall in wintertime during which animals could die of starvation. Otherwise, I think the nomad life was very pleasant and good.

Q: How did they treat you?

#64M: They held us in very high esteem. In general there were also monks who'd come from [local] monasteries in the Kham areas. However, we were from the great monasteries [Sera, Drepung and Gaden Monasteries in Lhasa] and treated as special. Though I was young in age then, if a monk from Kham region sat on a mat, he being older in age should be seated higher but he was not. We, the monks from the great monasteries were given higher seating. That was the sort of esteem.

Q: You travelled around these regions for three years, yeah? And so do you want to tell us anything else about what you saw during that time?

01:03:40

#64M: The food in general among the nomads was almost the same everyday. During summer they held what was called the *gopsang* like horse racing and firing from a gun. It was like the summer picnic that we had. They held horse-racing and target-shooting competitions among the different groups.

Q: Did they possess guns?

#64M: They possessed guns. Among the nomads, if a son was born they purchased a gun immediately as part of his possessions. That was their tradition. Guns and swords were considered like ornaments. These days when you see someone with a sword, it looks very

ugly. However, in those days in Tibet, it was considered like an ornament. It was worn not to fight and sever [someone]. When a son was born in Kham, it was certain that he'd have a horse and a gun was purchased immediately as a part of the child's possessions.

Q: When did the summer festival take place?

01:04:52

#64M: Perhaps it took place in the 7th month. There were meadows for the horses to race and the leaders of each section awarded prizes to the winners. The first prize winner would get a horse and the second a yak. There were such traditions. There never was any money there.

Q: The horse-racing area, was that Lithang?

#64M: It took place in every region. There were different groups [of nomads] and two or three groups joined together to organize one.

Q: For example, where was one group located? Was it in Lithang?

01:06:54

#64M: For example, it could be upper Yushu or lower Yushu or Gerge or Tsangyue. There was the custom [of holding the horse festival] in all these regions.

Q: Where else?

#64M: Like Tsangyue, Yara, Yushu - different regions but they were all nomads.

Q: No, no, no. The horse festival, was that in Lithang? The horse festival that you described, was that in Lithang?

01:07:32

#64M: No, no, I am talking about the nomads now.

Q: There are no nomads in Kham?

#64M: There were nomads in Kham, but they were farmers as well as nomads.

Q: He's talking about Amdo, maybe?

01:08:07

#64M: [Speaks before question is interpreted] The main nomadic regions are in Amdo. Then there were the places where we stayed like upper and lower Yushu which I told you about earlier. There were also upper and lower Gerge and upper and lower Tsangyue [whose inhabitants] were all nomads. In the rest of Kham, there were not many nomads. They owned [animals] as well as farmlands.

Q: You felt this was quite a romantic life—I'm getting the feeling, yeah?

#64M: It was good. Wherever they went, they rode their horses and carried their guns. [They] did not have to carry any food when [they] traveled. One just put a cup in the *amba* ‘pouch in the traditional coat.’ It was not necessary for him to know the next nomad he met. He was asked, “Where are you going? Come in.” They placed tea or milk, cheese and butter in front of him. He kneaded the cheese in the butter and ate it like we eat *pa* ‘dough made from *tsampa* and tea.’ He drank the milk-like tea and continued his journey. It was not necessary to carry any kind of provision.

Q: I’ve a feeling you have the heart of a nomad.

01:10:08

#64M: Though I do not wish that I was a nomad, [I] think it was a very genteel tradition that they have among the nomads. Unless you were related, here you would not be able to enter [someone’s home]. One would have to request for a place to stay and who knows if he [the host] would agree or not. Over there it was not necessary to know someone. If there was a nomad [home], one could enter it.

Q: So this was different to your village? Where you grew up people didn’t act this way?

#64M: Where?

Q: In Lhasa and Kham areas?

01:11:20

#64M: In Kham and Lhasa, one would have to be related or known [to the host] to be able to enter someone’s [home] to get food to eat. You would not get food and tea in everybody’s [home]. If one did not know someone, he would not be received. If you begged for something, you might be given, otherwise there was nothing like that.

Q: Really, if I was a stranger in your village and if I was hungry, you wouldn’t...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: They give if you ask them to give but not openly go and they welcome you like that.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: They wouldn’t, okay.

Q: Is there anything else you want to tell us?

01:12:50

#64M: Actually it was our plan to stay there for 4 years. Normally most of them [the *buldhue* groups] stayed for 4 years and offered all the contribution to the *datsang* or *khangtsen* [whichever had sent the *buldhue* group] as was the tradition. However, we had to return in three years because the Chinese started to implement Reformation in the year ’58 at Ga Chekudo, where there was nothing earlier. Then the people of this area gradually fled to the nomadic regions saying that Reformation was being carried out and that the Chinese were causing suffering. The route happened to be through the nomadic region.

People with animals drove along this route which was the main road to central [Tibet]. When we began to hear such news, we too made our escape towards [Lhasa]. So we escaped from there.

Q: You went back to Lhasa?

#64M: When we fled from there, we had to come on foot driving the animals like yaks. If we brought along the older *dri* ‘female yaks,’ they would not be able to adjust to the climate, so we exchanged them for young ones which were 2 or 3 years old. [We] brought along all the young ones which were about 60 in number and 60 yaks. We had many traveling companions. There were 200 pack animals belonging to the Taopon ‘leader of Tao region’ then. Taopon is from Dege and he lives in Bir Tibetan Settlement [Himachal Pradesh] presently. There were about 200 horses, mules and yaks.

When we escaped from there, we were in a large group including the *buldhue* [group] of Sera Je. It took us a month and 20 days to reach Lhasa. Usually the travelers got up at five o’clock in the morning and rested at 10 as the animals must feed. However, at that time we traveled until four in the evening. Even then it took us a month and 20 days on the journey to Lhasa.

Q: Why did you use the word escaping? What were you escaping? What were you running away from?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Because the rest of the Khampas were escaping from [through] the nomad area; so [when] the Khampas were escaping, we felt that these Chinese troops are coming towards the nomad area. So [it was] better to run away.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Afraid of them?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Afraid of the Chinese and started escaping.

Q: What happened when you got back to Lhasa?

01:17:32

#64M: Then we reached a huge river called the Dhamchu during our journey. It was almost around sunset, perhaps about five o’clock. The river had become extremely big. There was a lama with us who said, “It is imperative that [we] cross the river tonight.” I and someone called Dhondup went to assess the depth of the river and found that the water came up above the level of the horse’s saddle.

Q: Yes?

#64M: The water reached above the level of the horse’s saddle. However, the river flowed very gently, the one called Dhamchu. “It is imperative to cross the river tonight. [We] must cross it tonight,” the lama said. It was autumn time and we replied, “The water has risen so such a height. How about crossing it tomorrow when it subsides a bit?” “No, it must be crossed tonight,” [he insisted]. So we drove the yaks into the river and all the load [upon

the yaks] started to float like this. [The loads] were tied together in pairs. The lighter [load] floated while the heavier ones like meat and grains sank. From [our] horsebacks we managed to save the lighter bundles which were floating. We spent the night on the bank of the river. In Tibet we used to make a *thopo* to measure the height of water by piling stones. The next morning [we] found that the water level had risen by about 2 feet! The *buldhue* [group] of Sera Je and many others who were following us could not cross the river and were driven back by the Chinese.

Q: What happened to them?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: They were taken by the Chinese authorities. They had to face that.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: They were taken?

01:21:07

#64M: The Chinese were pursuing [us]. We were fleeing and were being chased by the Chinese. We had crossed the river while they [the other *buldhue* groups] could not cross it at that time of evening. The next day, they were driven back by the Chinese.

Q: Then?

#64M: Then we arrived in Lhasa. Perhaps it was around the 12th month of the Tibetan lunar calendar when [we] reached Lhasa. It was soon after we'd arrived in Lhasa that we went to attend the Monlam. We'd made all the necessary offerings and given the yaks and all the things to the *khangtsen*. There were yak keepers called *shema* in the *khangtsen*. We made all the offerings to the monks. Then we were ordinary monks [without the responsibility of the *buldhue*] and lived in our quarters.

We went to attend the Monlam. The period during the Monlam was very tumultuous. The Chinese had prepared to occupy Tibet at that time. I was about 18 years old then and understood it to a certain extent. The Chinese had made plans right at the start to take over all the monks of Sera, Drepung and Gaden [Monasteries] along with His Holiness the Dalai Lama when they assembled for the Monlam.

01:22:30

Before we left for Kham, there was a double storied house located in front of the *chamra* 'arena where *cham* [religious dance performance by monks] was enacted' which had already been purchased by the Chinese; the one I recounted about breaking the windows. Then there was a huge gate leading to the Tsuglakhang 'Central Cathedral' near Sungchoerawa 'enclosure where teachings are bestowed.' Located in front of this was a building called Samdup Phodang which was a long house with two floors. It was purchased by the Chinese. There was another gate on the other side near the Dolma Lhakhang 'Temple of Goddess Tara.' [I] cannot remember to which nobleman it belonged to but that house [near the third gate] had also been bought by the Chinese. As I look back now I realize that their plan was to kill everyone when they assembled for the Monlam as those were the only exit points.

During the Monlam of '59, the windows, doors and roofs of all those buildings were set-up with machine guns [aimed] at the Tsuglakhang when the Monlam was going on. What the Chinese said at that time was, "The onions and garlic have not arrived from China. Once the onions and garlic arrive, [we] will serve food." When I look back now, perhaps they meant that they had not yet received orders and that they would finish off everyone once the orders came. They gave a hint. [To interpreter] Please translate that.

Q: What month was this in 1959? Early February?

01:26:06

#64M: Perhaps it was February when the Monlam took place. It must be in February though I am not exactly sure.

Q: And then?

#64M: Well, the Monlam was over. Thanks to the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Chinese could not kill us altogether and everyone dispersed to their respective monasteries. [We] realized that it was certain the Chinese would use force in Tibet. The government gave orders to the monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Gaden to collect guns to protect the monasteries. They were to guard the monasteries. So, 300 monks each from Sera, Drepung and Gaden [monasteries] left [to receive guns]. There was a monk sitting here a little earlier [previous interviewee] and he was among those who went to fetch guns.

Q: Potala? Should come to the Potala?

#64M: [Nods]

Q: Did you go?

01:27:42

#64M: I did not go. The person who was here earlier went; the person who gave an interview ahead of me was among those who left to fetch guns. About 300 monks from Gaden left to get guns. I and a companion who belonged to the same *khangtsen* as me—since the time of Monlam, we did not have any wish to remain in the monastery. Whatever funds [we] received during the Monlam, we'd purchased pants, *shurtsi* 'boots,' *chupa* 'traditional coat,' shirts and caps. We wanted to join the Defend Tibet Volunteer Force.

Q: Where did you wish to go?

#64M: To join the Defend Tibet Volunteer Force which people now call *Chushi Gangdrug*. Earlier it used to be known as Defend Tibet volunteer Force. Later it was called *Chushi Gangdrug* and even in Tibet it was known as *Chushi Gangdrug* for a short while. [We] prepared to join it and purchased layman's clothing from the Monlam funds.

There was this person who presently lives in Camp Number 1 [Mundgod, India]. My companion said that he wanted to get some *tsampa* from this person's home. Our laymen's clothing was new as we normally did not wear layman's clothing except for the monks'

robes. Both of us had the same attire; shirts and brown colored *chupa* in preparation for joining the Force. [Brown] was considered like an army uniform. We went to the village that was located at the mountain pass near Gaden and returned in the evening.

01:29:25

There were two routes that led to Gaden: one from the front and one at the rear. Once we were within the *lingkor* ‘outer circumambulation area’ [of the monastery] it was imperative for us to be dressed in the robes. So we’d arranged with a young [monk] to bring [us our monks’ robes] that evening. We climbed up a little and waited. Then the 300 monks who’d been to fetch guns arrived from Phenpo after crossing the river. They’d arranged for 300 horses at Phenpo and it seemed like a brightly colored cavalry. “Let’s watch this,” we said. [To interpreter] You can translate that.

Q: Then?

#64M: Then they arrived from there and we watched from the hillside. Someone said, “Come down or [I am] going to shoot you both.”

Q: Who said that?

01:31:34

#64M: Those who had gone to fetch the guns. There were 300 people who were bringing the guns. I said, “Shoot [your] gun,” as I was not afraid then. In the group there might be people who had handled guns and many who’d never used a gun. A volley of shots rang out and dust rose near our feet with the sound of whizz near the ears. I was not afraid when they fired but I felt that it was a waste of bullets.

We climbed down and it was quite close. When some of the monks came nearer, they recognized us. They avoided us. The incident could not have lasted half an hour, perhaps about 20 minutes. It resulted in a huge commotion in the monastery. There was a Chinese army camp to keep watch over the monastery. It was a separate unit to counter Gaden.

Q: Was it made up of Tibetans or Chinese?

#64M: It was a Chinese army camp to counter the monastery. The unit was to suppress the monastery in the event of an uprising. [The monks living in the monastery] thought that this unit was attacking the monks that had gone to fetch the guns. All the monastery monks rushed out—some dressed in layman’s clothing. Some might have been armed with swords and some with revolvers. There was the custom in Tibet of hanging spears, swords and many other things in the old *gonkhang* ‘shrine of protective deities.’ Armed with those things, they rushed outside the *lingkor*.

Q: Did they come to chase you?

01:33:16

#64M: Not us, but the shooting had been going on and they thought that the Chinese had attacked those [monks] who had gone to fetch guns. Those [monks] who were inside the

monastery rushed out with the aim to fight the Chinese. They thought that it was the Chinese and had no idea that it was us.

Q: So the 300 monks were from which monastery?

#64M: [They were from] Gaden, same as us. They'd arrived from Lhasa bearing the guns.

Q: Gaden Jangtse or Gaden Shartse?

01:35:17

#64M: Both.

Q: So they came across you and your group and you are dressed in ordinary *chupas*, yeah? Why did they think that you were Chinese authorities?

#64M: [Speaks before interpretation is complete] As I told you earlier, there might have been some [monks] who knew how to fire a gun and it was possible that there were some, upon receiving the guns at Lhasa wondered what it was like and wished to fire but were nervous. What had been mentioned among them was that the two men were spies from Tashi Lhunpo of Tsang.

Q: The monastery of Tashi Lhunpo?

01:36:00

#64M: Yes, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. At that time everybody used to bad-mouth the Panchen Rinpoche. People said that he was [an ally of the] Chinese and even we used to say that as we did not know better. Now we realize what Panchen Rinpoche was. In those days Tsang Tashi Lhunpo was considered an ally of the Chinese. So it was mentioned that the two men were from Tashi Lhunpo and that was the reason [we were] fired at. And also because they'd never handled a gun and were eager to shoot.

Q: Why did they think you were spies from Tashi Lhunpo?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Because Panchen Rinpoche and the Chinese have ...

Q: No, no, no. Why did they think you were spies from Tashi Lhunpo?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Because they were using normal dress; they were not in monks' dress.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: They knew he was a monk?

Interpreter to interviewer]: No, because of the normal dress, they felt that they were something like that.

Q: Were there other people in normal dress?

#64M: We were dressed in layman’s clothing, not monk’s robes.

Q: Were there not many people dressed in layman’s clothing?

01:37:52

#64M: We looked similar in layman’s clothing. We’d attended the Monlam and [purchased] similar shirts, *chupa* and caps which we’d worn.

Q: It looked a little bit strange and suspicious. You had exactly the same clothes on, so it looked a bit suspicious. Did they start questioning you at first? Or did they just start shooting?

#64M: [They] did not pose any question. As I told you earlier they said, “Come down, both of you. If you do not [I will] shoot.” And I replied, “Shoot.” [I] did not think that they would shoot but they fired at once. When they did, there was whizzing near the ears and dust rose at the feet. It was claimed that they’d fired 2,500 bullets at us. The government’s rate per bullet was 50 *ngusang* or 1 *dhotse* ‘currency unit.’ Fifty *ngusang* was equal to 1 *dhotse*. We were told that we’d have to pay the 2,500 *dhotse* after an investigation was carried out at the monastery.

Q: That you both would have to pay the amount?

01:39:14

#64M: Yes, that both of us would have to bear the cost of the 2,500 bullets. There were many officials in the monastery like *shengo* ‘treasurer’ and *chanzo* ‘business manager.’ And a *chanzo* in the group that went to fetch the guns. What they said was this, “2,500 bullets have been used on two men but [you have] not managed to kill the two men. Return all the weapons and we will distribute them to other monks.” This discussion went on for a few days and in the meanwhile we fled to India.

Q: And how many people were there in your group?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Only two persons.

Q: Two thousand five hundred bullets, this is what the monks said. They said, “We’ve used 2,500.” So at some point they realized that...okay the shooting went on for 20 minutes, were you just standing there? Did you hide behind something? What happened?

#64M: [We] were not hiding. The hill was like this [shows upright palm of left hand] and [we] were here [points to middle of palm]. When the shooting began, I thought it was a waste of bullets and clambered down [traces finger downwards on palm].

Q: Where were they?

01:42:11

#64M: They were climbing up. The distance was not much. It was like from here to the Community Hall there [interpreter interprets distance as 500 yards] up the hill. It was very close.

Q: Were you coming down?

#64M: We were on [the hill] and they were scaling up.

01:42:42

#64M: It was not 500 yards, only about 100 yards.

Q: 100 yards? Oh, 100 and not 500?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Not 500; 100 yards.

Q: Were you crouched down behind something?

#64M: No [shakes head].

Q: You were just standing there?

#64M: Standing. I walked down directly.

Q: Why were you coming towards them instead of running away?

01:43:18

#64M: I never thought then that I would get shot and die. That was because His Holiness the Dalai Lama went to China in 1954 and returned in '55 and after his return, His Holiness distributed protective amulets called Jigshay Mahe to all the monks of Sera, Drepung and Gaden Monasteries and the soldiers. The Jigshay Mahe was given to [the monks of] Sera, Drepung and Gaden Monasteries and the soldiers. Since I was wearing the Jigshay Mahe, it never ever occurred to me that a bullet could enter my body. Nor did one penetrate me.

Q: Was that in 1954?

#64M: His Holiness the Dalai Lama went to China in '54 and returned in '55. It was distributed in '55 to [the monks] of Sera, Drepung and Gaden Monasteries and the soldiers and not to anyone else.

They [interviewer and videographer] may know about the *tsongsung* 'protective amulet' but [I] do not know how much they believe in it. However, we believe in its [power]. His Holiness always says, "If you rely in entirety, [the result will be] in entirety and if you rely in part, [the result will be] in part." Since His Holiness is everything for us, we believe in it a hundred percent.

And it is certain that the *tsongsung* works. A bit of my hat was torn and my colleague was hit twice. His dress was pierced and the skin looked bluish but there was nothing besides that. A *tsongsung* stops the bullet and does not let it come close. It is believed that when a bullet or two touches your body, that's the day you need to be careful. The power may be

waning and [a bullet] could harm you. If one was careful that day, the next day would be fine. Except for a bit of my hat which was torn near the ear, I was not hit on my body.

Q: Two bullet holes in the *chupa*?

01:46:30

#64M: Except for the holes in the *chupa*, there was no injury.

Q: Who was the guy with him?

#64M: He's no more now. He was called Zambalha.

Q: Where did he die?

01:46:51

#64M: He died in Tawang [Arunachal Pradesh]. He used to be in the [Indian] army.

Q: He was his friend?

#64M: Yes, he was my colleague. The elder monks of Gaden Shartse and Jangtse would know this story about us.

Q: But he wasn't the guy that traveled around Amdo and Kham?

01:47:31

#64M: [He] has not been there.

Q: You weren't armed, right? You didn't have any guns?

#64M: No, nothing.

Q: So the monks shot at you for 20 minutes? And then after they ran out of bullets, what happened? Did they say something to you? What happened? You were still standing there.

01:48:12

#64M: First they fired [at us] and then after I had reached below, there were many monks [I] knew. Some monks of Shartse tried to kill me with the knife that was attached to the guns. However, those monks from my *khangtsen* said, "You do not have to kill him. He is a monk from our *khangtsen*. He is not a spy from Tashi Lhunpo. [We] can report this to the higher authorities [of the monastery for their decision]." That was how it ended and we went back to the monastery.

After we were back, we were told that we'd have to make good the cost of the 2,500 bullets. However, the *shengo* and other high authorities remarked, "[You] have fired 2,500 bullets at two people and not even killed them. How would you be able to kill the Chinese? Return all the weapons and [we] will distribute them to other monks." This went on for 3-4 days and then we had to flee the monastery.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: When you say high authority, who do you mean?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: The higher monks.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: The higher monks of Gaden?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Gaden, yeah.

Q: So let me...I just want to make sure I understand this. So once the monks from Jangste recognized you and they said, "No you guys are not spies, they're monks, they're fine." So then they went to the authorities of Gaden and the monks wanted you to pay for their bullets because they had expended 2,500 bullets. They wanted you to pay, but the authority of Gaden said "No because you guys were such bad shots, you don't deserve to have these guns anyways. We should take these guns and give them to other monks. Is that right? Wow, this is a great story.

Q: During this whole time, *pa-la*, you were not afraid?

01:51:23

#64M: No, I was never afraid at that time because it was such a turbulent period. And also it was not our fault in any way.

Q: People get killed even if they hadn't done anything wrong, right?

#64M: [I] will not get hit because [I] had complete faith [in the protective amulet].

Q: Then what happened?

01:52:21

#64M: So a few days passed in that way in Gaden. Before that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had left secretly for India and [we] never knew of it. Then [I] think it was the 14th day—I am not sure of the date—perhaps it was on the 13th day that the Chinese attacked Lhasa at around 12 in the night.

Q: Where?

#64M: In Lhasa; the attack in Lhasa began. Many thousands of people thronged around the Norbulingka thinking that His Holiness was still inside. The Uprising Day we commemorate these days was the day the Chinese planned to invite and capture His Holiness. However, the people said that they would not let His Holiness go and since that day [saying]; "Tibet belongs to the Tibetans." The Chamdho Phakpala's *chatsa* was killed and his body dragged during this time. Many such things occurred which everybody knows about.

Norbulingka in Lhasa was surrounded by thousands of people. They had no knowledge that His Holiness had left. However, as soon as the Chinese attacked and many people got killed at the Norbulingka, one of the escorts of His Holiness secretly sent a message to

Norbulingka, “His Holiness is not [in the Norbulingka].” So the rest of the people fled from Lhasa. When they did, we too fled. Earlier in Gaden, volunteers were sought to go to Lhasa and I had volunteered. However, it came to naught.

Q: Because they wanted to stop him? Why would they run in the direction of His Holiness?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Because they want to follow His Holiness; where His Holiness goes, they wanted to follow him.

Q: And then what happened?

01:55:15

#64M: Then everybody fled from Gaden and most of them landed in Lhoka. Lhoka was relatively a place with no Chinese presence except at Tsethang where the Chinese had established an army camp by digging foxholes at a hillside. The Defend Tibet Volunteer Force had been resisting the Chinese at this place since ‘57-‘58. Other than that Lhoka was free of Chinese. So His Holiness left for India through Lhoka.

I was sort of numb but ordinary people remarked, “His Holiness has left for India, so we must go to India.” So in that way I reached Tsethang in Lhoka. The Chinese fired innumerable times the day we reached Tsethang. Initially we were quite a large number of people. That day there was so much firing, from machine guns and 20-30 cannons. Well, that day I thought I would die and was quite scared. [I] went a little further away to a nook and took out my amulet and ate a blessed pill thinking I was going to die that day. [I] prayed to God and rushed away. [I] did not suffer any injuries. There was so much shelling that day that everywhere was dust and the smell of gun powder in your nose.

Q: Which day was that in March?

#64M: It might be 17th or 18th, but [I] am not sure of the date.

Q: Could you see the Chinese who were firing at you?

01:58:28

#64M: One could not see the Chinese because they had dug out the belly of the mountain and were hiding in there. The Tibetan soldiers had stopped them in there for two years. They did not let them come out or go in. However, there were enough provisions to last the [Chinese] army for years together in the belly of the mountain. The Chinese had planned such a vast construction.

Q: Was it at Lhoka?

#64M: Yes, it was at Tsethang in Lhoka. Later [I] went up the Gonpori [a hill] as a guard. Samye was lost and there was the danger of losing Tsethang too. [I saw] two or three vehicles emerge out of the ground. The Chinese were very good at digging and the *Chushi Gangdrug* or Defend Tibet Volunteer Force did their best and made every effort to destroy the underground network, but we did not possess sophisticated weapons. So they [the

Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas] blocked their route day and night and did not let them [the Chinese] emerge. However, once Lhasa was defeated, everyone was forced to flee and then they [the Chinese] too came out.

Q: So were bullets landing close to you then?

02:01:09

#64M: Bullets and shells fell from above and exploded around. We did not have any training, but thanks to God I found myself [flat] on the ground in the dust amidst the smell of gun powder. If one was trained, one lay flat on the ground as one knew that shells exploded a foot above the ground. I did not know that until later after I received training. Perhaps I was pushed down by God as I was lying in the dust. It was dark and similar to what we see these days on the Discovery Channel.

Q: Were you armed? Did you have any weapons?

#64M: No.

Q: And then?

02:02:54

#64M: And then after Tsethang was lost, everybody seemed like their soul was lost and nobody had any plans to fight the Chinese. When someone said, “The Chinese have come” everybody rode their horses and fled in a cloud of dust. It was the soldiers and the monks of the great monasteries that suffered because they had to walk. However, if the Chinese really gave chase, it would have been difficult for us to reach India. I realized that later after I received military training. Like the ‘bond by bond’ [strategy] that if [the unit] was to go to Camp Number 1 [Mundgod], [they] stopped once [they] reached Camp Number 1. By then we’d have reached as far away as Mundgod. If they’d pursued continuously, there was no way [we] could have escaped.

So we fled to India in that way. Like the earlier [interviewee], we took the same route through the Mangola pass. It was a snow covered mountain and the escaping exodus had continuously cleared away the snow in the path. If one moved a little to the right or left, one would sink in the snow. However, I told you earlier that [if a man sank in the snow] he would be pulled out by others, but the Mangola was full of the corpses of horses and mules.

02:04:14

During the journey, most of the [escapees] were men and there were not many women. One incident that gave me great sorrow at that time was that of a woman giving birth. It was in the snow on a snowy mountain! She was lying below a huge boulder. There was no hot water, nothing to find. Her husband was with her. One could hardly bear to look. We did not have time to stay back nor would we be able to offer any help had we stayed back. It was right in the middle of the snow. There was no way they would have survived. Such was the sorry state and the difficulties to endure. The pathway was littered with the bodies of horses and mules.

Q: Do you know what happened to the lady later?

#64M: We could not stay back with them. It was extremely sad. Times were bad and the pathway was in the snow. What can anyone do? Even the husband cannot do anything. He cannot even give her some hot water to drink. We cannot go anywhere [to offer help]. Moving even a little meant falling into the snow. We were walking like this [keeps fingers of both hands in line]. If one stopped, those people at the back shouted to walk faster and even fired shots. The shots were not fired at people but to frighten them [into moving faster]. Everyone who escaped at that time has suffered, but giving birth there was like experiencing hell while living.

Q: So Mangola is the border in Arunachal Pradesh?

02:08:10

#64M: Yes, actually Mangola is in Tibetan territory but now it is said to be Chinese. During our journey, at the base of the Mangola was [a place] called Jora Khata. There was an estate belonging to the Samdup Phodang [an aristocratic family of Tibet]. One could get provisions like *tsampa*, butter and tea from the estate. Earlier it used to be said that the Samdup Phodang was a spy for the Chinese. So everyone who passed on that route took away [provisions]. We were nine people in our group and owned two horses on which we loaded two bags of *tsampa* and some butter.

Q: Was one free to take any amount of *tsampa*?

#64M: Yes, one was free to take any amount. [The estate] was located near the base of the pass. I have made an error in relating the sequence. [I had] heard that it was an estate of the Samdup Phodang and there was enough stock. We were nine in our group and we took two bags of *tsampa* and crossed the Mangola. Mangola was in Tibetan territory at that time. It is located on the Indian border.

Q: That was a very interesting story. I just want to go back. I have a couple of question from what you said earlier back in Lhasa. You were very excited to join the Chushi Gangdrug, right? You wanted to join the Chushi Gangdrug, but you did not volunteer to be one of the monks to go to the Potala who were asked by the government. I'm just curious why you didn't volunteer or did you volunteer and there were so many monks and you just weren't able to be part of that? Do you understand the question?

02:10:57

#64M: Volunteers were not called for because [the number of monks required] was divided between the *datsang*. Each *datsang* was to send 150 men which were [further] divided among the 12 *khangtsen*. Each *khangtsen* was made up of *mitsen* 'a group of monks from a particular region' and the heads of these asked a certain [monk] to go. There was no announcement made to ask for volunteers.

Q: And then I have another question. The Khampas [people from Kham] in general, were they better shots than the people from Utsang?

#64M: In general [I] cannot say whether the Khampas are better shots and the Utsang people poorer [shots]. However, in general the people of the Kham regions have more interest in guns because most people in Kham possessed guns. It was like an ornament for them and there was almost no one who did not own a gun. There were not many people in the central part [of Tibet] that possessed guns. Therefore, [I] think they might be better shots.

Q: I think I know the answer to this but I'd like to hear it from you. So you and your friend intended to join the *Chushi Gangdrug*. That was your intention but when you got to Lhoka, you know circumstances changed. Why did you choose not to join the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

02:13:37

#64M: After leaving the monastery, we joined the *Chushi Gangdrug*. We joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* after reaching Lhoka. We consider ourselves as [men of] the *Chushi Gangdrug*. When we reached Missamari in Assam, the Indian government allotted 62 bamboo huts for the *Chushi Gangdrug*. I was asked by the *Chushi Gangdrug* to join school as I was young then but due to my misfortune, I did not go to school. We did join the *Chushi Gangdrug*.

Q: I see. I've a question. So you joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* but you never had a gun?

#64M: When we escaped from there, we did not own weapons. Those who were in the *Chushi Gangdrug* since long ago owned guns and they also possessed weapons that they had seized from the Chinese after fighting them. People who joined it later—unless it was someone from Lhasa who already owned a gun—there was no one who provided you with a gun when you joined the force.

After we'd crossed the Mangola, except for a few escorts of His Holiness the Dalai Lama who were allowed to leave for India, the rest of us were stopped after crossing the snow covered area at the Indian border by the Indian sentries posted there. We were not allowed to proceed and there were about 1,000-2,000 people. We are among the first to arrive through Mangola. Andrug Gonpo Tashi [founder of *Chushi Gangdrug*] was there then. Andrug Gonpo Tashi said that one was not allowed to fire his gun in that region but people did so because some people did not have anything to eat.

Q: Where?

02:16:38

#64M: At the Mangola region, where we were stopped at the border.

Q: Where were they firing their guns?

#64M: One was forced to shoot. There were nomads in the region and animals belonging to the Monpas. Shots were fired and their yaks killed. People were starving and forced to kill because they were stopped at the Mangola region for 15-16 days. [We] were not allowed to proceed to India nor could [we] go back. At that time some people ate horses and some cut out the hips of mules and ate them out of desperation for food.

Q: How long was it before you were allowed to cross the border?

02:17:56

#64M: [We] were stopped at the border. If this was the border, everybody was stopped here. [We] were not allowed to proceed to India. Then Andrug Gonpo Tashi said, "This is not right. We should go back to Tibet. The *Chushi Gangdrug* should return." Names of people wishing to return were collected and I volunteered. Then I was provided with an English-made short barrel rifle. It was at Mangola.

Q: Andrug Gonpo Tashi was with this group of 1,000 people?

#64M: Yes, [he] was. [He] was with us at Mangola then.

Q: Had he reached there earlier or did he arrive later?

02:19:04

#64M: We were among the first [to arrive there]. His Holiness had left for India then. We were stopped there and not allowed to proceed.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: I understand but where did this gun come from? You said he was given a gun but he didn't have a gun when he was fighting. Well, not when he was fighting but when he was in the middle of the action before. Where did this gun materialize from?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He was given by Andrug Gonpo Tashi.

Q: Okay. Andrug Gonpo Tashi had a huge stash of guns at the border?

#64M: He had been hit by many bullets. He had been injured during encounters with the Chinese. He had been struck by many bullets.

Q: Was he struck?

02:20:09

#64M: Yes. After reaching India, many [bullets] were removed from him through surgery.

Q: Did they come from India?

#64M: [The weapons] were distributed at Mangola.

Q: Was there a huge stock?

02:20:26

#64M: No, it was not like that. We'd escaped to the Indian border through Mangola but were not allowed to proceed. So there was nothing to do but go back to Tibet and fight the Chinese. There was nothing to eat and nothing to drink. So it was announced, "Who wants to go back?" There were about 2,000 or 3,000 people. Some of those who possessed

weapons did not want to go back. So their weapons were taken away and given to those who wished to go back.

Q: So he was not in a fit state to go back himself?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Who?

Q: Gonpo Tashi.

#64M: Despite [the injuries], there was no other way because he was the leader of the army then. There was no one else.

Q: But he couldn't because he was too...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Though he was willing to go back...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: He was willing but...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He wanted to guide everyone back...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: But physically...

Q: What was the reason for not going back?

02:21:52

#64M: Then two days later the Indians let us through. The reason was that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had reached Assam and met Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru [Prime Minister of India]. The order came from the government to let us through, which was why they allowed us to proceed; otherwise [we] were ready to go back.

Q: Andrug Gonpo Tashi said, "Whoever wants to go back to Tibet, come." He was planning to go back also? Is that right?

#64M: He had no other choice. He was a courageous man and thought that we would die in any case, either from starvation by remaining there as the Indians were not letting us proceed or go back and die fighting the Chinese.

Q: So suddenly they did get permission. They changed and they got permission and then Andrug Gonpo Tashi said, "Let's go"?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: "Let's go to India."

[Interviewer to interpreter]: "Let's go to exile." I see.

Q: And then you came to India? You received permission within two days?

#64M: Yes, the permission came in two days and everybody came to India.

Q: Including Andrug Gonpo Tashi and others?

02:23:40

#64M: Yes, everybody; all of us. Daily 300-400...

Q: Where did he get his medical treatment?

#64M: He first arrived in Assam and then went to Gangtok [Sikkim].

Q: Did you speak to Andrug Gonpo Tashi? Did you get an opportunity to talk to him?

02:24:01

#64M: [I have] never spoken to him.

Q: What was he like?

#64M: He seemed a very gentle man—a calm man. He was unlike anyone.

Q: Did he inspire people?

02:24:38

#64M: [I] did not attend any gathering that he addressed. However, he seemed a gentle and good natured person.

Q: Did you see him from afar?

#64M: Yes.

Q: Well, I have to say I'm very glad that you survived all of these incidents otherwise we wouldn't be able to talk to you today. So I'm glad you survived everything.

#64M: Okay. After we arrived from there...I would like to relate a little about that but [I] wonder if you have time?

Q: Please carry on.

02:25:29

#64M: We stayed in Assam for less than a year. And then we were dispatched for road construction to Chamba [Himachal Pradesh]. At that time we were supposed to be monks. Monks were specifically sent to Buxa [West Bengal] but we went to Chamba for road construction. There were the [groups] of 400 and 600 that were sent to Chamba and they consisted exclusively of monks from the three great monasteries. There might have been a soldier or two but most of the Tibetan soldiers were sent to Gangtok.

It was extremely difficult when we constructed roads in Chamba. [We] worked among the rocks and innumerable people died. It was like sacrificing one's life during a war. One

prayed to His Holiness as one left in the morning [for work] and there was no conversation. In the evening one returned to a tattered army tent and slept on a sack. The wage was about one *rupee* and 12 *annas* [Indian currency].

His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited Chamba once or twice at that time. We received an opportunity to see him. Everybody cried from happiness as well as sadness. Later Kungo Namdol of Gaden Jangtse went to Dharamsala to attend a meeting and when he returned he said, “His Holiness the Dalai Lama is living in a very sorry state. He has to walk wherever he goes and does not even have a car. It would be nice if we could offer him a car.” He gave that advice.

Q: What was his name?

#64M: Namdol-la.

Q: Was he an abbot?

02:27:08

#64M: No, he was a...[?] during His Holiness’ escape journey. [He] was called Namdol-la. He said that it would be good if [we] could offer a car. The monks said, “Yes, we will.” So each person gave 300 *rupees* and a vehicle by the name of Mahindra was purchased. It was a jeep as that was the only vehicle available at that time. It is imperative for a monk to take the *gelong* ‘ordained monk’ vows upon reaching the age of 20. So, 20 of us monks who were to take the *gelong* vows left for Dharamsala to offer the vehicle.

Q: Did you make the offering at Dharamsala? Was [His Holiness] not in Mussoorie?

#64M: No, he was in Dharamsala and His Holiness specially praised the road construction workers of Chamba. We feel ourselves most fortunate.

Q: Did you purchase the jeep and offer it?

02:30:45

#64M: Yes, it was purchased and offered.

Q: Were you one of the people who went to Dharamsala?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah, he was one of the persons. Twenty persons went and he participated in it.

Q: So you drove the jeep to Dharamsala? Somebody drove it?

02:31:12

#64M: We loaded the jeep with provisions like rice, wheat flour and various kinds of fruits. There was a driver to drive it. We placed a *khata* ‘ceremonial scarf’ over it and drove it right up to the door of the quarters [of His Holiness].

Q: You were in other cars behind?

#64M: No, we went up walking. There was a slight slope.

Q: You walked by foot?

#64M: [Speaks before interpretation] It [His Holiness' palace] was located nearby above Dharamsala.

Q: How did you reach Dharamsala?

02:32:02

#64M: The vehicle, which had been purchased somewhere near Chandigarh was driven by someone.

[Question is repeated.]

#64M: And we arrived from Chamba.

Q: How?

02:32:09

#64M: By bus.

Q: Were you back in your monk's robes by this time?

#64M: We were dressed in the monks' robes.

Q: And you were one of 20 other monks who made this offering?

02:32:44

#64M: [Speaks before interpretation] Yes, that's right.

Q: Wow. Do you have photographs of this?

#64M: No, there were no photographs then; perhaps not. There was no awareness at that time about taking photographs.

Q: You've never seen any photographs?

#64M: [Shakes head]

Q: What color jeep was it?

02:33:14

#64M: That's the usual jeep color which is somewhat bluish [greenish]. At that time nobody in Dharamsala owned a jeep. The Tibetan government was in great difficulties. It was said that His Holiness used to walk, which was why we felt we had to offer one.

Q: Yes. I have seen many offering ceremonies to His Holiness but then the monks—they hold it up in front of the throne. You can't pick up a jeep ... [laughter from everyone].

[Interpreter to interviewer]: They drove it full of grain and everything, just in front of the house.

Interviewer to interpreter]: In front of the palace?

Q: The jeep was driven until the front of the palace?

02:34:08

#64M: Until the doorstep.

Q: Was His Holiness standing there?

#64M: His Holiness was looking on. At that time the palace was not grand. It was a small one like this [points to interview room].

[Interviewer to interpreter]: I've seen the location. Where was the place where he was working on the road construction?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: In Assam.

Q: You said each person contributed 300 *rupees* each. How many people contributed?

02:34:51

#64M: We were 400 people.

Q: And how much were they getting paid a day for road construction?

#64M: A *rupee* and 12 *annas*.

Q: A day?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: A day.

Q: 300 *rupees*...

02:35:15

#64M: [Interrupts] We were 8-9 people that cooked together in a group then. The food we ate consisted of just *dhal* 'lentils,' steamed bread and black tea. Our expense was not more than 18-19 *rupees* per month. That was the only food we ate then.

Q: Nineteen *rupees* a month for each person?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: For each person.

Q: Wow. That's a huge amount of money. I mean for those people, right?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Right.

Q: How long did it take to raise the money?

#64M: It did not take many days. Those people that did not possess [money] borrowed from here and there; not everyone had ready cash. I never used to spend even a *paisa* [Indian currency] those days. I was extremely sparing. There were some people who spend money every month.

Q: How many days did it take?

02:36:22

#64M: It did not take many days. I am not able to provide the duration.

Q: And whose idea was this? Nam... something?

#64M: Namdol-la.

Q: It was his idea?

02:36:59

#64M: Yes, yes.

Q: Where is he now?

#64M: He has passed away.

Q: Where did he used to live?

02:37:05

#64M: He was from Jangtse [Division] of Gaden [Monastery].

Q: Was he a monk?

#64M: He was a monk. He was in a meditative state for three days [after death].

Q: You still have the protection cord that you wore?

02:37:32

#64M: Yes, [I] do.

Q: Are you wearing it now?

#64M: [I am] not wearing it now. It's at home.

Q: Is it at your home?

02:37:45

#64M: Yes, it's at home.

Q: You're not going to show us?

#64M: No [laughs].

Q: Can I ask one? Why won't you show it?

02:37:58

#64M: It should not be revealed where the sky is visible. When it was initially distributed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, it was to the monks and soldiers who were going to join the *Chushi Gangdrug*. [I] heard stories about [the protective amulets] being sold around. Though I did not witness it but stories were told about people testing them by tying them on goats and sheep and firing on them. [I] heard many such stories.

Q: Who tried to experiment?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Some Tibetan people.

Q: To see if the sheep died?

#64M: No, they did not die.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: So he's not going to show you. [Laughs]

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Okay, I have to honor that.

02:39:18

#64M: And then I joined the [Indian] army. [I] joined the army in the year '62.

Q: India and China fought a war then.

#64M: The war took place in Bomdila [Arunachal Pradesh].

Q: Did you participate?

02:39:38

#64M: No, I did not because our unit had not been established then. When the Chinese invaded Arunachal Pradesh, the Indian government and we were in similar situation because Tibet was occupied by the Chinese. Now they [the Chinese] were trying to occupy

India, which was why our unit was established then by the Indian government. It was mainly America that provided weapons and training initially when we joined the army.

Q: He finally got some training.

#64M: We were the first [batch] and underwent training. As I told you earlier, the weapons and the teachers were all Americans. Much later they [the teachers] were the Indians. For those of us it was the Americans and we did not know the language. Everything was taught through signs and by demonstrations. Our teacher was an American who taught us all the aspects [of warfare].

When we joined the army, we had no thought of continuing there as soldiers. Except for a month or two of training, we had no other intention but to go and fight the Chinese. Everyone [had the same aim]. Each one had joined voluntarily.

Q: So that was the first time you actually discharged a bullet from a gun?

02:41:57

#64M: No, no. I have fired a gun while in Tibet. I owned a gun, a small pistol then.

Q: Where did you handle weapons?

#64M: I owned a gun when we traveled to Kham.

Q: What did you think of the Americans?

02:42:38

#64M: We knew for certain that the teachers were Americans and the weapons too. There were a few Indian teachers who told us so. There were some Indians who prepared our food. We faced a lot of difficulties then. At times we would not get food until midnight as people arrived in droves of 200, 300 or 400. [The food] was a little quantity of rice and *dhal*. Just as the rice got cooked, it was rationed out. At times we were given coupons. Some greedy men ate twice while others could not get their share. If you lost the coupon, you did not eat. However, one did not feel that one was hungry or that the food was bad because of the enthusiasm for one's country. [We] only had the intention of training for a month or two and going to fight the Chinese.

Q: Did you go to Mustang?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes?

Q: Did you go to Mustang?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Go to?

Q: Mustang, where the fighting continued in the 70's.

[Interpreter translates as: Did you get a chance to take part during the war between the Chinese and Indians in '62-'63?]

#64M: The war got over very quickly in Arunachal Pradesh. Our unit was established then and [I] did not join the war in '62. Then two groups of a 100 men each were dispatched to Ladakh in '63. That was right on the border. The Chinese were there and we were here.

Then in '65 India and Pakistan fought a war. When the war took place, all the Indian troops and us were asked to withdraw to Leh [Ladakh]. The signal was received three times by the Indian officer. We told him, "Even if only one man is left standing, we will not withdraw but fight the Chinese." We did not budge and the leader said, "If I go back, this [points to shoulder to mean medal] will be lost and if I remain, I am bound to die." He was an educated man and [I] could see that death was a certainty. However, [we] reiterated then that we would fight until the last man.

The Chinese did not arrive there. Had they come, we'd have killed 1,000-2,000 of them because [we] had good weapons and were trained contrary to earlier times. It was not a case of five or six bullets. Earlier in Tibet there were only five or 10 bullets and still people were willing to fight. Here we were armed with thousands of bullets, bombs, canons and big machine guns. So we did not withdraw at that time.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: You must have heard about the Tibetan resistance force in Mustang.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Force in ...?

[Interviewer to interpreter]: The Tibetan resistance force in Mustang? You know where Mustang is, yes? There was a number of Tibetan resistance fighters regrouped and started fighting the Chinese but their base was Mustang. And they were running raids into Tibet.

[Videographer]: In Nepal.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: In Mustang, next to Nepal. The *Chushi Gangdrug* in Mustang.

#64M: That was [a] separate [unit] but it too was established in '62.

Q: Did you join that?

02:48:19

#64M: [The place] was called Lho Chumi Gyatsa [Mustang] and the *Chushi Gangdrug* started an army camp. It was established secretly and the weapons and training were provided by the Americans. [I] think our unit was established 5-6 months after the formation of the unit [at Mustang]. They were formed around the same time.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: I was just asking if he knew about it.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He knew that they were formed earlier and the Indian force was formed a little after, like 4-5 months later.

#64M: Actually we wanted to join it because a letter had come from the *Chushi Gangdrug*. We were supposed to be [a part of] *Chushi Gangdrug*. The seven of us who cooked together were living in Chamba then. [We] were asked to come to Mustang. The letter came into the hands of the one called Kugno Namdol that I told you about earlier. He had hidden it and not informed us. Had we been informed, we would have left for Mustang then. Because [we'd] not been informed...

Q: So he buried the letter? Where did he hide it?

02:50:32

#64M: He did not give it [to us].

Q: So how did you find out?

#64M: We heard it later when we joined the [Indian] army.

Q: Who told you?

02:50:42

#64M: He [Kungo Namdol] told us that a letter had arrived.

Q: Do you think he was protecting you?

#64M: That was because we were constructing roads in Chamba. We were about nine people and he was our head. Perhaps he thought, "If I show [this letter], all of them will go and I will be left alone."

Q: Because he was very close to you?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes, he was close and they were on the road construction. They were always together during that time.

Q: Okay. I think there might be another reason but we'll keep it at that. Okay, well this has been really, really fascinating...

02:51:49

#64M: [Interrupts] I have nothing left to say but I was about 20 years in the army. A war broke out in Bangladesh in '71. I was stationed in Simla in '71 and my group was not required to participate [in the war]. However, due to an emergency situation, 12 men were asked to come as signal and artillery operators. I gave a lot of thought over my situation. I did not have a wife or children and I was single. All my relatives were left behind in Tibet and it was the same thing whether one died under the Chinese or the Pakistanis and if it would help the cause of Tibet, it was fine and I said I would go. So I volunteered and went to Pakistan.

The Pakistanis fired countless shells and machine guns. As I told you earlier, [I] did not ever think that [I] would die and nor did [I] die. So my being alive today is thanks only to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Otherwise I would have been finished in '59, is it not?

So to sum up [the story], I would like to say that it is extremely important for all of us not to forget, and to keep in mind that everything is due to grateful thanks of His Holiness the Dalai Lama because all of us, whether we are in India or in foreign countries or in Tibet where at present there is a certain number of monasteries and the ability to practice the dharma; all these are due thanks to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Had His Holiness not been able to come to India, the Chinese would have destroyed Tibet, our dharma, monasteries or even chanting the *om mani padme hum* [mantra of Avalokiteshvara]. [I] request everyone to understand this. That's what I wish to say. [Joins palms] Thank you.

Q: This protection cord was given to you during the Monlam in 1959, correct?

02:55:25

#64M: It was distributed in 1955, after [His Holiness] returned from China. It was not distributed during the Monlam but His Holiness visited Sera, Drepung and Gaden [Monasteries] and distributed in each of the monasteries.

Q: Blessed by His Holiness?

#64M: Yes. It was distributed only to [the monks] of Sera, Drepung and Gaden [monasteries] and the soldiers. It was not given to every monk.

Q: Did you feel there was some purpose to this?

02:56:52

#64M: His Holiness had been to China and he is all-knowing. He saw everything of what was to come, but he never mentioned that a certain thing would occur the next day or the following day. He knows what each person is thinking and if one happened to be a bad person, he never said, "Oh you are a bad person. You are opposing me." He sympathized and felt compassion. Therefore, His Holiness is all-knowing and the Chenrezig. [I] do not know if some of the people accept this or not but from my side, [I] believe him to be [Chenrezig] in flesh and blood. He knows the future, being the all-knowing and knew that the Chinese would attack and there would be war. That was why he distributed [the amulets] for protection.

Q: Do you know other people who were given the same protection cord and also sort of came out safely and felt that this protection cord helped them?

#64M: Oh, it would have helped many people. In general, I am speaking about it because I am being asked, but for most of the people who escaped to India from Norbulingka it is due to the *tsongsung*. Otherwise there was no possibility of escape because the Chinese were firing their artilleries and machine guns like rainfall.

Q: Is it red color like *sondhue* 'blessed cord'? Is it red?

02:59:21

#64M: No, it's a statue.

Q: Is it a small statue?

#64M: There are two, one with an image of *jigchay* and the other of a *mahe*. It is wrapped in cloth.

Q: What type of cloth?

02:59:32

#64M: It's wrapped in brocade.

Q: *Jigchay* and...?

#64M: *Jigchay* and *mahe*. The *mahe* is like blessed pills which are to be taken when one is almost [at death's door].

Q: Alright, I need to ask once again. If this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

03:00:37

#64M: [I] do not think there'll be any problem because my region is very vast. When [I] say [I am] from Lhoka, though there are not many in India, since the name is different, [I] do not think there'll be any problem.

Q: Alright, well thank you very much for sharing your story to us. It was very fascinating.

#64M: Thank you.

Q: We just have a small present for you from the project.

END OF INTERVIEW