

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #45D – Phari Wangdu
May 22, 2012

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #45D
2. Interviewee: Phari Wangdu
3. Age: 86
4. Date of Birth: 1926
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Shigatse
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: May 22, 2012
10. Place of Interview: Hotel Tibet, Mcleod Ganj, Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 46 min
12. Interviewer: Rebecca Novick
13. Interpreter: Thupten Kelsang Dakpa
14. Videographer: Ronny Novick
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Phari Wangdu is from Shigatse in Utsang Province. One of his older brothers was a *ngagpa* 'shaman' and the other one was sent to be a soldier in the Tibetan Government Army in Phari Wangdu's place. Army soldiers were provided only guns and ammunition by the army and local villagers were required to pay the soldiers salary. When his brother reached Chamdo with the army they were told not to fight the Chinese and sent home.

In addition to working in the fields with his family, Phari Wangdu performed *wulak* 'labor tax,' for which farmers were required to provide horses and pack animals to transport government officials and their goods to other villages. Phari Wangdu's was a trader and travelled frequently to Kalimpong, India trading wool for tea. He moved to Phari after his marriage to a girl there.

Phari Wangdu recalls his unforgettable good fortune of having the opportunity to escort His Holiness the Dalai Lama from Dromo to Gyantse. He provides an account of his duty as a transporter and the royal horses, mules and various other preparations for the journey. He also recounts the risks he took for his countrymen by carrying letters sewn in his coat from the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] men that had fled to Kalimpong to their wives back in Phari. He describes his family's escape journey and their detention in Bhutan and work in Shimla [Himachal Pradesh, India] for 10 years on road construction and finally in Dharamsala.

Topics Discussed:

Tibetan army, taxes, trade, customs/traditions, Dalai Lama, escape experiences, life as a refugee in India.

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Interview #45D

Interviewee: Phari Wangdu

Age: 86, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Rebecca Novick

Interview Date: May 22, 2012

Question: *Pa-la* 'respectful term for father,' could you tell us your name?

00:00:12

Interviewee #45D: Wangdu.

Q: Where are you from?

#45D: I am from Shigatse in Tibet and came to Phari as a son-in-law.

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record your experiences, so that we can share your memories with many generations of Tibetans, Chinese and the rest of the world.

#45D: Okay.

Q: Your memories are going to help us to document the true history, culture and beliefs of the Tibetan people.

#45D: Okay.

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

#45D: [I] offer it if it would be beneficial.

Q: During this interview if you want to take a break at anytime, just let us know.

#45D: Okay.

Q: And if there's any question you don't want to answer, that's fine.

00:01:36

#45D: Okay.

Q: *Pa-la*, if this interview was shown in Tibet or China or anywhere else in the world, would it create a problem for you?

#45D: What problem would there be since I do not have to go to the Chinese? My relatives arrived in Amravati [Andhra Pradesh, India] during the Kalachakra [a religious initiation]...two siblings from the same set of parents arrived. The brother is 80 years old and the sister is the youngest in the family. She was 65 at that time and around five years have elapsed now.

They said then, “You do not have a good house in Dharamsala. Come to Tibet. We own very good houses in Shigatse and Lhasa. You can stay wherever you like.” “Thank you. I do not want it. If His Holiness the Dalai Lama can come to Tibet, I will. You can help me with a house then. Other than that I do not want anything. Whatever money you have, spend it on religious offerings.”

[The siblings] had brought a lot of money, which was offered for the 100 million *mani* ‘mantra of Avalokiteshvara’ recitations. “You can make donations for the Kalachakra, Sera [Monastery] or anywhere. I do not want anything. I earned my living until now and do not want anything. I will come to Tibet as soon as His Holiness goes. Help [me] with a house then,” [I] said.

Q: Would there be any problem since you have siblings in Tibet?

#45D: Yes?

Q: [You] have siblings in Tibet.

#45D: Yes, [I] have siblings.

Q: So if this interview was shown, would it be a problem?

00:03:17

#45D: I have no intention of going [to Tibet]. If, by the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama we are all able to go back, they [the Chinese] cannot do anything then. I would not go now, so what problems would I face?

After the Kalachakra in Amravati, [we] visited Bodh Gaya [Bihar], Varanasi [Uttar Pradesh] and all other [pilgrim] sites and then I went to drop them until the Nepal border along with my daughter. The brother did not but my sister was crying, “I will never see you again.” “You do not have to cry. Return with a happy heart after your time here. We are nothing but worms underground. His Holiness is working so hard in the world. Pray well. We did not meet for 46 years but met now. This is due to the grace of the Buddha,” I said. Then when we reached the border, they did not cry but bid goodbye.

Q: *Pa-la*, can you just give us a little idea of what your life was like growing up in Shigatse?

#45D: The experience was like this. We were six sons and a youngest sister in the family. [Our] parents passed away at a young age. Mother passed away when I was 14 years old. There were many siblings and father [was alive] when mother passed away. The oldest

brother was from a different mother. He was well educated and could read the scriptures well. [He] chanted prayers and watched for hailstorms.

Q: Was [he] a monk?

#45D: He was not a monk. We were *ngagpa* ‘shaman.’ There were *ngagpa* in Tibet.

Q: *Ngagpa*?

00:06:22

#45D: *Ngagpa* that watched for hailstorms. [He] performed prayers similar to the *ngagpa* of the Nyingma [sect of Tibetan Buddhism] here and was highly accomplished. The one next to him, who was older to me was also well-versed. Later when I turned 16 years old, I had to join the Tibetan Government Army.

Q: At the age of 16?

#45D: When I was to join the army at the age of 16, leaders of the Tibetan Government arrived from Kham who said, “He is too small.” When father took me [the leader] said, “He is a good child but is too short.” One had to walk for many months carrying guns and provisions, as there were no vehicles then. [I was] declared too small. [Father said,] “I have money problems. Please let the older son join.” “Yes, that is fine,” [the leader said]. My older brother’s birth sign was the ox and [he] was older to me by two years.

Q: Older by two years?

#45D: Yes, older by two years. [Older brother] joined the army and lived in Kham for many years. There was a war in Chamdo when the Chinese appeared. When the war started in Chamdo, Ngabo [a minister in the former Tibetan Cabinet] was in Chamdo. Ngabo told [the Tibetan army] that they were not to fight. All the guns and bullets were taken away. [My older brother] said that Ngabo gave five *dhayen* ‘Chinese silver coins’ to each [soldier] and they returned [home] begging along the way.

Q: Who gave the five *dhayen*, the Chinese or ...?

#45D: Yes?

Q: Who was it that gave the five *dhayen*?

00:07:56

#45D: Ngabo. Ngabo Ngawang Jigme.

Q: Who’s Ngabo?

#45D: Ngabo Ngawang Jigme is...

Q: Was [he] a Commander in the army?

#45D: Yes?

Q: Was [he] a Commander?

#45D: He was not a Commander but a Cabinet Minister.

Q: Ngawang?

#45D: Ngabo Ngawang Jigme.

Q: Was [each troop] given five *dhayen*?

#45D: [They] were given nothing but five *dhayen* and while returning to Tsang, [they] came begging along the way from Dhotoe and reached Lhasa.

Q: [He] was a sibling?

00:08:32

#45D: [He] was a sibling, an older brother. [He] has since passed away in Lhasa. When they reached Lhasa...When approached, the Commander-in-Chief gave each of them a letter stating that landowners responsible for them should provide assistance. [Soldier brother] returned to Tsang with it [the letter]. He used to live very humbly in Kham, while some soldiers were not good. [He] was given very good help in the form of winter clothes and summer clothes. [He] was provided with entire sets of summer and winter clothing.

Q: Did the government supply them?

#45D: No, [they were supplied] by the landlords, landlords that paid taxes. They were the *genpo* [village leaders] that collected from the people [and provided the troops]. [The soldiers] had been living there for many years without making any complaints. [The land owners] said that [the troops] were good and provided assistance during troubled times by collecting grains and supplying [them].

00:10:30

Q: Was it the oldest sibling that joined the army?

#45D: The oldest sibling was living at home. He was married.

Q: Which sibling joined the army?

#45D: The one younger to him and older to me joined the army. [He] was the second son.

Q: Was that during the war in Chamdo?

#45D: Yes. The Tibetan Government Army was based there. They went to the border and fought for a day or two. We [the Tibetan side] did not have a large number of men while

they [Chinese troops] were overwhelming. [The Chinese] surrounded the region and appeared from behind. The [Tibetan] army had unloaded the horses and mules in a pasture and camped there. At around 2 or 3 o'clock in the night, artilleries were fired. [My brother] said that cannon shells flew passed them but the men were not hit because [they] possessed good protective amulets. Then they immediately got up. Each one grabbed his horse that had been left loose to graze but there was no time to put saddles. Instead one removed his *chupa* 'traditional coat' and flung it over the horse and rode away. [They] fled carrying the guns and bullets. When [they] reached Chamdo, Ngabo Ngawang Jigme said, "You cannot fight." All the bullets and guns were taken away.

00:13:17

Q: This is in 1950-51?

#45D: It must be in '51 but I cannot say for sure.

Q: What age were you at this time when your brother met Ngabo Ngawang Jigme? How old were you?

#45D: [I] must be around 20 years old then. [I] was already in Phari.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Sorry. Who gave the letter?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: When you surrendered your arms, you could get a letter, like "I have done so much service. So, I might be given compensation or whatever."

[Interviewer to interpreter]: *Pa-la* is talking about his brother?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Brother.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So these are stories he heard from his brother, right?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So *pa-la* didn't go to Chamdo?

Q: Were the stories that you talk of the doings of your sibling?

#45D: Yes, [my] sibling.

Q: Were you together?

#45D: [We] were not together. I was living at home.

Q: What did you brother get paid in the army? What was his salary?

00:15:11

#45D: The salary was collected from us people, from some families that owned large tracts of land. [My brother] was sent by [people that owned] eight *kang* [of land] or what is called acres here. These people must collectively pay the salary.

Q: Did the soldiers receive the salary?

#45D: Yes. The people must collectively pay while the Tibetan Government provided the bullets and guns. It was like that.

Q: What did your brother get paid?

#45D: Yes?

Q: How much money?

#45D: There was no money that [he] received. The salary collectively paid by the people was consumed there.

Q: Was it in the form of grains?

#45D: Yes?

Q: Was it grains that were given?

00:16:14

#45D: It was mainly grains that were given. However, it must be converted into money because [he] cannot carry grains there. [He] had to take money there.

Q: How much grain was given?

#45D: Grains must be cheap then. [I] do not know about it. [He] would eat like everyone does there. [He] took the salary paid by the people.

Q: Was it money that was given?

#45D: The landowners or taxpayers, those that owned eight acres paid [him]. In India it is called acre but in Tibet we called it *kang*. One that owned eight *kang* was taxed to send a soldier [to the army] and at times even [owners of] four *kang*. There were many regiments in the Tibetan Government Army.

Q: Your brother didn't actually receive any salary, what we would call a salary, a payment, money?

#45D: The people collectively paid money.

Q: Did they?

#45D: They did.

Q: Around how much?

00:17:33

#45D: [I] do not know how much it was. There was the *genpo* of the people that is called a leader here in India. We called [him] a *genpo*. The *genpo* collected and paid.

Q: This sounds very informal, yeah? The Tibetan Government never actually gave a salary to army members?

#45D: The Tibetan Government did not pay; we, the people must pay. Besides the guns and bullets, there was nothing else from the government. One was a soldier in name.

Q: Can we just make sure that *pa-la* is talking about the Tibetan Government Army and not some kind of volunteer force?

#45D: [My brother] was a soldier of the Tibetan Government.

Q: Tell me a little bit about what your family did for your livelihood, livelihood of your family and background?

00:18:47

#45D: We worked in the fields.

Q: What did you farm?

#45D: [Speaks before question is interpreted] [We] must serve the tax duties of the Tibetan Government. We performed *wulak* ‘labor tax.’ There was no salary for *wulak*. There was no salary whether it was for Tashi Lhunpo [Monastery] or the Tibetan Government. You must take food from home when you went to work. I was the third son in the family. I did not have any education and went to work in the fields everyday. If there was *wulak* from the government, [I] went to perform it.

Q: Does *wulak* mean working for other people?

#45D: Yes, [it means] going to do any kind of work for the government.

Q: What kind of work did you do?

00:19:52

#45D: If the work concerned Tashi Lhunpo [Monastery], then one must work for Tashi Lhunpo and if it was the Tibetan Government, there were duties for the government like keeping horses ready for the soldiers, and *khema*, meaning yaks or donkeys to transport their stuff to the designated places. One must send them [to the designated place].

Q: You had to go around with Tibetan Government officials, is that right?

#45D: Yes?

Q: By *wulak* of keeping horses ready, did you have to go with the government officials?

#45D: One must go with them from one place to the other, like from here to Pathankot [India]. Such places were there in Tibet. Every district had their respective designated areas. One escorted [soldiers/officials] from Phari to Gyangtse and then returned, and from Gyangtse, it was carried on by the [people] of Gyangtse.

Q: These government officials, what kind of people were they? What were they doing?

00:21:29

#45D: They were people like us but with authority. Since they had authority, [they] would chide if the horses were not good. There must be good yaks or donkeys if their belongings were heavy. Then you must escort them to wherever the designated place was and hand over the things saying, "The packages have not been broken or torn." You handed over to another taxpayer.

Q: How did they treat you?

#45D: Yes?

Q: Did [they] treat you well or badly?

#45D: [They] did not treat badly. It was our [duty] to keep good horses ready, in readiness for them to ride. They rode them while we led the horses. [They] got down at the designated place and [we] removed the saddles. Then [we] unloaded the packages and handed [them] over and came back riding our horses. There were [people] to take charge at every point.

Q: When it was decided that you were going to get married, how did that decision happen? Who made that decision?

00:23:25

#45D: It was your wish just like it is here.

Q: Depending upon [one's] wish?

#45D: Yes, it was according to your wish. If the boy and the girl liked each other, then the parents discussed. I came to Phari and [my] well-wishers spoke [introduced us]. I had come on business.

Q: How did you meet the woman who became your wife?

#45D: Yes?

Q: How did [you] meet?

#45D: I used to travel between Phari and Kalimpong [West Bengal] on trade. Other people talked as mediators and the girl's father said, "My daughter needs a partner. Could you be the one?" I would not agree because my relatives lived in Shigatse. So in the meantime my well-wishers and their well-wishers spoke among themselves and that is how it was done. All marriages happened like that.

Q: So it wasn't exactly your choice then. It sounds like it was the parents' choice.

[Interviewee's cell phone rings]

#45D: One would not agree if one did not like it.

Q: Was there a little liking?

00:25:54

#45D: One would say no [if there was no liking]. Other people urged and if one thought it was okay, one got married.

Q: So when you met her, what did you think?

#45D: What was there to think? It was the same for every boy and girl. One made the choice as per one's wish.

Q: How old were you?

#45D: [My] wife was 18 years old.

Q: Eighteen years?

#45D: Yes, there was a gap of 11 years between us. I was older.

Q: How many years' gap was there?

#45D: Eleven years.

Q: Eleven years' gap?

00:26:43

#45D: Yes. I am 86 now and my wife is 75.

Q: Eleven years younger?

#45D: Wife is 11 years younger.

Q: Wife is younger?

#45D: Yes, I am 11 years older.

Q: I see. When you were 18 years old, how old was she?

#45D: She was 18 years old when we married. I was twenty-something. [Counts] 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 [I] was around 28 years old.

Q: You were 28 and she was 18 years old?

#45D: Yes. There was a difference of 11 years.

Q: A difference of 11 years?

#45D: Yes.

Q: Eleven years or 10 years?

00:27:16

#45D: Eleven years, yes, 11. I was around 29 years old. [She] stayed back while I traveled to India and everywhere in Tibet.

Q: How old were you when you actually got married?

#45D: [I was] 29 years old while wife was 18.

Q: What business were you doing that time?

#45D: The business was taking *bhel* 'wool' from Tibet to India.

Q: What's *bhel*?

#45D: Sheep's *bhel*. What is it called in English? The Indians call it wool.

Q: So you were trading wool to India and getting what?

#45D: [Speaks before question is interpreted] We brought [wool] to India and took back *charil* 'round-shaped tea blocks.'

Q: Tea?

#45D: You would not know. It's tea that's round shaped.

Q: *Chabakchung* 'small rectangular-shaped tea blocks'?

#45D: Yes?

Q: Was it *chabakchung*?

#45D: It was not the *bakchung*. The *bakchung* came to Tibet from Dhartsedho. The *charil* came from India though it did originate from there [Dhartsedho]. It reached Kalimpong through the sea route. It is round-shaped tea and called *charil* and has the label of a flaming gem.

Q: Is the tea for drinking?

00:28:59

#45D: Yes, it was for drinking. It was used in the preparation of Tibetan tea. This sold well in Tibet.

Q: We don't know much about how men and women got married in Tibet and how that works. So it's something a little bit new. Can you tell us about the plans for your wedding and how that worked?

#45D: These days it is done in grand style here, as [people] have sufficient finances. However, long ago in Tibet when [the bride/bridegroom] came home, *doma* 'small wild sweet potato' and *chemar* 'butter mixed with *tsampa* [flour made from roasted barley]' were prepared. Your well-wishers offered *khata* 'ceremonial scarves' and that was it.

Q: That was it?

#45D: There was a party for a day and that was the end.

Q: Only for one day?

#45D: Some did it for a day and some for 5-6 days and others for 10 days. It depended upon the family's financial status.

Q: How many days did you do?

#45D: Yes? Ours must have been for a day or two. Then one must go to trade. Here [people] party for many days.

Q: Were you given any advice about what to expect in married life?

00:31:00

#45D: Yes? There were no such things.

Q: There were none?

#45D: No.

Q: Did you have any experience with women at all?

#45D: [Speaks before question is interpreted] There were no [cameras] to take photographs then. Your well-wishers offered *khata*.

Q: Were *khata* exchanged?

#45D: [The well-wishers] garlanded both the boy and the girl with *khata*. That was it. Like it is done here, *mendel thendho* [symbol of offering to one's spiritual master, in which one visualizes offering the entire universe and its precious contents] was offered to the altar. There was the altar that held the images of the Buddha.

One wore whatever jewelry one possessed. In Tibet one wore a golden earring [touches left ear].

Q: Golden earring?

#45D: Yes?

Q: Golden earring?

#45D: Yes, one wore a golden earring, earrings weighing five *tola* [one *tola* is equivalent to 10 grams] or eight *tola*.

Q: Were you nervous on your wedding day or excited or how did you feel?

00:32:12

#45D: There was no excitement. [Laughs]

Q: It was nothing, really?

#45D: [Speaks before question is interpreted] There was no need for me to be excited because I was quite old, around 28 or 29. I never indulged in any kind of activities like other people. [I] never indulged in any kind of activities while in Kalimpong, Shigatse or Gyantse. When the Phari traders went to roam in Kalimpong, [I would say], "You have a wife at home. I shall report to [her] when we reach home. This is not right." I never let my colleagues stray. I never liked such things right from the beginning.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: What other business is that?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Fooling around.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Fooling around with his wife, you mean?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: With other people, I think.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Like adultery, he's talking about?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: And maybe prostitutes.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: I see. I see. Okay.

Q: So then you shifted to Phari. You moved to Phari and did you move in with her family, like what was your new set up?

00:33:53

#45D: [I] lived with [my] wife's family. After I came to their house, I must take responsibility of the home, whether it was going to Kalimpong in India or Shigatse and Gyantse in Tibet. I traveled while my wife and father-in-law stayed home and sold the wares.

Q: Did you have good relations with your in-laws?

#45D: [I] knew them and was cordial.

Q: Did you have good relations?

#45D: Because there were [good] relations, they had hoped for me by saying, "My daughter needs a partner. Would you please come?" However, I did not agree at once because I had numerous relatives in Shigatse. There was the property of my parents to which I had rights. I had no such thoughts [of settling in Phari] and was travelling on business. Later, their neighbors and my well-wishers mediated, "They are a good family with no debts. They own money and you too have money. Do not reject [this proposal]." Saying this [they] took me to them.

Q: Did the age difference create any kind of problem between you and your wife?

00:35:50

#45D: There was no problem. We have never fought at anytime. There are some people that beat their wives. I have never done that. [My] wife too has never quarreled with me. When I returned home after having been on trade or anywhere, [she] served tea and there was never any trouble. Some people do not get along and fight a lot. We have never fought.

Q: What kind of qualities did you think were important in a wife?

#45D: Yes?

Q: What are the qualities important in a wife? Like the wife's character, what's important?

#45D: These days [some] wives never get along with the husbands. Such things happen today as it used to happen in Tibet long ago. Husbands get drunk and the wives fight and beat. I have never done such things.

Q: When you looked for a wife, what are the qualities that are required in a good wife?

#45D: She did the household chores and minded the shop that they owned. Her father also traded. When I returned after [my] trips to Shigatse, Gyangtse or anywhere, the money they had made [from the shop] was exchanged into Indian *rupees*, which I took to Kalimpong to purchase goods. The goods were partly sent to Shigatse and Gyangtse and a part was left in the shop [in Phari]. They [father-in-law and wife] knew the price [of the goods] that I had instructed them.

Q: What was considered a good wife and a bad wife in Tibet? What, according to you is the quality that separates them? What's a good wife like?

00:38:07

#45D: A wife must be good-natured and hail from a fine background. There are some that are really bad who fight, go around with other men and do various things. Even in the case of husbands, there are some bad men that are thoughtless and speak to every woman. They seek women during trips to Kalimpong in India and return home like nothing has happened. This will not result in a good home. If you indulge in various kinds of activities, things will not go well in the home; there will be much sickness and a shorter life, right? If you remain loyal, you will have less sickness and a longer life. That is it.

Q: Was it easy to find other women in Kalimpong?

#45D: Of course, there were women. There were Tibetans and Indians, like [they] are found in Kolkata [West Bengal, India]. Bad men went with such [women].

Q: You mean a brothel?

#45D: Yes, that is right. I never let my colleagues go, "Do not ever go. You brought the money from your home and wandering around with women and gambling is not right." I say such all the time.

Q: Did you not drink alcohol either?

00:40:12

#45D: When I was young [I] had to accompany the muleteers on the back and forth journey to Kalimpong since goods were loaded on the mules. The weather was cold and they [the muleteers] used to drink, so [I] drank a little alcohol.

After arriving in India, I first worked as a road crew for 10 years. Later, in '70 a Kalachakra empowerment was given in Dharamsala and I came from Shimla to receive the Kalachakra. I returned to work as a coolie and then took leave and settled in Dharamsala. There was no work in Dharamsala. Dharamsala then was not like what it is now. There was nothing but a few small houses. I lived in a tent a little further away. There was absolutely nothing. Then [I] took some loan and went to sell sweaters. I went to Kolkata for a year to sell sweaters but Kolkata was a dirty place. So I went to Bangalore [Karnataka] in '71.

Q: Bangalore?

#45D: Yes. [I] was 25-26 years in Bangalore.

Q: How many years were [you] in Bangalore?

#45D: Around 25 years.

Q: For 25 years?

#45D: Yes.

Q: Where in Bangalore?

00:41:28

#45D: Bangalore. Bangalore in Karnataka.

Q: I know Bangalore, but where in Bangalore. I've lived in Bangalore.

#45D: It was a *chattar* 'guest house' in Majestic near the railway station. It is called *chattar* in Kannada while in the north it is called *dharmashala*. It was a *dharmashala*, a huge building. He [the owner] had occupied a huge area.

Q: You were living with your wife and going back and forth to Kalimpong doing this trading and so then what was your first experience with the Chinese in Tibet?

#45D: When we got married, there were no Chinese, none at all. There was no talk about Chinese. Later, after [I] had come to Phari...the Chinese initially appeared in Chamdo. In the past whenever we went to India there were no questions asked. The Indian police did not say anything. There was no trouble at all.

One day we were traveling through Nathang in Sikkim where there was a police station. We were many people. While we were drinking tea at a host family, we were told to come to the police station at the place called Nathang. There were many people and I was the first to be called in. "What is your name," [I] was asked. "My name is Wangdu," I replied. "What is [your] father's name? "It is Tsering." They immediately wrote it down. Then it was another person's turn.

I told them [traders], "It would not be good if you do not speak well. We have been travelling to Kalimpong for so many years and never faced any trouble on Indian territory. However, today we are being registered in the police station and that is not good." When they were asked, "What is your name?" the reply was, "My name is *zaru* 'ladle.'" *Zaru* is used to pour noodle soup and is called *tsekyo* here. Such a name was mentioned. They [the police] would write it down as *zaru*, the ladle for noodle soup and vegetable.

Q: Was it said for fun?

00:44:28

#45D: [The traders] said it for fun but they [the police] wrote it down instantly. If someone's name was Dawa, instead of Dawa [he] said *lokomomo* 'steamed bread.' *Lokomomo* is something like *tingmo* 'steamed bread.' Such was said. I told [them], "Do not say such things. You will face trouble later." Then we went to Kalimpong and back to Phari. During the journey near Podhong, a place near Kalimpong...

Q: Where?

#45D: A place called Podhong.

Q: Where is it?

#45D: It is a day's journey from Kalimpong. We arrived at the police station there. Again all the men were together. I was the first to be asked, "What is your name?" "My name is Wangdu." "What is [your] father's name?" "It is Tsering." It was written down at once and there was no problem. Another person was asked, "What is your name?" Instead of saying *zaru*, [he] said Nyima. Nyima was stopped. The next was asked, "What is your name?" [He] should have said that his name was Dawa in the beginning but he had said it was *lokomomo*.

Then they were put inside the station. [We] pleaded for [their] release saying that we were colleagues but were told, "Each person has only one name. [He] can travel anywhere or trade or do whatever [he] likes. These men with two names are those that murder and steal along the way." In the beginning our people were ignorant and such things happened.

00:47:41

People should not make mistakes right at the start and there will be no problems wherever you go. Some people are unaware. [I] was young while in Tibet but after coming to India, I tell everybody "Do not harm animals. If you harm or kill animals..." Our region came under Tashi Lhunpo [Monastery]. There was an estate and [people] were obliged to perform *wulak*. Numerous people had to work on this estate. There was no wages and one must take one's food [from home]. Well, food was nothing but *chang* 'home-brewed beer' and *pa* 'dough made from roasted barley flour and tea.' There was a family called Shangloma in the valley.

Q: What was the family's name?

#45D: Shangpa. Shangpa.

Q: Shangpa?

#45D: It was called Shangloma. There was one called Lhakpa and [the family] had many members. It was a wealthy family. There were *naa* 'blue sheep' in the region. Do you know the *naa*? There was [an animal] called *naa* in Tibet. It was similar to a goat, and big.

Q: *Naa*?

#45D: [It] was called *naa*. He [Lhakpa] used to carry a gun and kill *naa*. Later, he...one gets sick when one becomes old. When [he] became sick and everybody was working in the fields or grazing yaks and sheep, he felt terror one evening because of [his] sins. He screamed from home and when everybody ran in and asked what had happened [he] said, “Why do you go outside? This room is filled with *naa* and I am being butted by the *naa*.” Such was the terror [he] felt. I tell many people, “Do not harm animals. Such things will occur if [you] harm animals.” It is for certain that there will be [terror] after death if one commits a lot of sin.

Q: The police stopped you at Kalimpong and Sikkim. Were the police Indians?

00:49:42

#45: [They] were Indians.

Q: Were [they] Indians?

#45D: Yes, they were people of Sikkim, which is under the Indian Government. There were Bhutanese too that were Indian policemen.

Let me talk about Phari first.

Q: Okay.

#45D: The place called Phari is not vast. The weather was cold with a lot of snowfall. There was good trade in this place. In the small town of Phari there was a monastery called Dagthogang near the District Headquarter.

Q: What’s the name of the monastery?

#45D: Dagthogang. Then there was another monastery called Samdup Choling.

Q: What did [you] say the name was?

00:51:50

#45D: Samdup Choling.

Q: Samdup Choling?

#45D: Yes. Further away was Gonpa Waa.

Q: Gonpa Waa?

#45D: Yes. Then Gonpa Ghong. Such [monasteries] were present.

Q: There were many monasteries, right?

#45D: Yes. Then further away was Richung Putho. There were these monasteries. Business was excellent at this place. People arrived from various places, like from Kalimpong in India and the Bhutanese. Food was aplenty in Phari. If one wanted to work, there were good jobs available and if one had finance, one could trade. Such was the place.

Q: The currency that you were using then, were you using different kinds of currency or were you just using Tibetan currency?

00:54:05

#45D: All kinds of currencies were used in Phari.

Q: All kinds were used?

#45D: Indian *rupees* were used...at that time India was under the British. Indian *rupees* were used and Tibetan currencies were used. Much later when the Chinese arrived, the Chinese *dhayen* was valid. They called the *dhayen* “*renminbi*.” This was used. All our Tibetan currencies became invalid. One possessed stocks of 100 unit notes of Tibetan currency. Later, after the riots in Tibet and after His Holiness the Dalai Lama had escaped to India, they [the Chinese] said that Tibetan money was no longer valid. I lost my stock of Tibetan currencies, but I [felt no loss] because His Holiness had left for India and much more than the loss of Tibetan currencies, Tibet was lost. [I] felt no anxiety. I had a little sum then. [Laughs]

Q: When you say that the Chinese did not allow any Tibetan money, what happened to that money?

#45D: All the money was taken away.

Q: Was taken away?

#45D: [The Chinese] took away everything. [It was ordered] that all families bring out whatever money owned.

Q: Was it reimbursed?

#45D: Yes?

Q: Was it reimbursed?

00:55:37

#45D: A little was given because there was the Tibetan *tamka karmo* [metal coins] and smaller notes that were compensated. The 100 unit notes were never reimbursed.

Q: One-hundred unit notes were not reimbursed.

#45D: Yes, alleging that these were rebel money. [The Chinese] were lying. They could say whatever [they] liked.

Q: So the people who had larger denominations and had more money, did they then try to exchange with different currencies with people from...like Bhutanese money or Nepali money or...to try and get some value back from it?

#45D: Those that were knowledgeable and educated had not kept much of Tibetan currencies. They had purchased goods or exchanged into Indian *rupees*. We people who had no education hoarded money and finally the currencies became invalid. That was it. I never felt any anxiety. His Holiness the Dalai Lama had left for India and I had no thought but of leaving.

Q: What made you decide...what was the decision...what led up to the decision to leave Tibet? What were the factors that led into that decision to leave?

#45D: Yes?

Q: [You] left Tibet to come to India...

00:58:08

#45D: The reason is like this. All those people in Tibet with education and money were being captured by them [the Chinese]. We were humble people. However, [the Chinese] would create trouble [for me too] in relation to my status. Nothing good was going to come about. I had only the thought of escape, and no thought of remaining in Tibet. [I] went to Shigatse and met all the relatives, then returned [to Phari], took my children...

Q: The wife?

#45D: [I] brought [my] wife along. [We] came away like that. We dared not tell others, as [we] might be captured. So, [we] came away silently carrying the children. The two children...

Q: How many children were there?

#45D: There were two children, two sons. [My] wife did not have much experience as [she] used to stay home. I had undergone a lot of hardships. [Her] late father had made fine clothes for her. I packed [them] in a big sack and carried it. [My] wife carried the two children and [we] left slowly in the dark. A little away from Richung Putho was a route that led to Timola [a mountain pass] towards Bhutan, and another route. I deduced that taking this route would mean certain capture because there were Tibetans that were working for the Chinese and Chinese workers as well. So we went directly towards the mountain behind Richung Potho. As [we] neared the Richung Putho Monastery, the older child that was carried on the back started to cry. Immediately the Chinese emerged from Richung Potho Monastery in the night. Flashlights shone brightly and dogs started barking.

00:59:54

I unloaded the sack at a turn of the mountain, took down the children and carried them myself. [I] had a bag in which [I] put the little money and let [my] wife carry it [indicates on the back]. Fearing [she] might drop it I tied a tight knot. [My] wife had never been on a mountain and [I] feared she might fall. [She] used to stay home while I was accustomed to traveling everywhere. [We] scaled the mountain. When [we] reached the top of the mountain, dawn was just breaking. One could see Phari from there, as it was close.

Q: Where could [you] see?

#45D: Phari could be seen. There were two routes on which people were walking. [My] wife was scared and said, “They must have come to capture us.” “Nobody will capture us. People will not come on this route,” [I] said. A little further up under a rock, I lowered the children and let [them] suckle while I went to take a look among the rocks. Chinese used to be on the mountains looking for people. They were...[not discernible]

[We] took a good rest and breastfed the children well. And then crossed over the mountain pass of Bhutan. It was close by. After crossing over the Bhutanese pass, someone [I] knew arrived there. I used to sell him sugar and tealeaves and he paid me punctually. [I] met him there and [he] said, “Why did you not come until now? What were you doing? All others have left.” I was a little late. He gave [us] food and then [we] left for Bhutan.

01:03:44

[To interpreter] Stop there, I will tell [you] about Phari. Long ago when the Chinese advanced from there initially, His Holiness the Dalai Lama went to Dromo from Lhasa.

Q: Where?

#45D: Dromo.

Q: Dromo?

#45D: There was a monastery called Dromo Dhongka Gonpa.

Q: Dromo Dhongkhar?

#45D: Dhongka Gonpa. The Tibetan Government aristocrats invited His Holiness there. [His Holiness] lived a year in Dhongka Gonpa in Dromo. A year later...the Tibetan Government aristocrats could do as they wished and saying that some agreement had been reached, escorted His Holiness back to Lhasa from Dromo. I was there then. I was into trading then and was most fortunate in Phari. [His Holiness] was to be escorted from Phari to Gyantse. We were young traders there. The government [officials] of Phari called all the young men to [escort His Holiness] to Gyantse. My acquaintance that was a year older to me and passed away in Kalimpong was the *genpo* ‘headman.’

01:05:07

He said, “Wangdu-*la*, it would be good for you to take part in the escort.” I had lived in Shigatse and had handled horses. The preparation was done at the official building called Chukangsha in Phari. The *chipthang* ‘horses’ were kept at the old residence in lower Phari. Do you know *chipthang*?

Q: No.

#45D: [They are] the *chikpa* ‘horses’ to escort His Holiness the Dalai Lama. They were kept there. The *chenmo-la* ‘expert’ was present then; he passed away in Dharamsala. There was Kungo ‘Government Official’ Tsecha who was similar to Kungo...[not discernible] of now. [He] was similar to Kungo...who is called Secretary. There was one called Kungo Tsecha then.

There were four containers of His Holiness’ attire. In Tibet the carpenters made what is called *pheshang*. There were four chests covered with white leather on the outside and made of wood inside that could be closed like the metal boxes here. [They] were like suitcases. There were exquisite ones. His Holiness had four chests containing attire. I was very strong then. I carried the four chests one at a time on my shoulder. Kungo Tsecha said, “You are very fortunate. Do you not feel exhausted?” “[I] am not exhausted.” He patted [me] and said, “[You] are very fortunate. These contain the attire of His Holiness. Nobody can touch the attire of His Holiness in Lhasa.”

01:06:42

[I] carried them to the old residence where the *chipthang* were and handed them over to the *chipon-la* ‘headman of horse keepers.’ There were two *chipday*. There were two large *chipday*. *Chipday* means mules. The Indians call it ...[not discernible]. *Chipday* is the honorific term used in Tibet. There were two large *chipday*. [The chests] must be loaded on them. It must be done by the *chipon-la*. Even if we could [we] were not allowed to. [The chests] were handed to the *chipon-la*.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama came on horseback. The horses [he] rode must be handed over to the *chipon-la* after informing the Kungo Tsecha. [His Holiness] left for Dhuena from Phari, and from Dhuena to Kala, from Kala to Zewu Gonpa, from Zewu Gonpa to Khangmar, from Khangmar to [a place] called Nenyi and from Nenyi to Gyantse. When His Holiness got down from the horse, we removed the saddle and wrapped it in yellow Tibetan *nambu* ‘machine-made woolen cloth’ and you could carry it whichever way you liked [indicates carrying on right shoulder] and handed over to the *chipon-la*. Kungo Tsecha had told me, “You are very fortunate.” Whatever the load, I could carry it at that time. Kungo Tsecha passed away in Dharamsala. Kungo told [me] like that.

Q: Were there no horses to transport the things?

#45D: [The things] must be taken from place to place. At present His Holiness’ residence is the palace. Preparations must be made to escort [His Holiness] to the Tsuglakhang [Main Temple in Dharamsala, India] or elsewhere. Things must be taken from here to there. There were horses to carry stuff. There were many horses. There were official horses. Each

man led two horses. His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the aristocrats rode horses during travels. [The entourage] went from Phari to Dhuena in a day and from Dhuena to Kala, from Kala to Zewu Gonpa, from Zewu Gonpa to Khangmar and...

Q: Where was the Dromo Dhongkhar Gonpa?

01:09:05

#45D: Dromo Dhongkhar Gonpa...

Q: Where was it?

#45D: Right in Dromo.

Q: In Dromo.

#45D: In Dromo. First it is Phari and then comes Dromo. The Dhongkhar Gonpa was located in upper Dromo. There was the lower Dromo. Tibetan Government soldiers lived at the border at lower Dromo. Then there was Dromo Jemar, Rinchen...[not discernible] that were parts of lower Dromo.

Q: Where's Dromo?

#45D: It is near the Indian border.

Q: Around how old were you then?

#45D: I was around 26 years old then, maybe 26 or 27, I am not certain.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: When you said "he" you're talking about *pa-la* now?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So he was just talking about this incident?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Completely different incident?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He likes to share.

#45D: Then it was Gyangtse District. After coming to Gyangtse District from Phari District, the preparations were made by the Gyangtse District. From there it was their...

Q: Were you together [with the entourage] from Phari until Gyangtse?

#45D: Yes.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Oh, you're talking about when His Holiness visited Gyantse at that time?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. What do you remember about that visit of His Holiness to India at that time? What else do you remember?

#45D: Yes? When [His Holiness] left for India I was at Kalimpong then. The Tibetans call it Washington [radio?]. "There is been turmoil in Lhasa and the whereabouts of His Holiness are unknown." Nobody knew where [His Holiness] had gone. Everybody in Gangtok and Kalimpong started to cry. [People] were completely shocked and thought, "Alas."

Then I went to Kalimpong from Gangtok. Kalimpong was a vast place and [I] was there for 12 days. You did not own a radio then. You could not find one like now. There were rickety radios in some Indian shops to which everybody sat glued. One day around 3 o'clock in the evening after 12 days, it was announced that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had arrived in Shillong. Everybody was ecstatic and started crying. Once in Shillong [His Holiness] was in Indian territory. Everybody was ecstatic. I learned of it after staying 12 days in Kalimpong.

01:13:08

People of Kalimpong left for Delhi. My landlord was a very good man and knowledgeable and [he] told me, "Do not purchase goods now. Wait for a few days." [He] was called Wangdu-la. Once they [people of Kalimpong] arrived in Delhi, they forced themselves into the presence of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru [Prime Minister of India] despite the police. They spoke good Hindi having lived in India since a long time back. They prostrated before Pandit Jawaharlal and cried, "Our Tibet is suffering. You are not helping us." Pandit Jawaharlal said, "Do not worry. The Dalai Lama has arrived in India. I will take care of everything. Go back." All those from Kalimpong and Darjeeling returned. When told not to worry and that everything would be taken care of, they returned.

"Buy a few things and go back to Phari," [I] was told. I bought a few goods and returned. Phari was a small place and there was no trouble. The Chinese had arrived at the District Headquarter of Phari where a Chinese flag was flying with a few Chinese around. [I] would not know the [exact] number. I sold the goods in Phari and left again for Kalimpong. Goods were cheap in Kalimpong and Indian goods sold well in Tibet. There were no other traders in the meantime. I went directly to Shigatse, sold everything and came back.

When [I] came to Kalimpong in two or three months—there were numerous Khampa 'people of Kham province' in Phari that had wives hailing from Phari, Dromo and Khambu. Unlike these days, [I] did not know whether they hailed from Tiwu, Markham or such. The Khampa spoke like they were natives of the region [Phari]. There were numerous Amdo in Phari—I met all of those [men] of [my] region in Kalimpong. They were able to escape soon after the attack in Dhuwazong and His Holiness the Dalai Lama's flight. However, all the wives were left behind in Phari. I delivered letters to all of them

that said, “[Your] husband has reached Kalimpong. [He] is fine.” Naturally all of them fled to India at the earliest.

Q: Had all the men managed to reach India?

#45D: Most of them men...

Q: The wives were left behind?

#45D: Yes, left behind while the men, after the turmoil in Lhasa—we would not know how much they had fought—had gone there [Dhuwazong?] and arrived after His Holiness was escorted [to India].

[Interpreter to interviewer]: So first of all to clarify, that time the thing he did [carrying the chests of His Holiness from Phari to Gyangtse], he was 26 years old. He was married when he was 29, so it was way back.

It was not when His Holiness was coming down to India. This was long time back...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Because His Holiness came twice. Once when His Holiness was...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: This was not that.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: It was not that time?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: The aristocrats wanted...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: He was just visiting Gyangtse.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Visiting, yeah and he stayed for one year and when he was going back, it was that and not towards India.

01:16:29-01:17:56

[Interpreter interprets interviewee’s story]

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Letters?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: From the husbands to the wives. Wives were stuck in Phari.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Okay. Why were the wives still in Phari?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: They were stuck apparently.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: What does that mean ‘they got stuck in Phari’?

01:18:13

#45D: They [the men from Kham] came to trade and then took wives in Phari and settled there. [They] were traders.

Q: Did [they] come to trade and stay back in India?

#45D: Not in India but lived in Phari. They settled there and became Phariwa ‘natives of Phari.’

Q: You said earlier that the wives were left behind in Phari.

#45D: The reason the wives were left behind was because they [the men from Kham] had joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force], the Khampa Force that was organized by Andrug Gonpo Tashi. They were Khampa and had to join along with guns if they possessed such. All the wives were living at home. When they arrived in India after the uprising in Lhasa, all the wives were left behind in Tibet, in Phari.

I delivered all the letters and told [them], “[Your husband] is fine. [I] met [him] in Kalimpong.” I do not know how to write. So [I] told them to write and delivered the letters. [I] was able [to help] many people escape in that way. Other people told me, “If you fall into Chinese hands, you will be skinned.” The Chinese did not let people leave. They stopped people from fleeing and captured [them].

01:19:22

There was *koyang*. *Koyang* meant capturing all those people that were fleeing. After I returned home from Shigatse I was told, “You have to come on *koyang* [duty] today.” One was obliged to attend *koyang*. *Koyang* meant going around in the night. When we went out and saw people fleeing, I immediately told the others, “Come back. Do not go outside. They [the people fleeing] must be scared. Keep silent.” After [they] had gone [we] emerged and pretended to sit outside.

Q: So the wives in Phari, did they not also have plans to try to come to India?

#45D: [The wives] did not know the route. The husbands had left for Lhasa and there was no way of knowing whether [they] were killed or captured and imprisoned by the Chinese. I saw that they [husbands] had reached India. [We] talked and drank *chang* and tea together. [They] requested me to try and bring the wives out. I told [them], “There is nothing [I] can do. I too have a wife and children. You can write letters that I can deliver.” That is how [I] managed to [help them] flee. The officials knew everything and said, “After Wangdu-*la* arrived, [he] went here and [he] went there.” They had written everything down.

Q: This is quite a dangerous thing to do, actually because you are carrying information from, you know, people who the Chinese considered counter revolutionaries back into Tibet. Were you worried about your security at all doing this kind of...carrying letters?

01:22:38

#45D: Even though it was dangerous [they] were our people and one must help one's people. I was a trader and moving about. I handed letters to wives saying, "[Your] husband has reached Kalimpong. [He] is fine. So make plans accordingly." They fled the next day since Bhutan was close by. I had fear but it was not possible not to do it because [they] were all acquaintances. [Laughs]

Q: Did you never face any problem then?

#45D: [I] did not face any problem. I delivered all the letters into the hands of the respective wives at [their] homes. [My] wife and late father-in-law were not aware of it. I delivered [the letters] that were stitched within my clothes secretly. I had sewn them in a... [not discernible] of the World War II. [The letters] were sewn in the *chupa* and then I handed them over. Those people have passed away in Kalimpong, here [Dharamsala] and Bylakuppe [south India].

[Interviewer to interpreter]: He already told about coming out, didn't he with his wife earlier, because he backtracked? Earlier he talked about coming out with his two sons.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah, yeah.

Q: But I'm curious but what happened to the brother who was in the Tibetan Army? What happened to him?

#45D: After the battle was lost, he returned to Shigatse from Chamdo. [He] was able to reach home by begging along the way back. After reaching back, others made [him] clothes for the summer...

Q: Was it at Shigatse?

#45D: [It] was Shigatse. [He] was provided with both summer and winter clothing and grains. He did not live at home with the oldest brother. There was [a place] called Tashi Gyaltzen in Shigatse. It is quite a large town located in front of Tashi Lhunpo [Monastery]. He went as a *makpa* 'son-in-law' to a family there. After going there as a *makpa*—he has passed away now—passed away at the age of eighty-something. [He] was a good man and a year older to me. He was well educated, knew Tibetan and could watch out for hailstorms, but was obliged to join the army.

Q: The wives who you were delivering letters to from the *Chushi Gangdrug*, were they also writing letters that you were then taking back to Kalimpong?

01:26:23

#45D: The wives did not write letters but they escaped leaving the homes.

Q: Did they escape after receiving the letters?

#45D: After receiving the letters they knew their husbands had reached Kalimpong. They would comprehend, take whatever money [they] had and leave. It was immediate. If I reached today, they were gone by the next or the following day. [They] left one by one and not all together.

Q: Thank you so much for talking to us. It's really interesting; your story's so interesting. Thank you.

#45D: Thank you. [I] have something to say. When we came to India through Bhutan...

Q: Sixty something?

#45D: ...came through Bhutan in '59 after His Holiness the Dalai Lama left. We escaped that very year and there were over 800 people that came through Bhutan. There were around 860 people.

Q: Eight hundred and sixty?

01:27:35

#45D: Yes. The Bhutanese stopped all of us for over a year. [We] were stranded there.

Q: Why were [you] stopped?

#45D: "Live in Bhutan," they said because they needed coolies to construct roads. We refused to go. There was a man who was a year older to me. He passed away in Kalimpong and was very good in Tibetan writing. We requested that we wanted to go to India but were stopped. One day a Bhutanese called Silon 'Minister' Hadompa called us for a meeting. He had been to Lhasa many times earlier, "Instead of going to construct roads, you young men are here." They needed coolies to construct roads but we refused to go. The Bhutanese *silon* called Hadompa said, "What has the Dalai Lama to give except placing his empty hands on [your] head?"

Q: What's the name?

#45D: Hadompa.

Q: Hadompa?

#45D: Yes, a Bhutanese *silon*. The king was the father of the boy that got married last year. The king was extremely good. We argued, got up and left the meeting saying, "No wonder you are a *lalo* 'barbarian.'" The women cried. We fought and left immediately. He was helpless as there were many people and [he] could not beat [us]. He had two or three servants with him, the Bhutanese minister.

And then we came to Buxar [West Bengal, India]. There were Tibetan Government aristocrats in Buxar like Kungo Tsecha and then there was Thupten Woesser. There were food rations from the Indian Government. We reached Buxar in the evening and each set

up makeshift tents. The next day everyone was called to the office. The interpreter called *Agu-la* was from Phari. He made a list and [we] were provided food rations. We were stopped there for a few months and the place was scorching.

Q: How many months in Buxar?

#45D: Buxar.

Q: How many months?

01:29:59

#45D: [We] might have been stopped for 6-7 months. There were fine food rations then like milk powder that had come from foreign countries with a picture of a handshake and letterings. [They] must be American things. There was excellent milk powder and tinned meat. The wheat flour, whether from India or foreign countries was of superior quality. Then there was bulgur that we were given. We received the provisions and one day an Indian leader arrived. There was an interpreter and he asked for our suggestions. "We do not have any other suggestions. This place is very hot and we are ashamed to eat food rations. This is not good. We want to work and eat our food. Please send us to a cooler place." He at once said, "Okay."

Q: Was it an Indian woman that arrived?

#45D: Yes?

Q: Who was the Indian? A woman?

#45D: An Indian leader. We had just arrived from Tibet and did not know who [he] was. He said, "I shall implement what you have told me today." When we requested that we wanted to work and fend for ourselves, [he] said, "[You] will be sent to Himachal [Pradesh]." We enquired, "What is Himachal?" There was an interpreter. "It is a place where there is snowfall. [You] will be sent to Simla." "That is good," [we] replied.

01:31:16

Then [we] went to Simla. [The place] was 150 miles further away from Simla. The Indians call it Kinnor while the Tibetans call it Khunu. There were absolutely no roads. Rocks stood like this [raises both hands] on the mountains. [We] constructed roads for 10 years.

Q: Ten years.

#45D: Yes, working on road construction, making roads along with Indian troops. We were 17 groups with 17 leaders.

Q: Seventeen.

#45D: I was not educated and said that I did not want to be a group leader but was asked to do so. I did it. I was in Group Number 7. Having been to Kalimpong earlier, I wished the

Indians *namaste* ‘greetings’ [in Hindi] and the Indian overseers liked it. There was a cross mark; if one did not work, a cross mark was written immediately. I have never had a cross mark in the course of the 10 years. There were 4-5 old people in my group that were not capable of working. They wore *chupa* and sat there. I gave them each a spade and told them not to use them on the ground [but] “You should not be sitting on the ground when the Indian leaders come around.”

01:32:46

We had able-bodied men that worked hard. There were many nomads and [I] told them, “If you do not know how to work, watch the others.” So for 10 years we were in Simla. The mountains were like this [raises both hands] and there were no machines. There were crowbars of this length [gestures off camera] and also blacksmiths. One person held the crowbar while two men hammered and pierced a hole in the rock.

Dynamite called *zorong* were used. Fifteen to 20 were blasted at the same time. The Indians did not know how to do it. [They] filled the hole with dynamite and covered it with some soil. However, we covered it well with mud and patted it. When [the dynamite] was lit, all the group members fled. Slabs of rock were cut off. Later we made roads where buses could ply. [Presently] those people live in Bylakuppe and Orissa. I took leave long back in ’70.

The *kungo* then was a very good official and he, Jampa Yeshe, passed away in Bylakuppe. “You have children,” being from Lhasa, he spoke in honorific terms. Children are called *puku* usually [but] he said, “You have *awa* ‘honorific term for children.’ You should go to a settlement.” I went to observe a settlement. The settlers had harvested corn and were setting [the fields] afire.

Q: Which settlement?

01:34:31

#45D: The settlement in Bylakuppe. Setting fire after harvesting corn meant that all the insects would be burned. I was terrified. I did not want to make a living by killing all the insects. If one lived in the city and traded, there was no fear of going without food. So I lived in Dharamsala.

Q: [You] arrived in Dharamsala?

#45D: [I] lived in Bangalore doing some business. [I] did not face any problems until now nor did [I] suffer from any serious illnesses.

Q: *Pa-la*, just a couple of very short questions I wanted to ask you about the letters. Going back to the letters you were delivering from the *Chushi Gangdrug* to the wives, when you delivered these letters to any of the wives, did any of them ever read the letters out loud to you?

#45D: [They] did not tell me. I handed over their letters to them and walked away at once. If [I] stayed long at their houses, those [Tibetans] that worked for the Chinese could arrive.

I must think about myself as well. It was like that.

Q: But I can imagine the wives are probably very appreciative, yeah, to receive these letters. They...

01:39:27

#45D: [Interrupts] There was a wealthy family called Phari Serkhang. There was one called Apo [a form of address for a person from Kham] Chenga in their home. I do not know Apo Chenga's origin but [he] was like a native of Phari. We were very friendly. [I] met him in Kalimpong. He was good in Tibetan writing. [He told me], "You come to buy goods. Please try to find a way for [my wife] Ayi to come here." I told him, "The means would be for you to write a letter that I shall deliver. I am able to travel up and down at present."

[After reaching home,] I stored my goods in the warehouse known as *dhokhang* in Phari. The next morning without the knowledge of [my] late father-in-law and wife, I strolled across to the home of Ayi Nyima. At that time there was a person working for the Chinese who later passed away in Mundgod [in south India]. He was armed with a gun then and the Phari people were terrified.

Q: Was he a Tibetan?

#45D: [He] was a Tibetan. His name was Damdul-*la*. He had been sitting on a seat as I entered the home. I thought, "Now this is not good." But I had to be brave. [I] was told, "Wangdu-*la*, please come in." [I] went in. [The lady of the house asked,] "Do you have something to say?" "I have nothing to say. I just came on a stroll since [we] are acquaintances and I am friendly with Apo." Tea was served. I sat next to the man. He sat here, I sat here [points to two places] and Ayi sat there. [I] had [my] fill of tea and sat talking inane stuff. After sometime the man said that he was leaving. [He] could not prolong his stay much. [I] said, "Farewell" and joined my palms.

01:41:10

After he left I told Ayi, "You were asking me earlier what [I] had to say. [I] have nothing to say. We are well acquainted and cordial. [I] met Apo in Kalimpong. [He] is not suffering from any illness and is fine." I removed the letter from my pouch at once and gave it. They had a relative who presently lives in Kalimpong. He is well educated. I was not literate. "Apo has written it. Read the letter." I left immediately. Ayi was there the next day but had escaped by the following day. [Laughs] They [people working for the Chinese] would note it down that [Ayi] left after Wangdu arrived. [I] heard the man, Apo Chenga passed away in Bylakuppe.

The man called Damdu-*la* passed away in Mundgod and there was another person in the same group. The Chinese might have awarded [them] titles. [They] were armed with a gun each and the people of Phari were terrified. There was one called Chonphel who [I] heard was someone great but I was not scared of him. [I] spoke sweetly, smiled and was genial. Numerous people of Phari were fleeing. One day I took a walk and he strode there. I guessed [he] was there to create trouble to someone. [I] looked at his face. [He] said, "Acho

[form of address for a person from Utsang] Wangdu-*la*, Acho Wangdul-*la*, please come here.” [I] sidled up towards a wall. “I have something to tell you, Acho Wangdu-*la*. It is not going to be good for you. Please be careful and do not go back and forth to Kalimpong. Do your work and not that of others.” I said, “I do not even know the alphabet. So how can I be working for others?” “I am being very honest. Please, you have to be careful,” he said.

01:42:54

I went to Shigatse, purchased some knick-knacks and left immediately. After arriving in Bhutan [I] was told, “Acho Wangdu-*la*, you must have earned a lot of merit in the past life. [I] believed you would be in a Chinese prison and never thought that you were among the [free] people,” a lady said. Her child was an official of the Chinese. He expired in Bylakuppe. It was what the gods had in store for me. On my part, I was honest with my thoughts. One must help one’s people in any capacity. That is it.

Provisions for the *Chushi Gangdrug* used to be sent from Kalimpong by one called Markham Apo Topgyal-*la*. Apo Lo Tsering dispatched [the provisions] from Phari. Their daughter has arrived here. How many letters of theirs had I taken back and forth? [They] were our people, whether the Chinese became aware or not. I never used to attend meetings when called [by the Chinese]. And then gradually it got worse and worse and all the influential people in Shigatse were being captured. There was an aristocrat at Tashi Lhunpo [Monastery] called Chonjor Khangsar...

Q: Thank you so much. It was great to talk to you. Thank you very much, *pa-la*.

#45D: [Joins palms]

END OF INTERVIEW