

# **Tibet Oral History Project**

Interview #26U – Gyarong Tenzin  
March 31, 2017

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# TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #26U
2. Interviewee: Gyarong Tenzin
3. Age: 84
4. Date of Birth: 1933
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Gyarong Tsako
7. Province: Dhoday (Amdo)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: March 31, 2017
10. Place of Interview: Minling House, Clement Town, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 20 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Tenzin Choenyi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

### **Biographical Information:**

Gyarong Tenzin was born in 1933 to a family that engaged in farming in Amdo Province. The people there were self-sufficient with everything coming from their farm and the animals of local nomads. Gyarong Tenzin recounts that farmers in his region grew poppy plants that were bartered with Chinese traders for wheat flour, oil, meat, guns, silver and gold. He became a monk at the age of 5 and lived at the village monastery nearby until age 17.

After the Chinese occupation Gyarong Tenzin's father was imprisoned for killing a Chinese leader. Fearing his own capture, Gyarong Tenzin escaped and travelled around China in disguise selling goods. He then traveled to Lhasa and earned a lot of money transporting rocks for the Chinese in order to buy guns to fight against them. He went and volunteered with the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] at the age of 26, vowing to sacrifice his life to protect His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Gyarong Tenzin talks about the guerrillas' numerous encounters with the Chinese and the many casualties suffered on both sides. He helped to care for Andrug Gonpo Tashi, leader of the *Chushi Gangdrug*, when he was injured and then served among those who escorted His Holiness the Dalai Lama on his escape journey to India. Gyarong Tenzin learned about his father's release in 1980 and decided to visit his hometown, where he observed the poor living conditions despite the insistence of the Chinese that they had brought about development.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Amdo, farm life, life under Chinese rule, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas, escape experiences.

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**Interview #26U**

**Interviewee: Gyarong Tenzin**

**Age: 84, Sex: Male**

**Interviewer: Marcella Adamski**

**Interview Date: March 31, 2017**

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:14

**Interviewee #26U: My name is Gyarong Tenzin.**

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?

**#26U: Yes.**

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

**#26U: Okay.**

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

**#26U: Okay, I do not need it.**

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

**#26U: Okay.**

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

00:02:17

**#26U: There will be no problem at all. When I was little...initially, in the year of my birth, which is 1933, the Communist Chinese whom we call Hongchen, the Hongchen Chinese came along with Mao Zedong to our region. They could not move elsewhere and were going back. Many were sick, injured or had died. They came through our region dying or being killed along the way. Then they went back.**

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

Q: *Pa-la* ‘respectful term for father,’ you said you were born in 1933 and you’re 84 now. Is that correct?

**#26U: I was born in that year. My father and mother used to tell me that every day.**

Q: The incident of your birth?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...of the Hongchen Chinese coming to our region along with Mao Zedong.

Q: Who was in your family, *pa-la*?

**#26U: When I was little there were Father, Mother, relatives, younger sisters and many in the family.**

Q: What kind of work did your family do for a living?

00:04:57

**#26U: All the family members worked in the fields.**

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about how much land you had and what kind of crops you raised?

**#26U: The land holding was not extensive yet the crops were sufficient. Corn, barley, peas and everything grew in our region.**

**Potatoes were cultivated along with the corn.**

Q: Were the produce used just for your family or did you trade it to get other goods that you needed?

**#26U: Everything was for your consumption. It was for your consumption and there was no sale in those days. We owned cows and the nomads lived close by us. They had *khulu* ‘fur from upper part of yak’s body.’ They sheared the *khulu*, spun and did the weaving. We made our own clothes. They cured the hide of dead animals and knew how to sew boots. We did, too.**

**There was no need to buy anything from outside. After the Chinese appeared there was a variety of things to buy. They destroyed those things that were available and Chinese goods have come in. All things from the homes have been taken away. [I] have seen such.**

Q: So when your family...were you considered middle class family given the amount of land and crops that you had or poor? What was your status?

00:08:28

**#26U: Our family was categorized among the rich by the Chinese and Father was taken away to be imprisoned for life. However, when I was 5 years old Father had made me a monk. So from the age of 5 until 16 or 17 I was in the monastery. At the age of 17, the**

**Communist Chinese once again came to our region and caused misery by arresting Father and sending [him] to construct roads. The children were small and we faced great hardship. Then those of us that were in a position to purchase guns did so and the revolt against the Chinese started then [when I was] 16 or 17 years old.**

Q: So when you were in the monastery from 5 to 17, was that a monastery near where your family lived?

00:10:28

**#26U: If one shouted from the village, it could be heard at the monastery. There were no loudspeakers or such and one shouted loudly. If [I] called loudly to Father or Mother, they came. The monastery consisted of around 200 living quarters for the monks, which still survives. The Chinese have not destroyed it. When it was about to be destroyed, all the people converged and said they were going to stay there and the monastery still survives.**

Q: Two-hundred quarters?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Quarters for the monks to live in.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Housing.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Housing, yes.

**#26U: The stupa and such were destroyed. I went back in the year '80 taking *zungshuk* 'precious items placed inside a statue' when the stupa was being rebuilt at the monastery. [I] took *zungshuk* in the form of a cloth from the Boudha stupa of Nepal. [I] took such as *zungshuk*.**

00:12:20

**Then when [I] went there in the year '80 Father had been released from prison and I met Mother, too. The house was completely empty. [Gets emotional]**

Q: That sounds like the next part of the story. So I'm going to go back to a little bit more earlier.

**#26U: Then when [I] went back, in front of the gate my mother...[Cries]...[I] am feeling sad.**

Q: It's okay.

**#26U: In those days there used to be a stable for the horses in front of my gate.**

Q: There was a stable in front of the gate?

**#26U: Yes. When I went back, as one opened the gate, there were two pigs. There were no horses. And when one entered the house, there was nothing unbroken left to make tea in. [The family] was making tea in a broken [pot] and cooking food in a broken one.**

[Interviewer to interpreter]: They were doing that?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes, [his] mother.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: When he went back?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: When he went back in 1980.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Oh, Mother was there.

Q: Was your mother still living in the house?

00:15:45

**#26U: Then many Chinese leaders gathered and served me tea. It was in the year '80. [The Chinese leaders] said, "These days things have become very good. [We] have brought about development." I replied, "[I] do not know if you have made progress elsewhere. You say that there has been a 100 percent development these days. Never mind 100 percent, it is 99 percent decline. Look at my house."**

Q: How did they respond when you said that?

**#26U: They had nothing to say. Those that had been deputy leaders were now the leaders. There were many people, around 30.**

Q: Who were the leaders? Were they poor people in the past?

**#26U: I told them.**

Q: Did you say they were poor people in the past?

**#26U: What?**

Q: Who were the leaders?

**#26U: It was in the year '80.**

Q: Who did you say were the leaders? Chinese leaders?

00:17:47

**#26U: There were many leaders of different ranks. All the deputies had been promoted. They claimed that there was development and offered me tea. "There has been a 100 percent development." I replied, "Never mind 100 percent development, there is a 99 percent decline and no progress. You are not touring the regions. Being leaders, you must speak after consulting the people. The work you are doing is not right. I have only seen my house and nothing else. From the 100 percent, it is a 99 percent decline and there has been no progress."**

00:19:02

**They said, “We are requesting His Holiness the Dalai Lama to come but [he] is not. If we have the ring of faith, there must surely be a hook that can pull.” I replied, “If your heart is not pure, even if tens of thousands of hooks are sent down, you will not be lifted.” [I] explained this to them.**

Q: You really stood up to the Chinese in words.

**#26U: [Speaks before translation] It is the truth. The Chinese said, “Come back [to live] and you will be given a house and treated well.” I replied “Of course, [I] will return,” but I would not go back.**

Q: Why wouldn't you go?

**#26U: What?**

Q: Why didn't you want go when the Chinese asked you to return?

**#26U: [I] have fought against the Chinese many times. [I] will recount this story. I have fought the Chinese from the age of 17 to 27.**

00:21:11

**#26U: After coming to Lhasa, His Holiness the Dalai Lama...I was ready to sacrifice my life and volunteered in the Tensung Dhanglang Maga ‘National Volunteer Defense Army’. [Gets emotional]**

**[I] went along with Andrug Gonpo Tashi and the resistance story is that we had many encounters with the Chinese. These are things that happened before the occupation of Tibet. I do something and then tend to forget it in the future. The Chinese...for instance, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is here [in India] and when the Chinese asked [me] to return, I will not believe their word nor will I go back.**

Q: *Pa-la*, can you please tell us when did you first see the Chinese when you were younger? At what age were you?

**#26U: When the Chinese first appeared—appeared in our region—they influenced the poor and the mean and made them attack the region. The Chinese did such things.**

Q: Who was attacked, *pa-la*?

00:23:25

**#26U: There were the bad people in our region and they were provided with guns.**

Q: Were there many poor people in your region who took the guns?

**#26U: What?**

Q: Were there many poor people?

**#26U: Yes, there were. It was one's own wish. The Chinese came and said that [the poor people], who were many, were very good. They became powerful and it was easy to beat and cut us up. Many of them converged, captured the people, beat and took away valuables.**

Q: *Pa-la*, why were there so many poor people in your region if the land was fertile and there was food enough for your family? Why were there so many poor people?

**#26U: Whatever it may be about the poor, there were always poor people. The reason for being poor was that [they] drank *chang* 'home-brewed beer.' If one had a little bit, it was wasted on drinking *chang* and eating and sleeping. There were many such that did not do any work and whiled away the time. There were many poor people. However much help was given to the poor, there was not any progress. There was not.**

Q: When you mentioned the crops in your area...when we were talking before this interview, you mentioned that they were growing poppy in your region. Can you tell me about that and who was using the poppy?

00:26:24

**#26U: Each family tills the land and the food supplies of the family members and animals for a year was stored in a sack made of hide or in a box. In this way, the rich families had a lot to eat.**

Q: *Pa-la*, you talked about another kind of crop you grew in the fields that was used to smoke...what is that?

**#26U: It is the one that is grown in Afghanistan.**

Q: Who grows this and who uses it?

**#26U: At one point it was grown by [the people of] our region. When it was ready, traders came; traders came from China bearing wheat flour, oil, meat, etc.—also guns, silver and gold for this stuff and took it to China.**

Q: So the Chinese actually wanted the poppy plants?

00:28:04

**#26U: Yes.**

Q: What did they do with it? Do you know?

**#26U: The Chinese smoked it. Tibetans did not use it. They slept, smoked and slept. It seemed like destruction. It used to be cultivated during the time of the Nationalists. The cultivation carried on for five or six years.**

Q: Was there any regulation from the Tibetan Government about not using poppy?

**#26U: It was far away. It took three months and 15 days on horseback from Lhasa to my region. The Tibetan Government had no knowledge about it. We never knew where the Tibetan Government was even. We had our own smaller leaders in our region that led all the families.**

Q: Did poppy continue to be grown after that period of history?

00:30:05

**#26U: After that cultivation was not permitted during the time of the Communist Chinese. The Communists caught all the smokers, shut them in rooms and stopped them from smoking. Perhaps [the Chinese] provided medications or killed [them] or did something else.**

Q: Did they forbid the Tibetans from growing poppy?

**#26U: Nobody said that because everybody was growing it. All Tibetans located everywhere in that region were growing it.**

Q: Did the Communist Chinese forbid cultivation?

**#26U: After the coming of the Communists there was no longer any cultivation. Earlier we grew it and obtained a lot of arms and ammunition. We fought the Chinese for five years in Gyarong.**

Q: What happened to you personally? You said that the Chinese brought in arms, gave it to the poor people and the poor people attacked your family and maybe other wealthy families? What personally happened to you? Were you still in the monastery or did you leave when that was happening?

00:32:19

**#26U: At that time I was in the monastery. However, when I was 17 years old, the Chinese came to capture me. It seems the family was wealthy and someone brought the message that I was going to be captured on the night of the 13<sup>th</sup> day of Losar 'Tibetan New Year.' Then before the 13<sup>th</sup> day, I took a gun and horse and fled into the mountains.**

Q: Who brought you that message, *pa-la*?

**#26U: He was a Chinese official who owed us some money. We had told him that we did not want the money back and burned the promissory notes. We were on good terms.**

Q: *Pa-la*, did you have many poor people working on your farm and did they speak out against your family?

00:34:28

**#26U: They were poor and took away our family's lands and wealth and divided it among themselves. Our family members were either killed or imprisoned. [The poor people] did what they desired. However, it did not benefit them because they are poor even now.**

Q: Is that when you went back to visit your home? Is that when you saw the poor people?

**#26U: Yes, [they] were poor. Of course, [they] were in a worse situation than before. Our home was confiscated and Father and Mother had to live in the monastery's monk quarters when the family's house was taken over by someone else. There was no house.**

Q: The poor got the family house and wealth and everything. You mean they were still poor?

**#26U: The poor were poor having sold the belongings of their home. What had been there was rendered no more. [The poor] still remained poor and they have had no development. I returned and bought my family house back by paying 200 currency units, 200 Chinese currency units.**

[Discontinuity in video]

Q: *Pa-la*, can we go back? *Pa-la*, I'd like to go back to the story of...you ripped up the IOU notes of the man and he gave you the information and then where did you go next to run away from the Chinese?

00:37:33

**#26U: The region of Gyarong is a valley and I fled towards where the nomads lived.**

Q: What did you do when you got there?

**#26U: I had a horse and a gun and many...[not discernible].**

Q: Many what, *pa-la*?

**#26U: Many friends. I had a large number of friends among the nomads; many friends everywhere until the place called Labrang.**

Q: And your family, your mother and father were they behind...did they stay behind? And were there siblings that stayed behind?

**#26U: Yes, there were. Father had already been imprisoned for life—already imprisoned for life by the Chinese. There were my siblings at home. My younger sibling still survives. There was another younger one that passed away. [My] younger sister passed away—passed away after I went back there. Another younger sister survives. We are many people. There are around 24 families in the hometown.**

Q: Members in the family?

00:39:12

**#26U: Yes, those engaged in working in the fields. There are around 24 families that are related to me. When I fell sick earlier, they wanted to visit but could not get travel documents.**

Q: I see. Why was your father sent to prison? Was that before you left home, before you ran away?

**#26U: [Father] was imprisoned for life because he belonged to a rich family and he had killed a Chinese—killed a Chinese leader. It was Barkham; the place where [father] was imprisoned for life was at the place called Barkham.**

Q: Barkham?

**#26U: Yes, imprisonment for life at Barkham. When [the Chinese] arrived at the door and said, “You are imprisoned for life,” my father who was foolish remarked, “Oh, if it is imprisonment for life, it is better to die now. What can be done now?” [Laughs] Father remarked like that and became famous.**

Q: And so did he die or did he...?

00:41:28

**#26U: Father got away from life imprisonment. [He] was there for 22 years. Mao Zedong died in the year '80 and when prisoners serving life sentences were released, my father was among them.**

Q: Did you see your father again?

**#26U: Then I received a letter. [I] wrote a letter from Kolkata [India] where I was selling sweaters. [My family in Tibet] had received the letter. [I] thought it strange that letters traveled so fast. A reply came saying Father had been released from life in prison and was home. [I] received the letter. Then [I] stopped selling sweaters and rushed to Nepal. In Nepal a person called Amdo Lobsang helped obtain papers from the Chinese. I went alone.**

Q: Was your father there when you got there?

00:43:18

**#26U: [We] met; [Father] was there. Mother and both of them were looking from the doorway where many horses used to be kept in the early days. I went up and met them. Within the doorway were two pigs. [I] spoke about this earlier.**

Q: What was it like to see your father again?

**#26U: Then when [I] entered the house, there were nothing but broken pots. [They] prepared tea and cooked *thukpa* ‘noodle soup’ in these broken vessels. There was nothing but such. Just before I left, the officials invited me to the place called Barkham and offered**

**me tea and spoke about the great things they were doing. Then I had said, “It is 99 percent decline and not progress.”**

Q: Were your parents happy to see you?

00:45:08

**#26U: Oh, yes. [They] were incredibly happy.**

Q: While your father was in prison for 22 years, where did your mother live?

**#26U: Mother lived at her home. We had maids—many maids. [Mother] was brought to be scolded [at a public humiliation session] and a maid stood up to scold [accuse] Mother. She said, “Earlier there used to be plenty to eat and when told to eat, [I] could not. These days when [I] want to eat, there is nothing.” Then Mother was vindicated and no one scolded Mother.**

Q: Did the maids say that?

**#26U: A meeting was called wherein Mother was to be scolded. Instead of scolding the maid spoke the truth.**

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So in the days...I don't know if I...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: “In the days gone by, there was plenty to eat and we didn't want to eat much. But now-a-days when we needed something to eat, there's nothing to eat...”

[Interviewer to interpreter]: ...under the Chinese.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...under the Chinese.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: ...under the Chinese, I see. Okay.

Q: *Pa-la*, you said that you left to join the nomads to fight the Chinese. Can you tell us how...? You had left the monastery...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...and went to the nomads.

Q: ...and went to the nomads. You left the monastery in your village, went to join the nomads...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...on a horse with a gun.

Q: ...on a horse with guns. How did you fight the Chinese?

00:47:44

**#26U: In our hometown, there used to be people that rode horseback to Lhasa. There were no longer such people in Amdo. I rode here and there but could not find anyone. Then I wore Chinese clothing, wore Chinese clothing, sent the horse back home and sent a message**

**home saying I was going to Labrang, and went to Chengdu in China. There was no one looking for me in China. They were looking for me in Tibet. There was no one looking for me in China.**

Q: What happened in Chengdu?

**#26U: From Chengdu I went to Yangen still wearing the Chinese clothes.**

Q: Where?

**#26U: The place called Yangen that is on the way to Dhartsedo from Kham.**

Q: Is it Yunnan?

**#26U: Yangen.**

Q: Yangen.

**#26U: In this place there was one called Thongkhor Wangpo Gokar. He was from Thongkhor in Kham. [I] met him. We knew each other, knew each other from the days when [we] were trading in poppies. “It is incredibly good for me to have met you. Please take me to Kham for there is no way I can go to Amdo.” He said yes—he was a Chinese official—and I went with him to Chamdo. [I] was 20 years old.**

Q: And then what happened?

00:50:45

**#26U: In Chamdo—now I became like a Khampa [touches clothes] —there was freedom. People were doing business and if one claimed to be a Khampa, the Chinese did nothing for [the Chinese] were deceiving then.**

**Then [I] opened a store [laughs] and did some business in Chamdo. One could do this to any extent. Then from someone I bought around 40 sacks of toothbrushes, lighters, key chains—they were cheap at four currency units each—and went to China to sell them. I acted like a Khampa. [Laughs]**

**All the articles were bought on credit. [I] took these to Chengdu but nobody would buy. Then I went to Tongyen but nobody in Tongyen would buy.**

Q: Tongyer?

00:52:46

**#26U: Tongyen. Then from the pier at Tongyen [I] took a ship on the Yangtze River to Hangku.**

Q: Hangku?

**#26U: Hangku is a Chinese region. Here too nobody would buy and then [I] went to Shanghai.**

Q: Shanghai?

**#26U: Yes, Shanghai. After getting down at Shanghai I went to...[not discernible]. Then taking a few sample [I] went to a place called ...[not discernible] where all my goods were bought. [Laughs]**

Q: So at this time it sounds like 1953 because you were 20 years old and you were born in 1933. So this is 1953...

**#26U: [Interrupts] I, a person from the region of Gyarong, claimed to be a Khampa and not from Gyarong.**

Q: You were 20 years old when you did this, 1953. So did you stay selling goods for a long time or did you come back to...when did you come back to Tibet to fight the Chinese?

00:54:58

**#26U: After selling the goods [I] came to Chamdo. With a little bit of money [I] left Chamdo for Lhasa. In Lhasa I stayed in the house of Rongpo Khangtsen ‘Division’ in Drepung Monastery.**

Q: Rongpo Khangtsen?

**#26U: Yes. [I] had a little bit of money with which [I] bought six mules and made some carts.**

Q: Yes?

**#26U: Carts—carts for the mules to pull. Carts.**

Q: Carts.

**#26U: [I] had carts made. The Chinese were breaking rocks to construct houses. [Laughs] If four mules worked for a day, one earned a 1,000 *dhayen* ‘Chinese silver coins’ box. So [I] transported rocks everywhere and earned a substantial sum of money.**

Q: What were the Chinese doing with the rocks?

00:56:59

**#26U: The Chinese broke rocks to build houses.**

Q: Did you want to help the Chinese build houses since they had arrested your father?

**#26U: There was no money and one has to buy guns and find comrades. [The Chinese] instantly paid *dhayen* for transporting rocks. With *dhayen* one can buy guns easily anywhere. One could not buy with Tibetan currency then.**

Q: My next question. So *pa-la*, to earn this *dhayen* that you could use to buy things, was your intention to buy guns to fight the Chinese? Was that your reason for working so hard?

**#26U: Yes, I went to the home of Andrug Gonpo Tashi and made three prostrations before the picture of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and vowed to sacrifice my life to protect His Holiness the Dalai Lama.**

Q: So how many years did you work to try and earn money so you could buy ammunition and guns?

00:59:19

**#26U: [I] worked in Lhasa for around three years. While in Lhasa I turned 26, having lived in Lhasa and in Chamdo in the meantime. [I] joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] exactly at the age of 26. [I] got to buy guns and horses, everything. [I] gave away the household things to a friend who was not going [to join the force]. Then I went with Andrug Gonpo Tashi to Lhoka.**

Q: What happened in Lhoka?

**#26U: We stayed at Diguthang in Lhoka. I was 26 years old. The Tibetan Government had an armory at Shang Gaden Chokhorling. There were many things—guns and cannons that the Tibetan government dare not touch. We were 600 riders that volunteered to go and get the arms. I went along with Andrug Gonpo Tashi.**

01:01:30

**We went through Chushul to Markyang where the Chinese lay in wait. We fought the Chinese fiercely for a day. That day we lost. In just the Chating division of *Chushi Gangdrug* 36 men got killed. People from Amdo and many others were slain. The Chinese killed around 70 of our men that day.**

**We could not push through and took a deviation through Yakpa Kholo and Nalo. Then we went to Shang Gaden Chokhorling taking a detour at Nalo. At Shang Gaden Chokhorling, early in the morning [we] surrounded the building that housed the Tibetan Government armory, caught the people and raided the armory and took away all the weapons. Now each of us carried 200 bullets. In addition, there were guns and cannons; everything was present. That day we fired a few cannons.**

Q: And then what happened?

01:03:40

**#26U: Then [we] came through the place called Woyul Zongthang and at a ...[not discernible] destroyed 19 Chinese vehicles. [We] caught around 30 Chinese drivers and**

others, but did not kill them because they were not armed. After the capture, [we] tied all of them around a large rock using ropes and left [them] there.

Then [we] took the route through Markyang where the first encounter had taken place and onwards to Tsang Nyenmo.

A large number of Chinese were stationed at Tsang Nyenmo. Then there was an encounter and we battled for two days. Many Chinese were killed and there were many casualties from our side. [We] set fire to 28 Chinese in a house. If the Chinese were not shot in the head but in the body, they would fire back. So we shot at the heads of the Chinese. [We] aimed at the heads of the Chinese and fired.

Q: Shut the door of the house?

01:05:29

**#26U: What? No, we fired shots and killed many Chinese and the Chinese killed many from our side. We killed many Chinese at Tsang Nyenmo. In the evening Andrug Gonpo Tashi called those of us from the Gyarong unit and taking along Lobsang Tashi went to fire cannons.**

**That day those from the Gyarong unit including me—all hailed from Gyarong—went to fire cannons taking along the Chinese Lobsang Tashi. [We] fired cannons at 500 cavalymen coming from Shigatse. It was Lobsang Tashi who fired the cannons that day.**

Q: Whose 500 cavalymen?

**#26U: The Chinese army. 500 cavalymen that came from Shigatse were fired upon. Nearly 16 shots were fired from cannons that seemed to have devastated the Chinese.**

**The Chinese man called Lobsang Tashi was a central figure in handling cannons. He fired the cannons and on that day we came to trust Lobsang Tashi and from then on became [he] a friend of ours.**

01:07:44

**Then from Tsang Nyenmo we went up a high mountain towards the east on which was a nunnery. However, it was not possible as the Chinese had surrounded it. Then we fled to the place called Yangpachen.**

**At Yangpachen the Chinese appeared as we lay in wait and fought for a whole day. It was believed that the Chinese strength was 4,000. They did not take care of the artilleries and swords. A large number of Chinese were killed that day. Then we went towards Jang Namtsokha and to Dhamchoktse. At Dhamchoktse we destroyed the Chinese and ambushed vehicles that came from Lhasa and Nagchuka. Then we planned to go to Gardha. However, Andrug Gonpo Tashi was injured at Dhamchoktse in Digung.**

**Earlier 30 Chinese had lay in wait in the region of Digung and we went there. The battle began at around 8 in the morning and ended at around 12 o'clock. Two Chinese got away**

**while 28 were killed. Then we had to cross a pass to go towards Dhamchoktse. The Chinese had made preparations to fight and that day Andrug Gonpo Tashi was injured.**

Q: *Pa-la*, what are you feeling during all these battles? Are you sad, are you scared, excited? What kind of feelings in your heart while you are defending Tibet?

01:10:32

**#26U: [I] was very happy to get the chance to kill the Chinese. Many Chinese were being killed and [I] was in a position to do that. I felt happy and not sad to kill even one Chinese. That must be because of the suffering [they] have caused us.**

Q: When did...when did your involvement in the army come to an end in the Tibetan Army? When did that finish?

**#26U: All the Khampa...**

Q: No, *pa-la*, the end, the end. When did it come to an end?

**#26U: The end...left in the hometown.**

Q: No, *pa-la*, you fought in Yangpachen and at Diguthang and various other places.

**#26U: That is right.**

Q: Where did the fighting come to an end?

**#26U: The final encounter took place at Yangpachen. Then we went to Dhamshung near Gaden [Monastery] where Andrug Gonpo Tashi...[not discernible]. From there we went and stayed in Nagchuka. While at Nagchuka during a meeting in the evening Andrug Gonpo Tashi stated that he was going to Kham to fight. I replied, "I have volunteered to sacrifice my life for the safety of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, but I will not go to Kham to fight. [I] am not going to Kham. I will not even take one step with you from tomorrow." I took care of him because he was injured and walked using a walking stick. I was 26 years old and helped him a lot. He decided to go and from there I took a different path.**

Q: Where did you reach?

01:13:02

**#26U: I left Nagchuka and passed through Thoe Nagtsang, Chokchu, Bumpa and along the Nepalese border to Dhingri and Tsokho and went to Lhoka through Chuplung, through Chuplung because the Chinese had blocked all the routes.**

**Then [I] went to Lhoka and was among those that escorted His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I went up until Kyudushu.**

Q: Up till where?

**#26U: Kyudushu.**

Q: Kyudushu.

**#26U: You know Lhoka, where there is an airport these days; I went until there and then His Holiness the Dalai Lama was escorted out. After that one had to fend for oneself. [Laughs]**

Q: How many people escorted His Holiness over the border?

**#26U: We were 100-200 men of the *Chushi Gangdrug* that went along with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. After sometime, only good men with good horses were selected and the number was reduced. And then [we] crossed over the Mangola pass.**

Q: Were you able to go over the Mangola pass or did you have to leave before that?

01:15:47

**#26U: Yes, I crossed over the Mangola pass. I carried many guns including Chinese guns and grenades until [I] reached a bad place in Mon Tawang where the arms were handed over.**

Q: Was that after His Holiness left you or was that before?

**#26U: You had to walk and find your own food at that time. There was nothing. [I] walked and walked and reached Missamari [India]. Straw huts had been built at Missamari.**

**[I] had a horse that fell off the road and a mule and drove it until Mon Tawang where it ate a certain kind of salt and died. [Laughs] Then there was nothing left.**

**There was no gun, but a knife which was useless. Then I reached Missamari and I wish to say *Tashi Delek* ‘Greetings.’ That is it.**

Q: *Pa-la*, that’s a very beautiful story. It sounds like you fulfilled your promise to get His Holiness to safety and you did not have to die in the process. I’m very happy.

01:18:14

**#26U: Yes, I sacrificed my life. However, I had a protective amulet called Jigshay Mahe given by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I was fired upon many times; fired upon 16 times just in Tsang Nyenmo yet [I] was not hurt.**

Q: Well, we are very happy that you survived.

**#26U: [Joins palms]**

Q: Thank you for telling us such a very powerful...

**#26U: [Interrupts] The reason for [my] living this long is that [I] went to see His Holiness this year at 83 and he said, “[You] must come again at 93.”**

Q: Yes?

**#26U: There’s nothing more...[Becomes emotional].**

**Thank you.**

Q: Thank you very much.

Q: *Pa-la*, I want to ask one more time: if this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

**#26U: [You] can do anything.**

Q: Can we use your real name?

**#26U: [Nods]**

Q: Thank you for sharing your story with us.

**#26U: Okay.**

END OF INTERVIEW