

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #9U – Khapochi Kalsang
April 5, 2017

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #9U
2. Interviewee: Khapochi Kalsang
3. Age: 84
4. Date of Birth: 1933
5. Sex: Female
6. Birthplace: Tawo
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1960
9. Date of Interview: April 5, 2017
10. Place of Interview: Sakya Tibetan Settlement, Puruwala, Himachal Pradesh, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 17 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Tenzin Choenyi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Khapochi Kalsang was born in Tawo, an isolated village of around 4-5 families in Utsang Province. As a small child she spent her time grazing animals and later carried manure to the fields. Once each year the villagers had to travel 12 hours to the town of Sakya to pay their taxes. Meetings were held to determine the tax amount and a penalty was levied if one did not arrive on time. Khapochi Kalsang became a nun at age 17 or 18 as a form of tax that her family must pay. She was only required to spend one month at the nunnery each year saying prayers.

When she wanted to marry, Khapochi Kalsang's family had to pay a large fine to the nunnery. Her new husband was already married to her elder sister, who requested that she be a second bride because they needed help on the farm. She describes the common practice of two or three brothers sharing a wife or two sisters sharing a husband in order to have enough labor. She also explains how people dealt with situations of family discord, domestic violence and illegitimate children.

After the Chinese invasion, Khapochi Kalsang's husband was required to attend *thamzing* 'struggle sessions' and witnessed the executions of their local leaders. She recounts the arduous journey of two months trekking across the mountains in order to escape to India.

Topics Discussed:

Utsang, childhood memories, herding, farm life, taxes, customs/traditions, *thamzing*, escape experiences.

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Interview #9U

Interviewee: Khapochi Kalsang

Age: 84, Sex: Female

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: April 5, 2017

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:09

Interviewee #9U: Kalsang.

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?

#9U: Yes.

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

#9U: Okay.

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

#9U: Okay.

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

#9U: Okay.

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

#9U: Problem for me if it is shown in Tibet or China?

Q: If this story was shown in Tibet, China or anywhere.

00:01:55

#9U: Those living in Tibet face problems but we have come here. Those living in Tibet face problems. Those of us living here have no problems. There is freedom in India.

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

#9U: Okay.

Q: *Ama-la* ‘respectful term for mother,’ please tell me where you were born?

#9U: It is called Tawo—Tawo.

Q: Tawo?

#9U: Yes, Tawo. The birthplace is Tawo.

Q: And the nearest monastery?

#9U: Tawo is an isolated place and there is no monastery. There is not any other monastery except the Sakya Monastery.

Q: The nearest monastery to Tawo is the Sakya Monastery?

#9U: It is the Sakya Monastery and [we] had to go there to pay all taxes—go to Sakya. One went from Tawo to the city of Sakya to pay taxes.

Q: Earlier [during the pre-interview] you mentioned Ogyen Lhakang.

#9U: Yes, Ogyen Lhakang. This was where we would make offerings of belongings and clothes when we died.

Q: Was it a small monastery?

#9U: It was a small monastery, a small monastery called Ogyen Lhakang with a caretaker. One made offerings there.

Q: And this is in Utsang Province?

00:03:51

#9U: Yes, it is in Utsang.

Q: And how old are you, *ama-la*?

#9U: Am 84.

Q: You are 84?

#9U: Yes.

Q: What year were you born?

#9U: That [I] do not know. Wonder which year it was.

Q: How many people were in your family when you were growing up?

#9U: There were four children and the parents in our family. There were the four children, Father and Mother.

Q: Would you say your family was wealthy or medium or poor?

#9U: [We] were among the middle class. We were neither among the poor nor the wealthy, but were middle class. We had enough money to live on and to pay taxes and the parents did not have to seek help from other people. [We] had adequate [wealth] and did not need to rely on others. Whether it was money or grains that was demanded as taxes, the family had enough for food and taxes. There was not any need to rely on other people.

Q: As a little girl, what did you do? What were some of your activities?

00:06:04

#9U: When one was little...as a little child of this size [raises hand to level of around three feet] [I] went to graze cows and oxen. The parents owned two or three cows and oxen that [I] went to graze. During summertime [I] grazed the cows and oxen and gathered grass. Then when one grew older, one went to work in the fields and transport manure. [I] carried manure on the back and took it to the fields when [I] was much older.

Q: When you think back on your village where you grew up, can you describe it? What did it look like?

#9U: [I] wonder what the Chinese has done to it now.

Q: What was Tawo like when you were little?

#9U: When [I] was little there were some families that were rich and some families that were not rich in Tawo; [they] were poor. Some were wealthy families. I would not know what has happened or what it was like after the Chinese arrived.

Q: About how many families lived in your village?

00:08:03

#9U: We were clusters of 3-4 families each, clusters of around four each. There was no large [village]. The clusters were of around four families at a distance from each other.

Q: How far was your village from Sakya?

#9U: If one left Tawo in the morning around 11 or 12 o'clock, one reached Sakya only around 11 or 12. Then one would have to leave in the night. Since there was no clock in Tibet, one watched the stars and left for Sakya.

Q: If one left Tawo around 11 or 12 o'clock in the night, one reached Sakya only at 11 or 12 o'clock the next day?

#9U: Yes.

Q: Would people leave at night? Was there any reason instead of 11 in the morning? Why would they leave at 11 in the night?

#9U: It was too far away to reach if one left during the day. One went there to pay taxes and would not be able to reach [on time]. Unless one left in the night one would not reach there [on time]. If you were late...around this time [of interview]...the office there asked [tax payers] to come before they ...[not discernible] the window and door. If one failed to reach on time, a penalty was levied. So you had to leave [the night before] to reach within this time or they demanded a fine.

Q: Before the window and door closed...?

00:10:14

#9U: One must reach there before the door opened. If the door was opened [when you reached there], a penalty was levied. You were liable to pay a fine if the office door was opened. So you had to reach Sakya before the door opened.

Q: You had to reach it before...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...the office opened.

Q: How often did you have to go to pay taxes?

#9U: Some had to pay twice while for others a single payment was sufficient. A meeting was held and if it did not conclude, one had to come again the next day. If there was a place to stay in Sakya, one remained in the town of Sakya and then attended the next day's meeting—went to the meeting the next day. Instead of travelling a distance, if there was a place to stay in Sakya, one remained there. Then one could attend the meeting in Sakya the next day. Returning is a long way and it was difficult to reach before the door opened the next day. So one must remain in Sakya for a day or two.

Q: Was there a meeting?

#9U: A meeting was held. It was a government meeting like the government meetings in Dharamsala [India, location of the Tibetan government-in-exile]. The government held a meeting.

Q: Did you have to pay taxes after the meeting?

00:11:51

#9U: Yes, a meeting was held during which it was decided, "This person is liable to pay this much tax and that person is liable to that much tax." Everybody received the message asking to bring [the taxes]. During the meeting it was decided the amount of grain or where one had to perform the labor tax.

Q: How many times did you have to go in a year?

#9U: We went only once.

Q: Besides paying taxes, were there other reasons why your family went to Sakya?

#9U: There was not any other reason for us to go to Sakya.

Q: Didn't have reasons to go?

#9U: No.

Q: You mentioned that you would use the stars at night to guide you. Did you learn the names of the stars as a child?

#9U: I do not know the names of the stars; [I] have forgotten. They would say, "There are four stars in a row or five stars in a row or the rows have ended." Stars appear in a row like three here and four here [shows left palm]. "Four stars have appeared in a row or rows have ended." The row of stars here [indicates on palm] would have ended. There used to be such in Tibet. Now [I] can no longer explain about the stars.

Q: Now what happened when you got a little older? Did you always stay at home or did you get married or join a convent? What did you do?

00:14:23

#9U: Initially, [I] became a nun and spent 3-4 years in the nunnery. While [I] was at the nunnery, the Chinese appeared. When the Chinese came to the nunnery, we fled to India. The Chinese appeared. When the Chinese came, we fled to India.

Q: After three years?

#9U: After around three years. When the Chinese appeared, messages were received; messages saying [we] would be captured. It was said that we would be captured. Being [from the family of] a village headman, they said we would be captured. [The Chinese said], "They are...[not discernible] and will be captured." So [we] fled here from Khapochi.

Q: Who was going to be captured in Khapochi?

#9U: The news came that the people in our village would be captured. There were 3-4 families that they [Chinese] said would be captured.

[Interpreter to interviewee]: We are at a juncture where you have not yet arrived in Khapochi.

Q: When did you become...when did you join the nunnery? How old were you?

#9U: [I] was around 17 or 18. [I] became a nun late at around age 17 or 18 as a form of tax.

Q: You went there as a tax. How did the nunnery benefit from your going because if you went, you would have to eat food, so how?

[Discontinuity in video]

Q: *Ama-la*, let me ask why did your family have to send you as a nun tax?

00:16:45

#9U: The tax was a nun tax. Because of the tax, one was obliged to become a nun. There were two daughters. [My] parents had two daughters and the tax required that from the two daughters one become a nun. So [I] became a nun as a form of tax. From the two daughters one was to become a nun as a tax obligation.

Q: How did that benefit the nunnery if a daughter went to live there?

#9U: The benefit for the nunnery...We just chanted *mani* ‘mantra of Avalokiteshvara.’ At the age of 15, 16 or 17 one just chanted *mani* and did not know any reading or writing. So one just lived there. There was nothing else but just to live there. There was not anyone teaching. One just had to live there.

Q: Did the family have to provide food for you?

00:18:17

#9U: While in the nunnery, the nunnery provided food. While in the nunnery, the nunnery provided food. [My family] did not need to bring food. One lived around a month in the nunnery. That was it. While there, the nunnery provided food prepared by the cook.

Q: After one month?

#9U: After a month you were sent back home on leave—sent home, sent back home. When [the nuns] assembled there for around a month...everyone gathered at the nunnery—gathered at the nunnery. There were four [permanent] nuns that were the *umze* ‘chant leaders.’ They read the prayers while we remained silent. They stayed back to continue practice while we would be told to go back after the assembly. There were small houses to stay in. Two of us children stayed in a small house just playing about.

Q: The small houses were at the nunnery?

#9U: Yes, at the nunnery—at the nunnery.

Q: To stay for a month?

#9U: [We] stayed for a month just playing about.

Q: Then you went back home?

#9U: After the assembly you would be told to go back home on leave—told to go back home.

Q: To Tawo?

#9U: Tawo or wherever your home was. Some lived in Tawo and some lived in nearby places. We were told to go back home on leave. [We] returned home.

Q: So you only stayed when you were 15 or 16 for one month in the monastery?

00:20:13

#9U: One went for a month in a year and not the whole year. It was a month in a year. After that one month in a year, one was sent back, sent back home.

Q: And for how many years?

#9U: [I] did this only for around two years and then we fled here after the Chinese appeared.

Q: So did you live at that monastery for two years or only go for one month every year?

#9U: Yes, a month [every year]. Yes, two months.

Q: *Ama-la*, how many nuns lived in that monastery?

#9U: There were 30 nuns...30-35 nuns. There were four *umze* that lived in the nunnery, four *umze*. These four nuns lived permanently at the nunnery.

Q: Did the rest go home to work with the family farm?

#9U: [The rest of the nuns] went back home to work there. You could do whatever work was there to be done at home. You could do any work.

Q: Did any girls want to be nuns all the time in your village?

00:22:33

#9U: There was not anyone who wanted to be permanent nuns. There was not anyone that said [they] wanted to.

Q: So if you went once a month...one month out of the year for two years and were you learning prayers that you did not know? Was this new learning?

#9U: There was not anyone that taught us prayers. [We] were not taught. There were the four *umze* that lived permanently in the nunnery and chanted prayers. The rest of us were not taught and once sent home, [we] did the work at home. Except for doing household work, there was not anyone to teach the prayers. [We] were not taught. There was no one

teaching the script or prayers. If prayers were taught, [we] would know like them. There was nobody to teach.

Q: And then when you went back home, *ama-la*, did you get married or stay single?

00:24:12

#9U: And then [I] got married, and arrived in the place called Khapochi after marriage. [I] came to this place after marriage. [I] married and came there. Three or four years after marriage, when the crops, the wheat and barley were ready to be harvested it was said, “The Chinese will cause suffering. We should leave.” The whole village left for India. The whole village left. The village consisted of four families and the four families fled to India. [We] came here through Gangtok [Sikkim].

Q: Okay. Now when you got married, how did you...how was your partner chosen for you?

#9U: We met and fell in love. Then [we] left for India. [My husband] passed away in India—passed away in India.

Q: You met and fell in love?

#9U: Yes. We fell in love with each other.

Q: Were you allowed to get married, if...because you loved each other and did your parents have to approve?

00:26:41

#9U: It was not necessary. If you fell in love and decided to live together, the parents did not express any disapproval and allowed you freedom to follow your wish. “It is your wish. You have your wish. [You] will not listen if [we] object.” And let it be.

Q: Why were you attracted to this young man? What did you like about him?

#9U: When younger we did not have any kind of education but like me [he] was a good worker. [He] did not have any other abilities. The work was tilling the land. Our work was tilling the land. [He] was able in working in the fields, working in the fields.

Q: When you told your parents you wanted to get married, did they prepare a marriage celebration or wedding?

#9U: There was not anything like that. There was not any kind of celebration that was performed. We just lived together and there was nothing. It is similar to what happens in India. If you wish, you went your way. Some wealthy ones in India have a celebration but we just lived together. There was nothing, no celebration of any kind.

Q: Why did you leave...You met him in your village? Did you meet him in your village or was he from another village?

[Whispering]

Q: Well, were you considered a nun at that time?

00:29:36

#9U: I informed the nunnery that I wished to get married. There was a tax that one had to pay for not continuing as a nun and getting married. One must say, "I wish to get married. Please excuse me." There was a tax to pay the nunnery. The nunnery did not object if one paid the tax.

Q: Were you a nun at the time you wanted to get married?

#9U: Yes.

Q: Even if you went only one month a year you were a nun?

#9U: Yes, [I] was a nun. One stayed a month. Then when I met the man, the nunnery had to be informed, "I wish to get married. Kindly excuse me." For leaving nunhood you had to pay the tax and there was no objection. There was not any objection if the tax was remitted.

Q: Did you do that? Did you make an offering to the nunnery?

00:31:34

#9U: One must pay the tax to the nunnery. Then there was no objection. Once the tax had been paid to the nunnery for leaving nun hood there was no objection. [The nunnery] did not say anything.

Q: And [you] did pay the tax? What tax? What amount did you have to pay?

#9U: The tax was in the form of money though [I] cannot recall how much it was. Money had to be given, a large amount of money had to be given. [I] cannot recall the amount. If the money was paid there was no objection; there was nothing said.

Q: *Ama-la*, when you lived as a nun and went to the nunnery one month a year, did you wear a nun's robes and shave your head?

#9U: A nun's hair is always cut. The hair is cut so long [indicates nape] with a fringe [touches forehead] but the robe is not worn. One wore an apron that was yellowish in color. One did not wear a *pangdhen* 'striped apron indicating married status of women' like this [gestures off camera] but a yellow one, a *kepthen* 'piece of cloth worn at the back of the waist' and a *chupa* 'traditional dress.' [Red] robes were not required.

Q: So when you wanted to get married, that was a big decision for your family to agree with that and then did they have to come up with the money to pay the nunnery off for your leaving?

00:34:29

#9U: The parents had to come up with the money to pay the nunnery. I did not have the money, so the parents had to come up with the money. Whatever the amount—it was probably a large one—was paid by the parents.

Q: You were living in your own village in Tawo and then you moved with your husband to Khapochi. Was that his hometown?

#9U: Yes, he was from Khapochi—Khapochi. The whole village of Khapochi fled to India when the Chinese appeared. The Chinese came and everyone that lived in Khapochi consisting of 3-4 families fled to India.

Q: But before you left, how long did you live in Khapochi before you had to flee?

#9U: [I] lived for six, seven or eight years...lived seven or eight years in Khapochi, lived 7-8 years, lived 7-8 years.

Q: What kind of work did you do with your husband?

00:36:30

#9U: The work was plowing the fields, harvesting barley and wheat. It was tilling the lands like harvesting and such kinds of work.

Q: Was this land that your husband owned?

#9U: That was his land and I moved there—moved there. After I moved there, [we] dug the field bit-by-bit and enlarged it little by little and grew crops. The harvest was good. Otherwise, we did not have a good harvest from the field.

Q: The harvest wasn't good?

#9U: The harvest was not good. The other workers were inexperienced and the land holding was small. When [I] came as a bride and the young people...[not discernible].

Q: How?

#9U: [We] dug the land bit-by-bit and enlarged it. Otherwise, our land holding was not large.

Q: What made things difficult to grow there?

00:38:19

#9U: There was not much water available for the crops. So crops did not grow very well. Water was scarce. There was just a little bit of water in the canals that was channeled into the fields. There was hardly any water. There was hardly any water. So crops did not grow well.

Q: When you married him and lived with him, did you live with his family or just the two of you?

#9U: When [I] moved there?

Q: You spent a few years in Khapochi after moving there. Who did you live with? Was it just husband or husband's entire family?

#9U: The family members consisted of husband, my elder sister and two aged people that were [my] husband's father and mother. So we were around four people.

Q: Who was the elder sister?

#9U: The elder sister was my elder sister. Elder sister came first [to husband's home as bride] and then I did. Elder sister asked [me] to come, "[We] need someone to work in the fields. You have to come here." So I joined [the family] after [my] elder sister. I had an elder sister that came as a bride there first and I came later after elder sister asked me to saying, "Come here. It is good here with fields for cultivation. Come, it is good here." That was how [I] came there after elder sister.

Q: Were you the second wife of your husband?

00:40:29

#9U: There were two. The senior wife who was my sibling came there first and I was called later, as [they] needed someone to work in the fields. I was a good worker and healthy, and was told, "There is no one to do the work. Come here, come here to work in the fields."

Q: Did you each live with your husband...each of you had shared him as a husband. So each of you could have had children with him. Is that correct?

#9U: There were children. I had two children. Elder sister had four children. I had two.

Q: Was that typical in that town for a man to have more than one wife?

#9U: There were [men] with two wives. There were those with two wives and there were also women with two husbands. There were two women sharing a husband or a woman having two or three husbands.

Q: What would cause each situation? Why would a woman want two or three husbands in that region?

00:43:01

#9U: The situation for two or three husbands having one wife was because hands were needed to till the land. In such cases a woman may have three husbands. There were some cases where there were only two people, a woman and a man. In some cases if three brothers lived with one wife, there were hands to work the field. Hands were needed to cultivate the fields.

Q: If the land holding was large...?

#9U: Workers were needed if land holding was large. There was the work of spreading manure and harvesting, and more hands were considered better. If [a family] was short of hands, an extra wife may be called to do the work, to do the work.

Q: Was it easier to have...a family have...you know, for people to have three brothers as husbands or two sisters for wives than have women or men from outside the family? Was it considered better?

00:45:14

#9U: It was considered good. It was said, “Three brothers sharing a wife cordially is good.” It was considered good. Also it was considered good if a man had two wives. It was not considered bad for there were more workers. More people were needed to meet the payment of tax and cultivate the lands. Fields must be tended to. It was considered good and not bad. It was considered good.

Q: And it was better that the extra hands were members of the same family than three women from three different families?

#9U: It was considered better. “Please come to work,” it would be said and if one went to work, wages were paid. If a sibling was hired along with many other people, wages were paid.

Q: Were wages to be paid if one joined as a spouse?

#9U: If one was a spouse it became the work of your family and of course, it was not necessary to pay wages. If one was a hired help whether from a different family or a sibling, wages must be paid. Whatever work it was, wages must be paid; wages must be paid.

Q: Was there any religious or Buddhist teachings that said this was okay or this was a problem? Was there anything in the dharma that prohibited this or accepted this?

00:47:28

#9U: There is not anything like this. There is not. It was okay if you could live cordially. If you could not be cordial, then you went your own way. In case a woman had two or more husbands, a husband may say, “I am being treated unequally. I do not wish to live together.” In such case one or two sons [husbands] may leave from among the three because of being treated badly and of the wife not showing equal love.

Q: What about the women? Would they ever be...have fights because they have to share one husband and who was the favorite and who did more work or something?

#9U: Fights did take place. Fights did take place. “You are treating me unequally. I am being scolded more although I do so much work. You scold me more. I do not want to live

with you.” One can say this. If there were two sisters...two wives and if one gets scolded, scolded even after doing work, [she] will say, “I will not live with you. I will go my own way.” If one was scolded or if the husband beats [her, she] will say, “I will not live with you. I will go my own way.” Then [she] will not remain. If the other one is a good woman, [she] will say [to the co-wife], “Do not speak like that. We do not have extra hands.” [And to the husband,] “Don’t beat; ask [her] to stay back. Do not be like that.’

If there were two sisters and one wanted to leave, [the other will] say, “Do not scold her. Do not beat. We do not have extra hands. Do not let [her] go. [She] must stay here. Do not fight. Do not beat. Let [her] work. Do not let [her] go.” There was a lack of hands. There was a lack of hands.

Q: Was beating a typical treatment of wives at that time in Tibet?

00:50:26

#9U: [Husbands] did beat. Some beat the wives and [the wife] will say, “I will not live with you” and go away. Then there would be reconciliation talks, “Do not act like this. Do not fight. A husband should not beat and a wife must not say too much.” There is a saying, “A woman lets her tongue loose; a man reacts with hands raised.” Men will beat; men will beat if a woman says too much. If a woman says too much, the man will beat. If a woman does not say much and if a man raises his hands, [he] will feel, “[She] does not badmouth me. Poor thing.” Once a woman says too much, the man gets angry and beats. “A woman lets her tongue loose; a man reacts with hands raised.” A man gets angry and beats [the woman].

Q: Were people free to leave a marriage if they weren’t happy or was that a big problem, men or women?

#9U: There was freedom. If one had no wish, the woman could tell the man that she had no wish to remain and he will reply, “If you have no wish, then I shall go my own way.” And then part ways. [They] will go separate ways and not live together if they have no wish to. Even if the man and the woman wanted to be together, she will not remain if she gets beaten. The man will say, “I am pushed to beat you because you say too much. If you do not say too much I will not beat you. Because of your loose tongue I am forced to beat you.”

There will be some who say [to the woman], “You must not say too much to the man. You work hard but get scolded.” [And to the man,] “It is not worth doing so and then there will be no one to do the work. So do not scold.” If a man beats, the woman will refuse to remain and say, “I will separate from you. I do not want a husband. I can look after myself.” If beaten, [a woman] will not live [with the man]. If a woman says too much, the man will beat. If you have no wish, [you can say], “I do not want to live with you” and go your way, and there will be no beatings. [Laughs]

Q: What about a young girl who’s not married? If she gets pregnant, how was that handled in the village? Did the parents then raise the baby? Did she look for a husband or did she name the father? What did they do for girls that got pregnant?

00:54:14

#9U: If there was an illegitimate child...if a girl had an illegitimate child and if the woman named a man and if there had been other men, the man will say, “I am not the one. There are others. I am not the father of the illegitimate child.” If she had not been with other men, they will live together. If an illegitimate child happened, they will live together. If there were other men, the man [named as father] will say, “There are other men. I will not live with her. There are others.” If there were no other men and they happen to have a child, they will live together; live together. There was nothing more to say. [They] will not refuse to live together.

Q: What would happen to the lady with the baby? Where would she go?

#9U: If there were no one... if no man accepted the lady, the lady would have to bring up the child herself. There was nothing done. Whether her illegitimate child was a son or a daughter, she will bring it up. If she was a good girl, the man and she will live together for the sake of the child.

Q: And there was no birth control? Was there anything used to prevent people from having babies if they had too many or they weren't ready yet?

00:56:31

#9U: Except in India, there was nothing like that in Tibet; there was nothing. If a young man assaulted a girl, there was bound to be an illegitimate child and nothing to prevent birth in Tibet. Should something happen, immediately there was the talk of someone carrying an illegitimate child or of some man and a girl going to live together. There was nothing like that...nothing to prevent [birth]. There was not anything like that in Tibet.

Q: *Ama-la*, one question about the fathers. If there were three men in the family and one woman and she gave birth, was that child accepted by all three men as their child or how did they decide who was the father or how did they tell the child who their father was?

#9U: It was like this. If there were three brothers, the eldest brother was considered the father. The children called the eldest brother “Father.” The [other] two brothers, the younger ones were called paternal uncles—paternal uncles. The eldest was called Father. The children called the eldest Father. If there were three brothers, the other two were called paternal uncles; two were called paternal uncles and the eldest one Father.

Q: That solved that problem. Did most babies... Women that were pregnant, were most babies born or were there miscarriages because of work or health or were most babies that were conceived born full term?

00:59:23

#9U: If a mother did a great deal of work, the child was born premature. If a mother was left at home...if a [pregnant] *nama* ‘daughter-in-law’ was left at home with just the household chores, she gave birth to a child. The child was born. If [a girl] was given away as a *nama* that had a great deal of work, because of the hard work, she miscarried. It was born premature.

Q: *Ama-la*, did you have an easy delivery of your two babies or was it very difficult...of your four babies? First of all, where were your children born?

#9U: I had four children...born in Tibet. The children were born in Tibet—born in Tibet. One child was born in India and three in Tibet...two were born in Tibet and two in India.

Q: How was the delivery of the babies in Tibet? How did that go for you?

#9U: [I] had a difficult delivery—had a difficult delivery. [I] underwent labor pains for four days and nights before the first birth. After the first...the births in India were easier than the first. The children born in India live here presently.

Q: You keep mentioning about the village and people leaving. So I think we should let you tell us about that. You said that...first of all, did you witness any *thamzing* ‘struggle session’ going on? Did the Chinese come to your village and do anything to the leaders of the village?

01:02:12

#9U: The Chinese came. The Chinese did not cause us any problems but there were government leaders in Sakya called *dungkhor* ‘lay officials’ who wore a head dress [touches right side of forehead] and they were beaten. They were beaten but we were not. [We] were told, “This evening so and so will be beaten. Come and watch.” [We] had to watch it. Other than that, we were not beaten.

Q: That was a long way to go to Sakya, 12 hours. So did the village go to Sakya to watch the officials being beaten?

#9U: Yes, one had to go. [Someone] will come to Khapochi and say, “Come to Sakya to watch.” A person came as a messenger and said, “This evening there is someone that will be beaten. Come and watch it.” One had to go. Everybody was ordered to come but not everybody attended. A person from each family went. Everyone did not go. It was said, “Come and watch. Come to watch the show. [Someone] will be beaten.”

Q: Did you go, *ama-la*?

01:03:59

#9U: I did not. In my family there was [my] husband who went. I have not been there; just a few people did. Not everybody went there because of the great distance. If a few failed to turn up [the Chinese] will ask, “Why did not anyone come?” There would be scolding. So a few went. Not everybody went but for a few who had to go and watch.

Q: You didn’t go?

#9U: I have not been because my husband did. If there was a man [in the family], he would be the one to go. I did not go.

Q: When your husband came back, what did he...did he say anything about what happened? Did he tell you?

#9U: [My husband] said, “The Chinese beat so and so and then shot him dead.” The Chinese said they were going to kill [a leader] and ordered everyone to come to watch, and the person [to be executed] was put there. [The person to be executed] had been put in a prison in Sakya and then was brought out to be killed. Everybody was told to come and watch the show. He was fired upon.

A person who was a leader and had been in prison was to be shot dead. Both the wife and husband had been imprisoned and both were lined up to be shot dead. Both the wife and the husband were fired upon instantly. The husband died while the wife did not. No, the wife was not shot; it was the husband who was shot. The husband died and the wife was told to carry the body of her husband on the back. The Chinese had killed the husband and the wife was ordered to carry [the body of her] husband and take it away to a valley.

Q: Carry it where?

01:06:01

#9U: The body had to be carried quite a distance. This vacant spot without any houses was located quite a distance away from the site of execution.

Q: Was it a cemetery?

#9U: Yes, a cemetery, and [the wife was] told to take it there. Poor thing, the wife had to carry it on [her] back. However, the wife was small and the leader had been a tall man. The wife was too small to carry [the body] and exclaimed, “I cannot carry it. What do I do?” Then some people carried [the body of] the man and cremated it there.

Q: Who helped carry...?

#9U: Other people helped carry. The wife was too small to carry it. The Chinese had killed the husband. The Chinese had shot [him] dead.

Q: What did your family decide to do after you saw and heard those...your husband saw this? And when he came back, what did he say? What did the family decide?

#9U: We had nothing to plan in the family. The one killed had already been killed. Those that had been there spoke about the execution to [their] families. There was nothing but to say, “Poor thing! He has been killed.” There was nothing to do.

Q: What did you decide to do?

01:08:03

#9U: There was nothing for us to do but to attend the meetings if ordered to. Other than that, there was nothing for us to decide. Nothing was done. If one did not attend the

meetings when called, [the Chinese] would scold us for not coming. Otherwise, there was nothing for us to do.

Q: Oh, no. I understand that. I meant, did your family... You said something about your village decided to leave and to flee Tibet. When did you decide that? Was it after your husband saw this or years later?

#9U: Yes. We decided to flee saying, “The Chinese will cause such suffering to everyone. Let us not remain here.” The whole village fled. There were four families and all left for India. The whole village fled. All those people that fled live here in this settlement. From among those that left Tibet some have passed away and some are alive. From those that fled some passed away. I am among the oldest. Some have passed away.

Q: How was the journey leaving Tibet? Can you tell us, was it difficult or how long did it take or what?

01:10:04

#9U: It was a difficult journey from there. We did not know the route to India and trekked through the mountains. We did not know the route, the route to India. It was very difficult trekking in the mountains. There are none that has struggled like us. Other people came to Gangtok [Sikkim] and Kalimpong [West Bengal, India] through Nepal. It was easier for these people. They were received in Nepal by the Reception Committee and taken to Dharamsala [Himachal Pradesh, India]. We did not know and trekked directly into the mountains for fear of being found and faced a great deal of problem on the mountains.

Q: *Ama-la*, how old were your children? This was like 1960 when you left. So you had two children and other people had children? Did you walk or go by animals, donkeys, horses?

#9U: [I] was carrying one child on the back. [He] could not walk and was crawling. [I] was carrying [the child] on the back. [I] was carrying one child on the back.

Q: And then?

#9U: The child that [I] was carrying on my back passed away in India. Then we had two more children in India. These two children live here at home. This morning you saw one. There is one younger to him.

Q: I see. Did everybody walk or did you go by horse?

01:12:39

#9U: Oh, those of us that left from there came walking. [We] walked carrying *mandu* on the back—carried *mandu* and food supplies like *tsampa* ‘flour made from roasted barley’ on the back. There were no animals and [we] were carrying the loads.

Q: What’s *mandu*?

#9U: It is [a blanket] to wear at night.

Q: How long did it take?

#9U: It took a long time to reach India. It took around two months because [we] were hiding. For around two days [we] could not walk, could not walk and felt tired by the weight of the *tsampa*. Then the *tsampa* was consumed; the meat was consumed and it became lighter and lighter. Then after everything was eaten, there was nothing to carry except for the *mandu* that [we] wore at night. Then there was nothing to carry and [we] reached India. It took around two months for [we] could not walk due to the weight of the *tsampa*. Then [we] ate the *tsampa* and the meat and it became lighter and lighter. In around two months [we] reached India. Then we reached India.

Q: Well, it sounds like you made it to India and settled here in this very place that we are in.

01:14:32

#9U: Right.

Q: And so...

#9U: [Interrupts] [I] have been happy here. His Holiness the Sakya Gongma Rinpoche established this settlement and [I] came here. This was meant for the people of Sakya and all those that came here were from Sakya. People that were not from Sakya but belonging to other regions requested His Holiness to admit them here. His Holiness began this settlement. His Holiness belongs to the Dolma Phodang of Sakya and we were from Sakya. Later those that were not from Sakya were admitted here by His Holiness the Sakya Gongma Rinpoche.

Q: *Ama-la*, what are your prayers for Tibet and the children of Tibet?

#9U: [My prayers] are, [joins palms] “May His Holiness the Dalai Lama live for tens of thousands of years. May Tibet gain independence soon.” If Tibet gains independence the children can go back to Tibet and live there. Therefore, I pray, “May His Holiness the Dalai Lama live for tens of thousands of years. May Tibet gain independence soon.” That is what [I] always pray for.

It is not for me but for the young people to go back to an independent Tibet. His Holiness the Dalai Lama advises the children to get good education to gain Tibet’s independence. His Holiness says this time and again, says this time and again. I always pray like that. It is not for me but if the children can go to Tibet, they will be happier in Tibet. “May Tibet gain independence. May His Holiness the Dalai Lama live for tens of thousands of years.” [I] am satisfied if the Buddha lives for tens of thousands of years.

Q: Thank you, *ama-la*. That’s a beautiful prayer and we are very grateful to you for sharing your story with us today.

#9U: Okay. [Smiles]

END OF INTERVIEW