

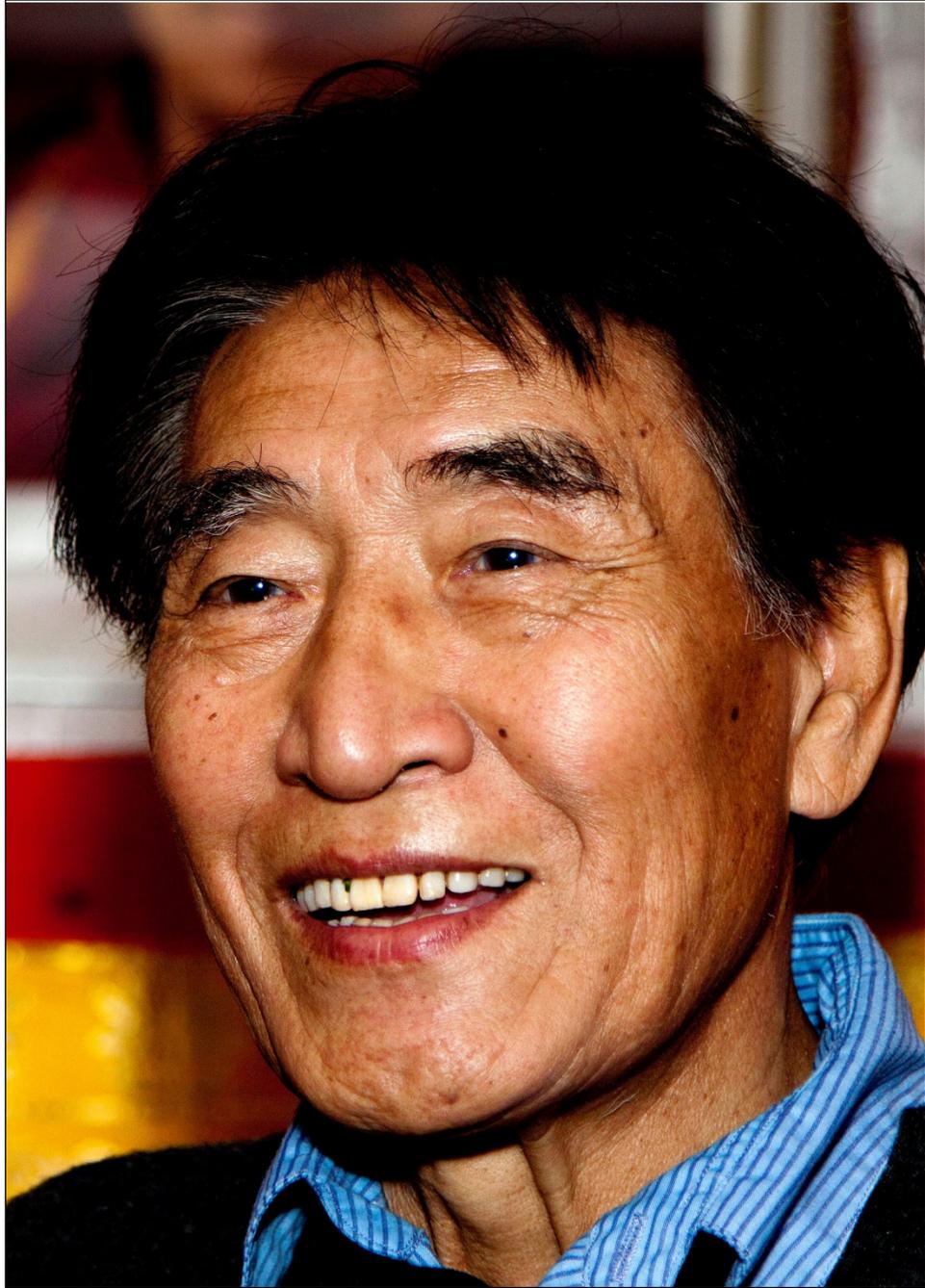
Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #6C – Sangyal Tashi
May 4, 2013

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #6C
2. Interviewee: Sangyal Tashi
3. Age: 73
4. Date of Birth: 1940
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Serchuthi
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: May 4, 2013
10. Place of Interview: TANC Community Center, Richmond, California, USA
11. Length of Interview: 2 hr 24 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Tsedup Wangdu
14. Videographer: Jeddadiah Emanuel
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Sangyal Tashi was born as the youngest of five siblings in the village of Serchuthi where the population was 700-800. The pastoral farmers raised yaks, *dzo* 'animals bred from a yak and a cow,' horses and mules and cultivated barley, peas and wheat. Sangyal Tashi gives an account of the duties of each family member and the relationship of the local monasteries with the villagers. He attended school at Karze Monastery and learned to read and write.

The Chinese appeared in Sangyal Tashi's village around 1947-48. He explains how the Chinese initially formed a relationship with local leaders, gaining their confidence and gradually controlling the whole village. One Chinese officer stayed in his house and advised the family to flee to Lhasa where it would be safer. Sangyal Tashi and his brother left for Lhasa together where Sangyal Tashi joined the Gyumed Monastery at the age of 18.

Sangyal Tashi provides a first-hand account of the vigil at Norbulingka Palace in March of 1959, explaining why the people protested. He witnessed the Chinese bombardment of the palace. He then talks about the courageous role played by the *Chushi Gangdrug* Defend Tibet Volunteer Force in confronting the Chinese and saving many people's lives. Lastly he narrates his escape journey and the death one of his brothers to Chinese bullets.

Topics Discussed:

Kham, childhood memories, farm life, herding, trade, monastic life, first appearance of Chinese, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas, Norbulingka, March 10th Uprising, escape experiences.

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Interview #6C

Interviewee: Sangyal Tashi

Age: 73, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: May 4, 2013

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:12

Interviewee #6C: I am called Sangyal Tashi.

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record your experiences, so that we can share your memories with many generations of Tibetans, the Chinese and the rest of the world. Your memories will help us to document the true history, culture and beliefs of the Tibetan people. Do you give your permission for the Tibet Oral History Project to use this interview?

#6C: Yes, [I] do.

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

#6C: Thank you and is it okay for me to say a word?

Q: Let's finish this first.

#6C: Okay.

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

#6C: [Nods]

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

00:01:39

#6C: Okay.

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

#6C: Yeah?

Q: Is it okay?

#6C: Yes, it is okay. There will be no problem.

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

#6C: That is okay and thank you. I very much wanted to participate because earlier she [interviewer] came here and gave a talk. I felt very happy when I heard then that it was the advice of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and that she was helping us. Though I cannot give a good narration, I want to try and relate [my story]. Thank you very much.

Q: Thank you. We showed you a short film.

#6C: [Nods]

Q: Let us begin, Tashi, by asking you about where you were born and what year were you born?

00:03:08

#6C: 1940. However, we cannot say the exact year because we do not celebrate birthdays. Therefore, [I] do not know much.

Q: Which place?

#6C: The place is Serchuthi, Karze in Kham. Serchuthi is the name of my village. Kham is the overall [province] and Karze is the district. Serchuthi is the village.

Q: Serchi?

#6C: Serchuthi.

Q: Serchu?

#6C: Ser chu thi.

Q: The name of the village?

#6C: Yes, Serchuthi.

Q: The name of the village?

#6C: Yes.

Q: And what was the nearest temple?

00:04:02

#6C: There are monasteries. Karze Gonpa is the largest monastery in our region. There are 13 smaller monasteries under Karze Gonpa.

Q: In your village or area, how many families lived in your village?

#6C: You mean families?

Q: Yes.

#6C: Oh. It [varied] from cluster to cluster. There were five families in our cluster. A little further away were four families. In all there were around 27 families in the place called Serchuthi.

Q: How many people altogether would you estimate that was?

#6C: In Serchuthi?

Q: Yes.

00:05:12

#6C: There were many in Serchuthi but I would not know much. The population could be approximately 700-800 including children.

Q: Tashi-*la*, what was the typical number of children that a Tibetan family had in your village?

#6C: Take my family for instance. We were five, four sons and a daughter. We were five. Because there was no practice of birth control in the region, there were four, five, six, seven, eight, two or three children.

Q: Just so we understand, was your village very near a big city or was it remote?

#6C: Riding horseback for 15 minutes from Serchuthi would lead one to the city of Karze. Karze is a city where there is the monastery.

Q: In your own family, how many people were in your family?

00:07:08

#6C: As I mentioned now there were five [children], four sons and a daughter in my family then. I am the youngest among the siblings. The rest were older and the oldest... Generally in our region the work was farming and herding. The main work was farming and there were also the nomads. You would know about the nomads in the mountains? Besides there was trade if one was capable of it. Therefore, our oldest brother was a trader. The second son lived in the mountains to herd the yaks and *dri* 'female yak.' Am I saying too much? Is it okay?

Q: Were your parents there?

#6C: Yes, the parents were there.

00:08:44

The second one herded the yaks and such. The third had married and lived at home with wife and children.

Q: What was it like being the youngest kid in your family? Can you remember some of the things you did?

#6C: Being the youngest, I was the happiest one then.

Q: Yes?

#6C: The happiest, I was the happiest and I knew it. [My] parents loved me and when I woke up early in the morning, a goatskin was spread for me where [I] could catch the warmth of the sun on the *khetho*. *Khetho* is the verandah of the house. It was a double storied house. I would be seated on the goatskin spread in the *khetho*. There would be a little kettle filled with milk, some *tsampa* ‘flour made from roasted barley’ with a pat of butter on it. I would be given this every morning and I found it delicious. [I] miss this very much.

Whether it was the sister-in-law or mother, they did this for me.

Q: Could you describe if we were going back in time and to your village, could you describe what does your house look like? Is it one story or two or what kind of rooms and arrangements are there?

00:10:44

#6C: It was like this. My house is double-storied. Double-storied with a door facing the east and one facing the west. There were two main doors.

Q: At the back and front?

#6C: Yes, two doors, at the back and front. Going down from the east door will lead you to two patches of vegetable gardens. Facing the door at the back that is the main door through which guests came was a square-shaped mound where one dismounted a horse, and also a place to burn incense. That was at the west door.

Q: What was there at the back door? Horse and...?

#6C: A place to dismount from horses. We raised a platform at the place of mounting and dismounting horses. It was not us alone but every neighbor had one. When you rode a horse, you climbed on this and then mounted the horse. That is called a *thapha*.

Q: Were there any prayer rooms in the house?

00:12:03

#6C: The main room in the house, which is half the size of this room, is the prayer room. That is the prayer room and next to it was what one would call the bedroom here. There were three such rooms. On this side [indicates left] was the kitchen. Behind the kitchen was the toilet. There was a place to pile straw atop the house and animals below. There were many animals.

Q: How was the house heated in the wintertime? How do you stay warm and how cold did it get?

#6C: Like anywhere in the world, there were three months each of summer, winter, autumn and spring. It was the same in our region. It snowed during wintertime, the cold period of the 12th, 1st and 2nd Tibetan lunar months. It did not snow much. It first snowed on the mountaintops and only about a foot in the house [village]. When it snowed, your food and likewise animal food would be stored much earlier in the house in anticipation of snowfall. There was no worrying over food.

Q: How do you keep warm?

#6C: The warmth was also the same. It did not become so hot that you had to use a fan.

Q: The weather was extremely cold and you had to keep warm. Did you make a fire...?

00:14:34

#6C: In order to remain warm a fire was left burning in the kitchen 24 hours.

Then there was tea and likewise...it was not wood but dung that was used in [our] region. Animal dung was dried on the walls and that was gathered and used to make fire, which burned well throughout the day and night. Moreover, the droppings of goats and sheep were very good fuel.

Q: Tashi-*la*, what would be a typical task that your mother would do everyday and typical task that your father would do?

#6C: For instance, mother and daughter-in-law did most of the work at home like cleaning and gathering the animals in the evening, gathering [the animals] in the evening, tethering them inside and untying in the morning. The men like my older brother went outside to herd the animals.

Q: Herding animals?

#6C: There were animals like *dzö* ‘animal bred between a yak and a cow’ and *dzomo* ‘female *dzö*.’ There were four types of animals that were reared at home *dzö*, *dzomo*, horses and mules. These were reared by every home.

[To interpreter] Did [I] say clearly? Did you understand?

[The four types of animals were reared] for home use.

Q: And what did your father do on a typical day?

00:17:00

#6C: Older brother went to trade and [father] oversaw those that lived in the *ba* ‘tent made from yak hair’ at the nomadic site and also the home. He shouldered the main responsibility of the home and oversaw all. The work was not much but...

Q: Did [father] go to trade?

#6C: [Father] assessed how trade was going on and issued directions on trading. He advised all the children and about maintaining good conduct.

Q: What kinds of items did he use in trade?

#6C: The merchandise then were the produce of our region like butter, curds, milk, cheese, butter and such. The butter was not just one piece like you have here. Since there were numerous animals, many bundles of butter were brought down once a month from the nomadic camp. The butter was sold and so were the grains. We sold grains and barley, food items that grew in the region.

Q: Were these food items that you gathered from your own animals?

00:18:55

#6C: Yes, from one’s animals. That is right.

Q: Just in terms of food for your own family, was there always enough food to eat or did you have times when it was not possible to have good or enough food?

#6C: There were never such difficulties. Because [we] owned lands, large tracts of land where one grew barley, peas and wheat. In the vegetable garden that led from our east door, we grew radish, potatoes, onions and such.

Q: It sounds delicious.

#6C: [Laughs]

Q: Very enviable. I’m sure with nine children...yeah...eight, 10?

#6C: Five.

Interpreter interprets as: Yeah, 10.

Q: It was 10, four sons and six daughters. Tell us a little bit about all the jobs your mother had to do?

00:20:32

#6C: Mother assisted the daughter-in-law with the household chores. There was a lot of work at home. After harvest, there was the thrashing and procuring grains, removing peas from pods, which was a lot of work. There was a lot of work at home. So without the

daughter-in-law, the daughters of the home and mother all working together, the day's work could not be completed.

Q: Your father who was a trader, did he do the trading in the area or did he go very far away and if so, how far?

#6C: The distance was about a day's horse ride to other villages and also Karze that I told you was 15 minutes away. Going to the city of Karze, one could find all the merchants gathered there. They sat in groups like the nomads that consisted of sellers and buyers. [Father] went there.

Q: If we went to visit your village and we went outside, what would we see if we looked around? Can you describe the scenery and the mountains or hills? What was possible to see?

00:22:27

#6C: The scenery is beautiful because the name of the mountain on this side [moves right hand] is Yargyakhawalori. It is covered in snow throughout summer and winter. That is in the east. Then there are forests, and mountains covered in grass. The whole region is beautiful and large. The region is surrounded by mountains on every side with the village situated in the center. A big river called Dhachu 'Mekong' flowed in the center. It is one of the famous rivers of Tibet.

Q: What's the name of the river?

#6C: Dhachu.

Q: I see, Dhachu.

#6C: It is the river called Dhachu.

Q: Were there any...Can you name us any animals that lived in the forest?

#6C: Since we lived lower down in the town, there were a few animals like antelopes and musk deer while the tigers and zig 'leopards' were found higher up on the mountains. We did not see [them].

Q: Which ones?

00:24:04

#6C: The tigers and leopards lived high up in the forests because when the goats and sheep grazed in the forests, they devoured them. There were not many [wild] animals in the village.

Q: How did you protect the domestic animals?

#6C: I told you just now that my older brother along with siblings...The mountain is very vast. It is a grassy mountain where the herding is done.

Q: Your sister-in-law's children?

#6C: No, the sons of the family. My older brother who presently lives in India, he along with other children went herding. However, it was not just our animals but the animals of all the villages that were brought to the mountain. Numerous people arrived there because each family sent one person. When everyone assembled, you watched the animals, played or toyed with slingshots and spent time that way.

Q: You said tigers and lions?

Interpreter to interviewer: Yeah.

Q: You mean lions?

[Interpreter to interviewee]: Does lion mean *zig*?

#6C: Yes, *zig* 'leopard.'

Q: Lions. And leopards, what about leopards? Snow leopards?

00:26:07

#6C: It is said that there were snow leopards. If one went further away from Serchuthi, the mountain was higher and the forest extremely dense. So neither [domestic] animals nor people went there. It was said that [snow leopards] existed there but [I] have not seen one.

Q: What was the feeling or the attitude in your family home? Were people in good spirits? Was it hard work? Was it, I don't know, sadness or joy? What would you say was the spirit that characterized your home?

#6C: The joy at home...there was no difficulties where food was concerned. The system was very good. Each year one harvested many sacks of grains from which the best quality was offered to monasteries and lamas. You stored the rest for yourself that was sufficient to last the entire year. There were no problems as such. All the family members lived happily.

Q: Can you tell us what was the relation of the villagers to the monastery?

00:28:08

#6C: The relationship was good because when there were many sons in the homes of the village, some of the boys became monks. When there were many daughters, some of the girls became nuns while others married and lived at home. Hence, the relation between the monastery and families was very good because the sons and daughters of the village joined the monastery. The monks did not come from outside to join [the monastery] but belonged to the village. Whether it was the nunnery, monastery or Karze Monastery—there were around 13 villages—all of them [the monasteries] existed in that way.

Q: You mentioned in your house the largest room was the prayer room. What did you use that prayer room for? How often was it used?

#6C: The prayer room contained the *kusungthukten* ‘body, speech and mind’ [symbolized by holy image, scriptures and stupa respectively]; *Kagyur* ‘translated word of Buddha (108 volumes)’ and *Tengyur* ‘translated treatises (collection of 225 volumes of religious commentaries.’ There were scriptures and likewise images of deities, images of the Buddha, Je Rinpoche and many such deities. You might have seen images in the Tsuglakhang ‘Central Cathedral’ and many other temples. There were many such life size images. [I] have heard at home that the previous generation like my paternal and maternal uncles were very pious. They had left behind [these spiritual items] in the house. They were accomplished practitioners of the dharma.

Q: Religious practitioners?

00:29:56

#6C: Yes, dharma practitioners. There were the paternal uncles and older people that belonged to the previous generation.

Q: They were practitioners.

#6C: Yes, good practitioners and thanks to them, there were the *Kagyur* and *Tengyur* and fine images at home.

Q: Did the monks ever come to your home for prayer ceremonies for special occasions?

#6C: The *dhasol* ‘monthly prayer’ was conducted every month for which 10 monks came home each month. It was understood and the monastery sent [the monks]. Besides this, the family may have to do special prayer ceremonies during the year, so 100 or 50 monks would be invited home. There was the tradition of offering food and money to them for conducting the prayers.

Q: Fifty or a 100 monks. That’s a lot of people for dinner.

#6C: [Laughs] Big dinner.

Q: When the Chinese liberated Tibet as they called it, they said that they needed to free the people from the oppression of the lama system, of the monastery system. How do you respond to that kind of statement?

00:32:13

#6C: [To interpreter] I had come prepared with a story that I would recount initially about living in the village for around 15 years but it is not going according to that because she [interviewer] is asking questions and I am providing the answers. If I were to narrate, I would speak about what the Chinese did, what it was like before the Chinese appeared, what happened after the Chinese came and in the meantime His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s

visit to China in the year '54 and I had come prepared to narrate what preparations we made. Please tell her.

Q: The question is the Chinese said that the system of lamas, of monasteries was very oppressive to the people and I want to ask your opinion about that statement based on your experience.

#6C: It is like this regarding this subject. The Chinese began to appear in the year '47 or '48. [They] began to appear in [my] region in '47-'48. When the Chinese first appeared...the way the Chinese appeared...first they came and formed contacts with Tibetan people that were permanent leaders and influential in the region. They formed relations with them and made preparations for their easy entry.

A few of them [the Chinese] and not many had come earlier and spoken to them [the influential]. As I look back now this is what I understand. There were the leaders in the region like the District Administrator, village leaders and leaders in the monasteries. [The Chinese] contacted them to say that they would be coming and that there would be this many men and the preparations to be conducted for their arrival. This is what they had said.

Q: The question now is, is it true that the monasteries, monk and lamas were oppressing the Tibetan people as they [the Chinese] said? The Chinese said that they liberated...is it true that there was no freedom?

00:35:04

#6C: That is what they said. There was none in the country without freedom. As I said earlier, each one earned his livelihood and lived happily. None was without freedom. However, take one family for instance. There would be an employer and servants or maids. There could be little differences in the degree of freedom due to authority. This happens all over the world and it occurred in the region. In general the regions faced problems...if the leader of the region happened to be a fearless and rigid man, the people may face problems but such types were very rare. This was not something that was unendurable for us.

The Chinese said, "We are coming to liberate because you are being oppressed." However, speaking like this was to prepare the ground for their coming. It was for that reason and not because there was oppression in Tibet. They planned to come and it was for this reason.

Q: So was there oppression by the monasteries of the people?

#6C: No, [they] did not.

Q: Tashi-*la*, you grew up in such a big family, happy family; what values did you learn as a little boy in your family that you still keep with you in your heart today?

00:37:24

#6C: What did one learn? That is the question. What should [I] say? From the time I left [my] village...I came to Lhasa from [my] village at the age of 14-15. Once in Lhasa I

became a monk. Since I lived as a monk among monks, I read the scriptures. Since everybody must act well for the country, it was my duty to do the same.

Similarly, the teachers and tutors say, “One must learn the scriptures, study well and become good men.” [They] taught this and because of their advice and the peaceful nature in my country, though the Chinese have caused us suffering, I do not feel that we have not been able to endure it. I do not feel that even now.

Q: Were you the first son in the family to go to the monastery?

#6C: In our family I was the only one that became a monk and lived in the monastery. The four [other] children worked at home and some got married. Some did not marry and went on trade missions.

Q: Was it difficult for you to leave this happy family even if you were the baby and go and become a monk?

00:39:52

#6C: [I] did not face any problems in the monastery. When one joined the monastery as a monk, generally one could not join the monastery until the age of 18. One could not become a monk until the age of 18. Though normally one became a monk and joined the monastery at a young age, yet one was bestowed the vows and observed the monastery’s rules [only at 18].

I joined the Gyumed Monastery. I could not join it until I turned 18. So I became a monk at the age of 18, took the vows and observed the rules of the monastery. I did not face any problems. I had become quite smart. When I joined, my relatives had found a good teacher with help from people that hailed from our village and so [I] did not face any problems.

Q: So from 10 to 15, were you in the Karze Gonpa near your home?

#6C: [I] was not a monk as such then but [I] was living at home and going to the monastery. [I] had not specifically decided to become a monk.

Q: Was it at Karze Gonpa?

00:41:57

#6C: Yes, at Karze Gonpa. We had to attend school at the Karze Gonpa.

Q: I see. From age 10-15 you lived at home and you went to the Karze Gonpa. Were you learning how to read and write?

#6C: [I] learned to write and read.

Q: Where? At Karze Gonpa?

#6C: There was a teacher at Karze Gonpa and 20-30 students. A teacher came and taught the alphabets like its done now and to write and read. Besides reading, I did not get to learn to write much.

Q: In your village, was that the only way for a young person to learn how to read was to go to the monastery? Were there schools that other children could go to?

00:43:30

#6C: There were schools. A school was established in the monastery and there were schools in the villages. However, it was up to your parents or you where you wished to join.

Q: Did your parents decide to send you to the monastery and were you okay with that decision or did you not want to go?

#6C: Generally when the parents sent you...I told you earlier that there were schools in the monastery and village. Since one wished to go to the monastery, the parents sent you there. If you did not wish to go to the monastery and asked to be sent to the village school, you were allowed to attend that school. My wish was to be a monk.

Q: What was it in your heart that made you want to go to the monastery?

00:45:01

#6C: I was small then and though I did not have any concrete thoughts at that time, it must have been one's destiny. It must be like that as I very much wished and liked becoming a monk.

Q: It felt right.

#6C: [Laughs]

Q: At 18 you now go to another monastery, is that correct?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Gyumed [Monastery].

Q: And how far away is that from your home? What city is it in?

#6C: It took a month if you rode a horse.

Q: Where is it?

#6C: Lhasa.

[Interpreter interprets]: Two months walking distance to Lhasa.

Q: Two months! I hope you had good shoes.

#6C: [Laughs] When we made the journey the Chinese had already arrived, so there were Chinese vehicles plying. One traveled in them or drove horses and mules.

Q: But at 18 you spent two months walking from Kham to Lhasa, it takes that long. Did you go by yourself and what was the journey like? Can you tell us some of your adventures?

00:46:54

#6C: I would not have reached had I traveled alone because when leaving the village [people] traveled in groups of 20-30 and never less than 10 then. Otherwise, one must journey for many days and spent nights in forests or pastures and rivers where one might encounter many different wild animals and thieves and bandits. Fearing such, people travelled in groups of 15-20 consisting of older and younger people. Hence, [I] traveled in that way and did not face any problems. One loaded one's provisions on a horse. There were horses to ride and mules to carry things.

Q: Was that an exciting journey for you?

#6C: One was happy because there were no problems. This topic did not come about but Lenda, the Chinese leader in the village told me to leave the village. "You should not remain," he said.

Q: Lenda?

00:48:37

#6C: Lenda mentioned [that]. If I were to recount my story in sequence this part would come about but it did not happen. The one called Lenda was staying in our home. After having dinner all the Chinese used to attend a meeting. The one called Lenda did not have to attend the meeting. He stayed in our home and after we had dinner, he used to sit in our chair. We called him Lenda Tsoso. Tsoso was the name of a neighboring old lady. The old lady and Lenda's faces were very similar. Hence, the old neighbor lady's name Tsoso was given to him. We called him Lenda Tsoso.

Q: His...

#6C: He told our [family], "You have many children. The Communists will invade Tibet and subject you to suffering. Do not remain. If you go to Lhasa, [the suffering] will come about only after a long delay. Kham will be invaded very soon." We planned to leave because of that.

Q: I don't think we heard that story on tape about these two Chinese officials that lived in your home and in your village. Can you tell us how that happened and how they got there and when they came?

00:51:05

#6C: Okay. Now we have come to the first point of the story I had come prepared.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Can you translate little at a time?

#6C: As I said earlier the Chinese first appeared in '47-'48. When the Chinese first arrived, we were given the message, "The Chinese are arriving tomorrow. You are to come and watch."

Q: Did China give the message?

#6C: No, the leader of the village did, "The Chinese are coming tomorrow. You must come to watch."

00:52:07

When told to come, the children and elders who were interested went to watch. We had to go from Serchuthi to Karze. Some were on horseback and some on foot. We went to Karze. When we went to Karze, they, the Chinese military arrived in rows of four. Each carried a load and a gun but nothing else. That is how [the soldiers] arrived. Perhaps there were 500 men.

Never having seen such, it seemed very fascinating...when [they] came marching in rows. [I] liked it.

Q: Were you scared?

#6C: [I] was not scared. There was never the thought that [the Chinese] would cause suffering later.

Q: What happened next?

00:53:42

#6C: Initially they came and contacted the leaders of the region who sent messages to [their] respective villagers, "Tomorrow you must bring five horses, ride to a distance of a day's journey and bring their [the Chinese] provisions and weapons." Around 500 Chinese soldiers had arrived and their supplies had been left at a day's journey, which we were to transport to Karze. The people of our village and horses were sent to fetch them.

Q: Was it threatening the way they asked or were they saying, "Please help. That would be nice"?

#6C: The leader of the village said it and nobody...It was like a [form of labor] tax. When the order to transport [the supplies] came from one of your people, we complied.

Q: Did you feel threatened that you had to do it or could you say no?

00:55:45

#6C: Some said, "I do not own five horses. [I] have only two." It was okay and [they] could go [with the two horses].

Q: Were you paid for the loan of these horses and did you... Were you reassured that you would get them back?

#6C: There was nothing like that [payment]. It was not far, just a day's journey. The horses [and riders] left in the morning and returned with their [the Chinese] supplies in the evening. [The supplies] were unloaded at Karze as per their instructions.

Q: What do you think would happen if you said, 'No, I don't want to do that'?

00:56:50

#6C: The Chinese had not taken control then. It was your people and [I] do not think anything adverse took place. [I] did not witness any such things.

Q: So what happens next?

#6C: To recount the story, for instance, initially when they [the Chinese] arrived, they had formed relations with all the influential people of the region. The Chinese initially arrived in the year '49. It was not just the 500-600 Chinese men but many arrived. The leaders among them held talks with the leaders of the region. They very much liked talking to the leaders and lamas. [The Chinese] gave them gifts and held talks.

That is what [the Chinese] did in the beginning. What [they] did a year or so later...initially they contacted the leaders. They formed relations with the leaders because unless they did that, they could not get in touch with the people. They [the Chinese] brought about a change around a year later. They remained in touch with the influential people of the region but not with the abbots and lamas. They continued to keep in touch with the leaders and elders of the village.

00:59:11

Initially to their advantage [the Chinese] formed relations with the lamas and monks. Next [they] contacted the people and when [they] did that, the people liked them, the common people of the region. Finally, what happened was [the Chinese] created resentment among the Tibetans, between the leaders and the common people. That was the [Chinese'] deed. It was around a year later.

[The Chinese] had formed relations with the common people. Hence, they gathered the people for meetings in the evenings, perhaps once a month. [They] would gather in a home and say, "While you had been living here, did the lamas subject you to suffering? Did the monks subject you to suffering? Did the leader of the region subject you to suffering? Did the region create problems for your inability to pay taxes? If [you] speak, you need have no fear. We will help you." Giving such advice, they held a meeting once a month.

Q: On Monday?

#6C: Once a month.

01:01:09

#6C: Later, for two, three or four years, a little before I left the village where there used to be a lot of happiness, it turned unhappy. The monks and lamas and leaders were not happy themselves because the people did not listen. The people no longer feared [them] because the Chinese had misled them. Therefore, the people liked the Chinese better and the poor obeyed the Chinese. So the leaders of your region...There was sadness within the community for around two or three years. Such a change occurred after the Chinese arrived. I am talking about the change that took place after the Chinese arrived. This must be told well as it is important.

[Interpreter interprets the above situation as having occurred during his absence and finding the change upon returning to the village.]

Q: Tashi-*la*, where were you for those three or four years before you returned to the village?

#6C: All this [occurred] before I left for Lhasa.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Before he went to Lhasa.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: He said he was away from his village and then when he came back it seemed less peaceful. Where was he away?

01:03:08

#6C: I told you earlier that I left for Lhasa at around the age of 15. I never returned and left for good. I am talking about the period of 15 years [when I lived in the village].

Q: And then you came back to your village around 18?

#6C: [I] left my village for Lhasa.

Q: Village to Lhasa at the age of 18?

#6C: I left for Lhasa from the village at around the age of 15. I stayed in Lhasa for around four years.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: And then he came back?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Then he came back.

#6C: India.

Q: When were the Chinese officials living in your family? Was that when you were in Lhasa or before you left?

#6C: [I was] in the village.

Q: How was your home selected as a place to give them shelter?

01:04:24

#6C: It was not just my home. In our village...Initially when they [the Chinese] came, they had formed relations with the leaders of the village and lamas and *geshe* 'monk with Buddhist philosophy degree.' They [the Chinese] had informed the leaders of the village who ordered, "Ten [Chinese] should live in this home and 20 in that." They [the Chinese] had already received permission.

Around 20 men stayed with those that possessed large homes. The smaller ones were allotted 15 or 10. There were 10 Chinese staying in our home. There was more [Chinese] living with the people in Karze and in various different villages. There were no payments received nor could one refuse to provide accommodation. They forcefully stayed [in the homes]. At night [they] spread their blankets and in the morning rolled them up. Though they did not give us any problems, no one was happy.

Q: In each home...

#6C: ...around 10 or 20 men were accommodated.

01:05:53

Hence [the Chinese] stayed like that and the one called Lenda was living in our home. When the Chinese held meetings in the evenings, Lenda did not need to attend. He could remain at home.

Q: Because he was a commander?

#6C: Yes, on account of being a commander, a leader. When [he] was staying like that he told us. He used to call me Sho Lama.

Q: To whom?

#6C: To me. He called me Sho Lama. Sho means little and Lama because I was a monk. He, Lenda, used to call me Sho Lama. He said, "Do not stay here. Go to Lhasa. If [you] go to Lhasa..." He knew even at that time and said, "By going to Lhasa, you will not face problems until at the final stage." [He] remarked about things like these, "It is good to go to Lhasa. Take things like money. It will be good to go there." He liked us very much. We left when [Lenda] said this. I was around 15 years old when I left the village for Lhasa. I was not alone; my sibling was with [me], the older sibling.

Q: So Lenda told you and your brother. Did he tell your parents and the other children or did you tell them?

01:08:03

#6C: [Lenda] told our family in the presence of all the children when we were dining but told [us] not to reveal it to anyone.

Q: Why do you think he gave you that information?

#6C: Because...later when I was in Lhasa, he came to Lhasa, the one called Lenda. He was powerful among the Chinese but he liked me very much, [I] do not know why. Before the Communists came into power, he was...There was another Chinese [Government] before the Communists took over. He was one of those people from that region. He was not a Communist. However, the Communists came into power; Mao Zedong came to power. He [Lenda] said that he had no knowledge where his family was. So at times he said, “You are lucky” and shed tears.

Q: Please tell us what were your experience, what monastery did you go to study in Lhasa?

01:09:58

#6C: There are the Sera, Drepung and Gaden Monasteries and upper and lower Gyu [Monasteries] in Lhasa. [To interpreter] You would know that, no? There are the Gyuto and Gyumed [Monasteries] right in Lhasa. One is called Gyumed Palden Meji Datsang. At present it is established in Hunsur [Karnataka, India].

Q: What Datsang?

#6C: Meji Datsang.

Q: Meji?

#6C: Yes, Meji Datsang [or] Gyumed.

Q: It's in Hunsur at present?

#6C: Yes, in Hunsur. The monastery is in Hunsur.

Q: And then?

#6C: That is it. I joined this monastery. One could not join this [monastery] unless one reached the age of 18.

Q: In Lhasa?

#6C: Lhasa.

Q: And it was the Gelug sect?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah, it's Gelug.

Q: How did you get permission to enter this monastery? Did you just show up at the doorstep and say, “Can I come in?” or did you have to have a recommendation?

01:11:25

#6C: It was not easy to get admission to Gyumed [Monastery]. One must give a series of examinations. So I lived in Lhasa for two years studying for the examinations.

Q: Did somebody...Where did you go to do these studies in Lhasa?

#6C: I stayed with an aristocrat called Jamyang Kyi in Lhasa. I stayed with Jamyang Kyi in Lhasa.

Q: In his home?

#6C: I had a special tutor. The tutor taught me what I had to learn to prepare for the examinations. [I] went to him in the morning to study and upon returning in the evening learned by myself. There was a lot of memorization. It was mainly memorization. Hence, before joining Gyumed I memorized 12 *lewu* 'chapters.' What is *lewu* called [in English]? *Lewu*? It is section wise.

Q: Yes.

01:12:34

#6C: One must sit for tests in the 12 chapters, which is one volume. The volume must be studied before joining Gyumed and if one passed the test could get admission into Gyumed.

Q: Was that difficult or easy to do that work?

#6C: That depended upon one's interest and effort. Because I wished to study, it was so-so.

Q: Why do you think you wanted to be a monk so much?

#6C: I said earlier that I joined the monastery school in the village. Since then [I] wished to become a monk.

Q: Did you feel sad about the idea that you wouldn't have a wife and a family and children? Did you?

01:14:28

#6C: There were no [sad feelings].

Q: How did your parents feel about you wanting to be a monk?

#6C: Parents were elated. When informed that I had joined Gyumed Monastery [they] were very happy. The best thing about my time was that the currency in circulation was *dhayen* 'Chinese silver coins,' the Chinese *dhayen*. That was in circulation. [My parents] sent me 100 *dhayen* from the village saying that [they] were happy I had joined the monastery.

Q: Did you need that money to pay to stay with the aristocratic family or how did you get support for two years?

01:15:40

#6C: My sibling had traveled with me to cover such expenses. There were two siblings. One joined a family in Metagangkar as a son-in-law, the very place where gold mining led to a mountain slide recently. He drove a horse carriage and traded between Lhasa and Metagangkar. He was a trader and my older sibling. The other sibling also lived there and after I joined the monastery, [they] left to join the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force]. They helped me [with the expenses].

Q: Different directions!

#6C: Yeah. [Laughs]

Q: The warrior and the monk.

#6C: [Laughs]

Q: Okay. What was your understanding about what was going on politically in Tibet? You are now 15, 16, no, 17 years old. What do you think is happening in Tibet? What do you understand?

01:17:17

#6C: What [I] had seen in my village at the age of 15, that change was advancing. The same thing was being carried out in Lhasa. Initially, the Chinese were having close relations with the aristocrats, liked the influential people of the region and held talks with them. Later on, instead of the influential people, [the Chinese] formed contacts with the common people and began creating hostilities between them.

Q: I want to go back and ask a question. You said you'd been away and when you returned to your village that the atmosphere...things were not so friendly. Can you describe what you mean by that?

#6C: The situation then was that there was no happiness; there was no peace of mind [thinking], "What is going to happen? What will become of the country?" However, there was no thought of our running away or going out of the country. At that time the Khampa force called the *Chushi Gangdrug* was formed. The *Chushi Gangdrug* force was established then. [The men] left from Lhasa in '53, '54, '55. Some left from Kham riding horses and carrying guns. The *Chushi Gangdrug* was like a guerrilla force. Such a thing occurred in Tibet.

Q: '54, '55, '56.

#6C: Yeah.

Q: Your village lost its sense of wellbeing and peace. People were suspicious of each other?

#6C: Yeah.

Q: Did people turn other people in to the Chinese authorities?

01:20:26

#6C: It was not done openly in front of all the people but some did it covertly.

Q: Were there any beatings in the village, *thamzing* happening in your village, which is a public beating of people by their relatives and neighbors?

#6C: I have not witnessed people being told to come and watch. However, [I] have heard people being used to subject previous leaders of the regions to *thamzing* but have not witnessed. It became a topic of conversation.

Q: You mentioned your two brothers joined the *Chushi Gangdrug*. For people who may not understand, could you explain what the *Chushi Gangdrug* is?

#6C: The one called *Chushi Gangdrug*...the Chinese had already caused suffering in Amdo and Kham. For instance, my family has been subjected to a lot of suffering, not exactly at gunpoint but due to the difference in the strength of people; we being less. So facing problems [people] started to flee. Those with wives and children remained in the village and the two siblings that were single left and joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* Force.

In the *Chushi Gangdrug* were those that had families and those that did not but the main point was that when [they] joined the force none had brought their wives and children along. All were alone, just one man, a horse, a gun, a sword and bullets. The first army camp, you know army camp? It was established first at Diguthang, Diguthang in Lhoka.

Q: What do the words *Chushi Gangdrug* actually stand for?

01:23:35

#6C: *Chushi Gangdrug* is a name they selected. However, the name *Chushi Gangdrug* means, there are four large rivers in the Kham region and six ranges like Tsawagang and others. I do not know for sure but am reading books on *Chushi Gangdrug*. Perhaps it is like that.

Q: I thought in translation it meant ‘six mountains and four rivers’?

#6C: [Nods] Four rivers and six ranges, I think.

Q: So you are in the monastery and your brothers go off to join the resistance of Tibetan young fighters. What’s happening in the monastery? Are the monks nervous, worried? Are you able to pray or were you worried about being invaded?

#6C: As [I] said earlier, there was no joy in the monastery as there used to be earlier because of the thought, “What will he [the next person] say if I said something? With whom does he have contact?” One could not learn, meditate or study the scriptures in a

relaxed state of mind like one did usually. It was the same in the monastery as was all over Lhasa.

Q: Are there any spies that come into the monasteries disguised as monks?

01:25:49

#6C: It is possible there were spies. However, [I] do not think there were Chinese in monks' robes then because it was in the beginning. They would not be able to do that. However, with the people they [the Chinese] said, "Do this and I will give you presents. Tell us what is being discussed in the meetings and what a person is saying." They did say such things for sure.

Q: Just tell us about yourself in those days, you're now 20-21. What are you feeling and what are you thinking about? What are you worried about? Tell us your story in the monastery.

#6C: Now I had been studying for around two years. It was '57 that [I] was studying. At that time His Holiness the Dalai Lama gave the second Kalachakra initiation in Norbulingka. [To interpreter] Please translate that.

Q: Did you go?

#6C: Yeah, I attended and received the Kalachakra initiation.

Q: Could you just for people who may not understand tell us what you mean by Kalachakra teachings?

01:28:04

#6C: [I] would not be able to explain the meaning of Kalachakra but our Tibetan culture...His Holiness the Dalai Lama said that in the 20th century when someone said something, everybody believed it. We too had been following that. His Holiness says, "In the 21st century you must analyze and understand, and not believe what others say." That is true. Though we do not know the meaning of Kalachakra, we know that it is precious.

We are the people of the 20th century that His Holiness talks about. The people of the 20th century trusted blindly in the old ways and followed it. What was right was right, nobody did anything bad and life continued. However, His Holiness says that that is not enough and that in the 21st century one must analyze, study and understand. That is true and so, people like us know that Kalachakra is important and receive the initiation. [We] might be learning a little but that depends on the opportunities and yourself.

Q: What does the word Kalachakra mean?

01:30:52

#6C: I do not know very well what Kalachakra means. I will tell you about it another time. I am not able to explain it now. We will talk about it at a later time.

Q: What was it like to hear the Dalai Lama speak and see him in person? What do you remember he looked like? What did you feel? Can you tell us about that?

#6C: Upon seeing His Holiness...Generally all Tibetans have great faith in lamas. However, one feels a sort of nervousness on seeing His Holiness the Dalai Lama, one of extreme joy and of the feeling, "This man is wonderful." What to say...You feel so much joy that you shed tears. [I] do not know why that happens.

Q: Was there any...Politically Lhasa was very tense at that time because there were Chinese coming into Lhasa, is that correct? What did you see with your own eyes?

01:32:50

#6C: At that time the situation seen in China...what we heard was...outwardly there was nothing to be seen. Except for the speculation that the Chinese would cause suffering, there was neither suffering being initiated nor [Chinese] coming with guns. There were rumors going around about the *Chushi Gangdrug* force that was putting up a great fight somewhere and about the warriors that would arrive, such that the people thought they would appear the next or the following day.

There were thoughts like these but none like, "If [I] do this, this will be the consequence" because even on the morning of the day [I] fled in the year '59...when the atom bomb was dropped on the Potala Palace, when it happened it never dawned, "[I] must flee now."

Q: [You] didn't think [you] must flee then?

#6C: There was no such thought. Nobody advised nor did one have the thought of escaping.

Q: Was there fear?

01:33:56

#6C: There was great fear in the mind about what would happen.

Q: What was happening in the city streets? Was there anything happening in the city streets that really frightened the monks and yourself? Did you see soldiers coming or anything at that time?

#6C: The situation was like this. I had lived for around four years [in Lhasa]. Behind the Norbulingka [Palace] is a large area called Dekyiling where the Chinese had established a huge military base. The Chinese military's arms and ammunitions were stored there. [To interpreter] Please translate that. It is near the Norbulingka.

What was being heard in Lhasa was that the Chinese would escort His Holiness the Dalai Lama to China.

Q: What did you see going on with your own eyes?

#6C: What could be seen then...speculations were floating around and people were nervous. I could visualize the crowd of people sitting like this [shuts eyes and bows] at Norbulingka during the Kalachakra in the year '57. This was three years later in '59 when the attack took place.

A day or two prior to the attack, all of us, everybody went to Norbulingka fearing that His Holiness may be forcefully taken to attend a banquet. Some said that [His Holiness] was invited and would be taken the next day to watch a Chinese performance—movies and dance shows that used to be screened. Everyone was in panic fearing His Holiness would be taken to China. So all the people were there inside and outside Norbulingka protesting.

Q: Were you one of those people?

01:37:30

#6C: I too went to protest there.

Q: What was the feeling in the crowd? What was the attitude?

#6C: Everybody prayed to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, “You are the all-knowing.” Yes, everyone was praying.

Q: And what were they going to do?

#6C: The reason for our sitting there like that was...the walls of Norbulingka were very high with only two gates. If these two gates were shut, none could enter or exit. No one was allowed to. Hence, if His Holiness were to be escorted, the Chinese would arrive at the gate in a vehicle. Vehicles came but we did not allow entry. Chinese leaders came in vehicles.

However, they didn't shoot or say, “Let [us] in or [we] will kill [you].” They came but none was allowed in as people lay siege. And they returned. They were trying to escort His Holiness out in this way. It was like that. They were not allowed entry by the many thousands of people lying around the gate.

Q: It sounds like the people were prepared to die protecting the Dalai Lama. Is that your opinion?

01:39:34

#6C: Yes, one's thoughts were, “Let death or anything happen to me as long as nothing untoward happens to His Holiness the Dalai Lama.” Everyone had similar thoughts.

Q: How long did you personally stay in that crowd?

#6C: There?

Q: Yes.

#6C: I was there for around two days.

Q: What happened at the end of those two days?

#6C: After two days...On the first day the happenings that took place were—never mind the Chinese, even Tibetans were not granted entry through the gates of Norbulingka. Aristocrats that came were not allowed in, Chinese were not allowed in, nobody was allowed in because there were many spies. Nobody was granted entry. [To interpreter] Translate this.

Even Tibetan aristocrats were not allowed in.

The first day passed like that and in the morning of the second day, it was around daybreak that the shots were fired from the military base at Dekyiling that I spoke earlier. Shots were being fired from there. It was in '59 and at around 5 in the morning; the day was dawning.

Q: Was it bombs being hurled?

01:41:39

#6C: Yes, there were gunshots and bombs, atom bomb.

The Potala was being fired at. Some bombs fell on the people where they were sleeping. When a bomb fell, it felt like...Our people shouted, "Everybody lie on the ground. Lie down, lie down." When the bomb exploded it felt like the clothes being thrown up. You felt like that.

[The bombs] contained smoke and gas and when that vanished, many people were dead. Many of the shots were aimed at the Potala. When we watched like this [looks up], the shell travelled like this [makes movements with hand in the air] towards the Potala Palace.

When the Potala was being targeted...they might have seen that the Potala's color is half red and half white. When the white part was hit, everything exploded in a cloud of white. It was not just one or two but many [shells] being fired. Everybody cried, "His Holiness the Dalai Lama!" and prayed and wept. [We] were helpless as nobody [Chinese] could be seen but shells were being fired.

01:44:05

When the white part [of the Potala] was hit, the whole area became white and when the red part was hit, everything turned red. However, once the [dust] settled, the [building] was not damaged, which is because of our prayers to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I thought so at that very time that His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Chenrezig 'patron saint of Tibet' had protected it. Otherwise, the shells hit the building but it was not damaged.

Shots were being fired and there was no way one could remain. Then some people said that His Holiness was not present but had been escorted out by the *Chushi Gangdrug*. Such [things] were being spoken about secretly.

Such talks could be heard. Some said His Holiness had not been able to leave while others said [he had] left and was no longer there but the main thing was whether [His Holiness] was there or not, Norbulingka was being bombarded and people that were inside and outside were dead. Then in desperation the people dispersed. People...

Q: What's *thor* 'dispersed'?

01:45:45

#6C: *Thor* means that each one left for remaining there meant death. So one left and then gradually fled away. Shots were being fired as the people left and many died. A huge number of people died. It was on this day that 10,000 people were said to have died.

Therefore, in this situation we could not return to live in the monastery. One owned living quarters in the monastery but did not return. With only the clothes on one's body and a wallet with a little amount of money since this would come in need, and with nothing else, [I] escaped.

Not just me but the situation was similar for everyone.

Q: Did you join a group of other monks or were there families and lay people?

#6C: There were monks you knew in groups of four, five, six or 10-15. Everybody was taking flight.

Q: Was there a road they were getting on leaving Lhasa? How were they leaving the center of town?

01:47:45

#6C: In order to leave Lhasa one must cross the river and the *Chushi Gangdrug* was said to be at Lhoka. So it was being said that His Holiness had left towards Lhoka. You know Lhoka, right? It is in the south towards India. Therefore, everyone was planning to leave for Lhoka.

So we went to Lhoka. The bombardment took place in the morning and towards evening we managed to cross the river in a canoe. Each person was required to pay a *dhayen* as fare. They [the boatmen] would not row us without payment, as it was their revenue. And secondly...

Q: Did [you] cross in a boat?

#6C: Yes, crossed in a boat. The Chinese with guns did not allow anyone over the bridge.

Q: Bridge...?

#6C: It was not possible to cross over the bridge. Those with horses rode them to cross the river.

01:49:07

Fleeing in this manner all of us escapees, over a 100,000 were able to reach India. That was how [we] journeyed.

Q: What is the distance between Lhoka and Lhasa and what direction?

#6C: Lhoka is in the south. This side [moves right hand] is east and China lies in the east. India is in the southern direction.

Q: When did people discover that the Dalai Lama was not in Lhoka? When did the people come to understand that His Holiness was not in Lhoka?

#6C: Not in Lhoka? One heard that [His Holiness] had gone towards Lhoka but none had seen [him] on the way to Lhoka. Rumors said His Holiness had not left for Lhoka and was in Norbulingka but no one could substantiate. These talks were all speculations.

Q: So you are about 20 years old then?

#6C: Around 21...

Q: You're 18.

#6C: Yeah 18, 19...

Q: 1940 you were born.

#6C: Yeah.

Q: You are 18. Tell me what thoughts are going through your mind? Are you by yourself? Are you with any friends? Are you afraid? What are you feeling?

01:51:04

#6C: There was great panic. Shots were being fired from every direction and [I] felt [I] would be shot to death. However, I continued. My two siblings were in the *Chushi Gangdrug* and I hoped to meet them. I do not know about others but I felt that meeting them would help me.

Q: Were the Chinese following the people as they fled from Lhasa?

#6C: The soldiers were in pursuit. The Chinese army greatly feared the *Chushi Gangdrug*, feared the [not discernible]. If five *Chushi Gangdrug* warriors on horseback armed with swords and guns rushed [upon the Chinese soldiers], in two to three days they [the Chinese soldiers] disappeared.

Q: What?

#6C: Chinese soldiers. The Chinese soldiers greatly feared the *Chushi Gangdrug*. They feared the *Chushi Gangdrug* warriors. The entire region of Lhoka was under the control of the *Chushi Gangdrug*. The Chinese had no knowledge where the *Chushi Gangdrug* men were hiding, whether among the rocks, in the forests, in the plains or in tents. Some of the men sacrificed their lives by rushing upon the Chinese military camps in the morning riding their horses and armed with guns.

01:53:10

That's how [the Chinese] feared [the *Chushi Gangdrug*] and justly so because they acted by sacrificing their lives. For instance, the Chinese had blocked the entire region in the direction of Lhoka but they [*Chushi Gangdrug*] had arrived a year or two earlier and fought until there were not many Chinese military camps left except for a few in the nearby areas.

Q: By the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

#6C: Yes, the *Chushi Gangdrug* since long ago.

Q: Were you going from Lhasa to Lhoka and then to India?

01:53:57

#6C: [I] came towards Lhoka. That is how we came. Presently Lhasa and Lhoka seem close but one had to journey for many days.

Q: What did you have for food and water and what was the climate like?

#6C: The weather was good. As for food and water, all the villagers [we] met along the way were Tibetans. [We] told them to leave just as we were doing but some of them left and some did not. However, they sympathized and gave us food. [I] was never hungry during the journey.

Q: So did you get to Lhoka?

#6C: Yes.

Q: And had the Dalai Lama been there?

01:55:18

#6C: [His Holiness] was not in Lhoka. [I] never saw [him] in Lhoka.

Q: No, but I mean had he gone through Lhoka?

#6C: It is said that [His Holiness] had left but [I] did not know where. Later, when we arrived in India, [His Holiness] was already in India.

Q: How many days did it take you to walk from Lhasa to India?

#6C: It might have taken 5-6 days. Perhaps it might have taken that long but I cannot remember for sure.

Q: Were [you] on foot?

#6C: What?

Q: Were [you] on foot?

#6C: [We] were on foot all the time.

Q: In 5-6 days...?

01:56:07

#6C: To Lhoka from Lhasa.

Q: Lhasa to India?

#6C: Until India. From Lhoka to Tsona, the place called Tsona. From Tsona to Bomdila [Arunachal Pradesh], which is on the India border.

Q: Bomdila?

#6C: Yes, Bomdila. [We] reached those places that were two or three days apart.

Q: Six days [from Lhasa to India].

#6C: Six to seven days.

Q: Were you attacked by the Chinese or bombed anywhere along the way?

#6C: In Lhoka there is a mountain called Gonpori, a pilgrim site of the deity Gonpo. It is a very long mountain range. For instance, if you travelled to Tibet you would know mountain ranges that you started upon in the morning but could not cover even by evening. There were such long mountain ranges.

Such mountain ranges had only one route on which to travel. You would not reach by taking different paths and one must follow that particular route. One could see the whitish route from afar. Before we took that route after reaching Lhoka, we met *Chushi Gangdrug* men that came to us give advice.

Q: Gave advice?

#6C: Yes to advise, "You must take such and such route."

01:58:07

The *Chushi Gangdrug* men came and said, “You must take this route.” Ten to 15 people would walk in a group. “When you walk by in that manner, [the Chinese] will fire. If a bomb is dropped...” A bomb travels like a pigeon. You know the bird called pigeon. We could see it come flying like that. We were not scared when it [a bomb] was dropped because if you lay on the ground...as long as it did not fall on you, it could not kill anyone.

However, a machine gun that went *rat, tat, tat...* they [*Chushi Gangdrug*] would say, “Wherever it is aimed at, when the bullet is fired run to higher ground. The bullets fall downwards and never up.” Because when a bullet is fired, it falls downwards and can never be pushed upwards. Therefore, the warriors said, “As soon as a bullet falls, fear not. You should flee higher up.”

Q: To higher grounds?

#6C: Yes, to higher grounds. “The bullet will fall downwards and you can go to higher grounds.” That is how [the men] advised.

Q: What’s it that came like a bird?

01:59:19

#6C: Cannons.

Q: Cannons?

#6C: Cannon shells. They are large.

Q: Cannons?

#6C: Cannons. Atom bombs.

02:00:22

So, that is how we progressed. As we advanced in this way, my two siblings came to fetch me. [We] met there.

Q: What was that like?

#6C: They had not exactly come to fetch [me] but had been assigned to [protect] that region.

Q: How did that feel to see your brothers in such circumstances?

#6C: [I] was very happy. I felt, “Now I will not die.” [Laughs]

Q: Your big brothers are going to help you. Were they happy to see you?

#6C: [Speaks before question is translated] I saw one of my siblings being killed right in front of my eyes.

Q: Was it later?

#6C: It was at that very place.

The killing happened like this. On the mountain that they [*Chushi Gangdrug*] were climbing, they [Chinese soldiers] had dug caves in the mountainside, heaped sacks with guns aimed from the middle. The men [within] were unseen.

Q: The Chinese?

02:01:50

#6C: No, along the way. [They] fired from there.

Q: The Chinese?

#6C: Yes, the Chinese. The [*Chushi Gangdrug*] men could not advance without being hit.

Q: Were they firing from above?

#6C: Yes, they were firing from above. When this was happening my sibling and around seven men with him could not escape [though they] carried guns. When I look back now the *Chushi Gangdrug* men were very stupid. [To interpreter] Please translate that.

02:02:39

...because the Chinese were firing through the hole but the men could not be seen, only the gun could be seen. They [*Chushi Gangdrug*] climbed up to shoot at [the Chinese] from below. [They] were climbing face up while being shot at from above. That is why I think the men were extreme, going ahead at the cost of [their] lives.

My sibling and the three others could not kill them [the Chinese] with [their] guns since they [the Chinese soldiers] were underground. Then [the warriors] brandished their swords and climbed up.

Q: Didn't [they] possess guns?

#6C: They were armed with guns but could not use them. So they went in search of the entrance of the caves carrying swords. As soon as the door opened, a shot was fired and my sibling fell down at the entrance like this [stretches out hands].

02:04:25

Immediately after my sibling was killed, the two companions rushed inside with [their] swords. How many got killed and how many Chinese were inside?

Q: Did they then emerge?

#6C: [They] did later and many Chinese were killed.

The result was that there were no more soldiers firing.

Q: Yes?

#6C: The shooters were no more because the two men entered and killed them. They returned carrying their [the Chinese soldiers'] guns. My younger sibling and all his colleagues brought my brother's body down and threw it in the river.

Q: Was it a river burial?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes.

#6C: If placed in a large water body, it will get carried away.

02:05:46

That is how we were able to find a way through due to their endeavor. Though my sibling died, it is just one person's death but many struggled alongside. There were 7-8 warriors armed with guns and swords that were protecting the area. If one such group could provide so much help, there were people fleeing day and night. [They] made it easy for them to carry on. It's been of great help.

Then we arrived in Tsona. Tsona. It was the same in Tsona. From Tsona one reached Diguthang, which [I] spoke of earlier where *Chushi Gangdrug's* base camp was established.

The guns that the *Chushi Gangdrug* warriors were carrying were known as Tashi Taring. The Americans provided the Tashi Taring guns.

02:07:15

They established the military base in Diguthang and the Chinese are still suspicious. An American plane had landed there then. It had come to drop weapons, not landed but dropped weapons that were tied to parachutes. Since they had dropped [the weapons], even now the Chinese are suspicious of that area believing American planes could land, as they possessed the map of the region. They are still guarding it. [I] heard it is being watched even now.

Q: The area is being watched?

#6C: The area is being guarded even now. [The Chinese] greatly fear the United States of America.

When I lived in the village and used to go to Karze at around age 12-13, the Chinese would show a huge paper with Tsengyal 'Imperialist' America, a drawing of a [man with a] big nose and thin limbs in chains and being dragged by them. [They said,] "Our enemy, Tsengyal America." Tsengyal America.

Q: What does *tsengyal* mean?

02:08:32

#6C: By Tsengyal America, [they] meant the United States. “[We] have no other enemy except the United States of America.” America’s...

Q: Did the Chinese show [the picture]?

#6C: What?

Q: Did the Chinese show [the picture]?

#6C: Yes, [they] did. We have notices being put up these days. [They] pasted many like that. The Chinese did like that long ago and they did not like the ‘Imperialist’ Americans.

Q: We have to quickly...

#6C: Yeah.

Q: Let me understand...Frst of all I’m so sorry that your brother died but I’m happy that he was able to save so many people.

#6C: [Nods] Right.

Q: So when you fled to India, we’re not going to hear...be able to have time to hear that whole story but just help me understand, how many years did you spent in India after you arrived?

02:09:38

#6C: I spent half my life in India, [smiles] around 20 years.

Q: And then you came to the United States?

#6C: Yes.

Q: And now I understand you’re...Are you married and have family?

#6C: [I] have a family. All these happened when I arrived in Dharamsala. I lost my monkhood in Dharamsala and had a family. I was no longer a monk and married.

Q: Had two lifetimes.

#6C: [Smiles]

Q: I would like to ask you just a few questions as we finish the interview.

#6C: Please ask.

Q: Because you were a monk I would like to ask you this question. How do you feel and what do you think about the monks that are immolating themselves in eastern Tibet?

02:11:10

#6C: There are many monks immolating and lay people dying in Tibet. When I fled from Tibet I did not know where I would reach and when I think about them I have the same feeling. [I] wish they would not do it because what is the use of doing it? They are people with such enthusiasm, right? There is nothing more precious than your life and if [we] lose one person who can sacrifice his life...instead he can do many things for the community. I feel a lot that [they] should not do it.

Q: What are your hopes for Tibet? What would you like to see happen?

#6C: We do not have the might to resolve Tibet's problem by violence or by going to war. If at all...those in Tibet have the enthusiasm to sacrifice their lives. If one thinks in a really bad way, that one person can destroy many people. That is because we consider ourselves more important than others. We do not believe that we can be happy by inflicting suffering upon others.

Q: Because you have studied the dharma, what do you think is the, some of the most important teachings of the dharma that you would like the world to know about or practice?

02:14:26

#6C: The dharma is a very good thing. Practicing the dharma...dharma is not just meditating. [I] do not think so. It seems doing something that benefits other people is the dharma.

It could be anybody, whether animals or humans, each one desires great happiness. [I am] not happy if I am sick, [I am] not happy if hungry. Likewise, if one feels the same for the other person, [I] think that is the dharma. I feel if one practices dharma, there will be peace in the world. Though [we] do not have [our] country, thanks to the dharma, China... Practicing the dharma is the truth. Practicing the truth...I think it will be difficult for Communism to hold power in China.

Q: To hold power?

#6C: Yes, to hold power.

Q: If you could talk to young Chinese people because you yourself are a father, what would you tell the next generation of Chinese people?

02:16:36

#6C: We are finding a way through the Middle Way. Since '72-'73 the Middle Way is the wish of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the people also voted in favor of the Middle Way. Therefore, [I] think adopting the Middle Way is the best approach. Adopting the Middle Way will benefit the Chinese and us. Were Tibet to gain independence now, I do not think

we will be able to do anything. For instance, if the Chinese were to say now, “Come back to live, you will be given independence,” I do not think we’re in a position to take control of Tibet.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: What else did you say?

#6C: Therefore, it has been like that. We have been saying since long ago that we are an independent country. Nobody is giving us independence and even if independence was given, I do not think we will be able to take control.

Q: Thank you.

02:18:38

#6C: Right? That is it. [I] think adopting the Middle Way will bear good result. Therefore, whether the younger Chinese or older Chinese, many Chinese must understand clearly the Middle Way approach. That is it. If one were to think about the happiness of others just as your own happiness, [I] think the issue of Tibet can be resolved.

Q: Could you very briefly say what the Middle Way is?

#6C: The Middle Way?

Q: The Middle Way.

#6C: I see. The Middle Way is this. What should [I] say? The autonomy within, like freedom of religion, freedom of expression, one should be free to live with such autonomy.

The external affairs of Tibet should be managed by China as it is being done now by China for it claims to a very powerful nation these days. If Tibetans are given equal rights like the Chinese people, [I] do not think there’ll be any problems from our side.

Q: I would like to end by thanking you and first asking if this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

02:21:11

#6C: There will be no problems.

Q: Can you just tell us what was it like for you to share your story with these people and how did it feel to talk about your story?

#6C: I have felt very happy because, for instance as was said earlier, today all of you have gathered here and recorded my story. You have the desire and the enthusiasm and by doing so have done a duty. You are very kind to have come here with a view to resolve our issue, the problem of the Tibetans and as such, I did not face any difficulties today and am very happy and [I] thank you. You can show the interview anywhere or do anything with it because I know that is the advice of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which is why I have

recounted my story. Not just today but if there is anything you wish to ask me in the future, call me and I shall come wherever you want me to. I wish to thank you.

Q: Why do you think it's important to interview the old people of Tibet?

02:23:21

#6C: [I] see it as very important because as we mentioned earlier, the Tibetan people belonging to the 20th century are almost...Initially when I came here I was the oldest.

I think of doing something but it is very difficult because I have not acquired any education through learning. My English is not fluent enough and though [I] speak Tibetan, [I] find it very difficult to write. Much more than an education by studying, I have gained more experience through serving the community.

This has been of great help. So I believe what you are doing will bear good result.

Q: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW