

# **Tibet Oral History Project**

**Interview #67M – Pasang Tsering  
April 4, 2010**

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# TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #67M
2. Interviewee: Pasang Tsering
3. Age: 66
4. Date of Birth: 1944
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Dhopa, Porang
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1960
9. Date of Interview: April 4, 2010
10. Place of Interview: Kalachakra Hall, Camp No. 3, Doeguling Settlement, Mundgod, Karwar District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 2 hr 48 min
12. Interviewer: Rebecca Novick
13. Interpreter: Namgyal Tsering
14. Videographer: Ronny Novick
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

### **Biographical Information:**

Pasang Tsering's family engaged in farming as well as rearing animals. He talks about *ri-lung tsatsik* 'law of the environment' passed by the Tibetan government, which prohibited hunting of wild animals with the exception of rats and wolves. Domestic animals were killed for meat by a special caste of Tibetans and prayers were offered for the animals at the time of slaughter.

Pasang Tsering gives a glimpse of some of the festivals which were related to agriculture and he fondly remembers horse racing and target shooting. The important roles of the monks and *ngagpa* 'shamans' in the life of the community are outlined. He describes how religious idols prevented hailstorms from destroying crops and illnesses from infecting villagers. He also explains two different groups of taxpayers called *chueshi* and *shungpa*.

Pasang Tsering recalls when the Chinese first appearance in his village looking very poor and assisting the Tibetans. Later the army came in vehicles with propaganda films and a large photo of Mao Zedong. They imprisoned local leaders and forced them to do hard labor. Fearing that their eight sons would be recruited by the Chinese to fight the "Tibetan rebels," Pasang Tsering's family with made their escape.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Childhood memories, environment/wildlife, religious festivals, customs/traditions, taxes, shamans/healers, first appearance of Chinese, forced labor, escape experiences.

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## Interview #67M

**Interviewee: Pasang Tsering**

**Age: 66, Sex: Male**

**Interviewer: Rebecca Novick**

**Interview Date: April 4, 2010**

Question: Can you please tell us your name?

00:00:17

**Interviewee #67M: Pasang Tsering.**

Q: We just want to tell you a little bit about this project. Gyalwa Rinpoche 'His Holiness the Dalai Lama' asked us to record your experiences, so that we can share your memories with future generations of Tibetans. Your memories will help us to document the true history, the true culture and experience of the Tibetan people.

**#67M: [Nods]**

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

**#67M: I do not have any objection. This is the advice of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and I will tell you whatever I know. I am 66 years old now and whatever happened during this period, I will relate to you. I would not know what happened earlier to that. I will tell you whatever I have experienced.**

Q: Thank you very much.

00:01:51

**#67M: [Nods]**

Q: If you want to stop at anytime or take a break during the interview, please let us know.

**#67M: Okay.**

Q: If there's something that we ask that you'd rather not answer, just say, "I'd rather not answer that."

00:02:16

**#67M: Okay.**

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

**#67M: There will be no problem.**

Q: We are very honored to hear your story and to share it.

00:02:42

**#67M: [Nods] Okay.**

Q: *Pasang-la*, please take your time to answer the question and if you need some time to reflect, don't think you have to answer right away. We have plenty of time, so just take some time to think if you need to.

**#67M: Okay.**

Q: If there is anything that you wish to add that I don't ask, then feel free to do that also.

00:03:24

**#67M: Okay.**

Q: *Pasang-la*, what do you think about when you think of Tibet?

**#67M: I was 17 years old when I escaped from Tibet. Before the age of 17, I engaged in grazing the sheep and yaks along with my parents. Before the arrival of the Chinese and before the change occurred, Tibet was like this: all those people who were farmers, worked in their fields from the age of 12 or 13 and those of us engaged in rearing animals, tended our cattle.**

**I used to tend the sheep. A shepherd can tell you what he sees in the mountains. In the mountains of Tibet, there were different kinds of wild animals. There were *shawa* 'deer,' *gowa* 'Tibetan gazelle' and *tsoe* 'Tibetan antelope.' The trio was called *sha-go-tsoe*; the male of these species have antlers while the female do not. Among the species of *dong* 'wild yak,' *nyen* 'wild sheep' and *na* 'blue sheep,' both the male and the female are with horns. Then there were many animals with upper teeth like wolf, *tsalawa*, which is a kind of spotted animal, *chiwa* 'rat' and rabbit. There were many such varieties.**

00:05:01

**Though there were many [wild animals], the order of the Tibetan Government and His Holiness the Dalai Lama was such that wild animals could not be hunted. It was because of the *Ri-lung-tsatsik* 'Law of Environment' of the Tibetan Government that they could not be hunted. However, in a desperate situation, one could kill a few wolves which killed the sheep. This came under the law called *Chi-chang-gongphu* 'Excluding Rats and Wolves.' The Tibetan Government's law of *Ri-lung-tsatsik* contained the *Chi-chang-gongphu*. *Chi-chang* meant rats and wolves that one could kill in small numbers and this was not considered a serious crime. Killing other animals would bring you trouble from the Tibetan Government.**

**Later when the Chinese arrived, they indiscriminately killed the wild animals. Actually when I look at it, killing wild animals would result in more grass for our animals. However,**

due to the law of karma, the more the wild animals were hunted, the scantier the grass and rainfall. Grass did not become plentiful for our animals.

I worked as a shepherd when I was small and later when the Chinese arrived...I was older, about 17 when my parents said, "A terrible period has arisen. The whole of Tibet is being occupied by the Chinese. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has left for India. It is futile for us to remain here. Now we have to go." I was a child then and did not feel greatly [alarmed]. Then as we traveled along our escape route—His Holiness had already left and the whole of Tibet was invaded—and experienced the difficulties, did I realize our grave situation.

Q: What would happen if somebody did kill one of these animals?

00:09:04

**#67M: If someone killed one of these animals and if he was not spotted, that was that. If he was seen killing an animal, the local district authority would immediately take action as they were protected by the government and were not allowed to be hunted.**

Q: Did the fine differ depending on the type of animal?

**#67M: The penalty in Tibet was one that you would have to bear on your physical self. Penalty was not in the form of money.**

Q: What was the punishment?

00:10:01

**#67M: The punishment was lashing with a stick or with an iron rod. The lashing depended on the seriousness of the offence. A serious offender received lashings. There were whips this long [gestures off camera] and he was lashed with it. A lesser offence got one a slap with something called *kopcha*.**

Q: Who would deliver this beating?

**#67M: Every locality had a district administrator, just like there are the ministers in the states here. Under the district administrator was the *thasam* and then the chief or *genpo* of one's village. If any one of them saw or heard [of the offence], [for a lesser offence] the chief or *genpo* would award a lesser punishment and then [depending upon the seriousness of the crime] the case was taken up to the district level.**

Q: Did he [you] have any personal experience of this himself?

00:11:44

**#67M: I have never faced any such problems myself. I have seen others facing such problems. There were certain people who were Tibetans that depended on hunting. I have seen such people and thieves being punished. Other than that, I have not faced such problems myself. When I was very small, I spent my time playing. Then as I grew older, I engaged in the work I told you.**

Q: What did he [you] think about this? Did he think this was fair?

**#67M: It is definite [that offenders are punished]. I knew about that since I was about 17. It was nothing but the law of the Tibetan Government, which proclaimed since long ago that wild animals should not be hunted. It was known as *Ri-lung-tsatsik* but here it is called environment [protection]. Over there it used to be called *Ri-lung-tsatsik* and none of the wild animals were allowed to be hunted.**

**Later when the Chinese arrived, even before we suffered the problems, they started killing the wild animals and there was no law then. After the appearance of the Chinese, wild animals were killed and their numbers dwindled. Before the loss of authority to the Chinese, [wild animals] could not be hunted.**

[Videographer requests rearrangement of chairs]

Q: What was your feeling about animals when you were growing up?

00:15:22

**#67M: As I grew a little older, I found tending the sheep tiresome and used to think that keeping such a huge flock was worthless. I wished to have horses, so I could ride them. I loved doing that. Much later I realized that it were the sheep and yaks that sustained us in Tibet.**

Q: When you think about Tibet, the animals come to your mind?

**#67M: I realized that the animals were important when I left because, take the case of sheep, we could shear the sheep once a year. We could sell the wool in India as well as make clothes for ourselves. A sheep sustained us in this way until it became old. Once it became old, we could eat its meat. They were very beneficial. I felt that even though one had to care for them, they were so very beneficial for us.**

**Take the yak, for example, in the olden days we did not have vehicles or trains in Tibet, so wherever one had to travel with loads, the yaks did the needful. As for the horses, since there were no motorcycles or any such means in Tibet, the horses were like motorcycles irrespective of the distance you traveled. They were so helpful for us. In this country we travel in vehicles, which were not available in our region then.**

Q: I want to ask about...Because for providing meat for food, the animals have to be killed. How did this work if there was all these rules against killing animals, other than wolves and rats, then what about the people who were killing animals to provide food for people?

00:18:53

**#67M: The hunters killed [wild] animals because they were for free. Actually [the wild animals] were required for the beauty of the region. The countryside looked beautiful with the wild animals. I used to see the huge herds of Tibetan wild ass from afar. They did not fear yak herders and shepherds like us and walked alongside. However, if they saw the hunters, they bolted, one after the other. They did not flee from us. I felt for them like they**

were my animals. They were not allowed to be hunted nor did we have to hunt them. We did feel like killing the wolves if we could, but we did not possess guns to kill them and we could not do so with swords. [Laughs]

Q: I'm still trying to understand because he said that it was illegal to kill animals other than wolves and rodents, but Tibet is a meat eating society, so they were eating yak meat, they were eating different kinds of meat and mutton they were eating. Who killed these animals and did they have a special license to kill?

**#67M: I do not know about other regions, but in my village, there were special people from poor families who slaughtered the sheep. It was never the custom to kill animals during summertime. People might eat the carcass of one killed by wolves, but animals were never slaughtered during the summer. We survived on the milk and dairy products of animals and never killed them. In the wintertime, all the older animals were selected and checked to see which would survive through the winter and the others were [slaughtered]. There were many animals and only the older ones were selected.**

There was a special person who went around the village to slaughter the sheep. He was called to a certain home to kill their sheep and he arrived. For every sheep that he slaughtered, he had to be paid a *di* 'measurement' of grain which was called *dhikla* 'wages of sin.' He was also entitled to the covering of the heart, which he filled with fats. This was in addition to the *dhikla*. The one who slaughtered the sheep was a special person. He came to our village though I do not know about the other regions.

Q: Does this person have a name or a title?

00:24:07

**#67M: In our small village, the person who did it was an old man and his name was Dhondup Sherap. I was quite young at that time.**

Q: Did he have a title, say like a postman or some special name?

**#67M: There was no special name. I do not know the background of this person. During the time I saw, it was an old man called Dhondup Sherap who did the slaughtering. I have no idea if his forefathers were also involved with slaughtering.**

Q: Because this is a very difficult work for a Buddhist to do, I am just wondering does he know anything about how this person comes to do this work in his village. Does he volunteer to do this work or is he chosen? Does he have any knowledge of that?

00:26:22

**#67M: That was what I saw in my village. However, the older people spoke about the *shenpa* 'animal slaughterer' as a separate people. They were of a different caste, who could marry only among themselves and other people did not marry them. *Shenpa* was considered the worst [lowest caste].**



Q: How would the animals be killed? Would it be cutting the throat? How would the animals be killed?

**#67M: In my region, the animals were mostly killed by tying up their mouths [smothering]. In some cases, they look for the *tsikpa* around here [points somewhere on the back but not on camera]. They counted [ribs?] and then poked there with a needle. Then [the animal] opened its mouth twice or three times and fell down. That's how they were slaughtered. It was called *tsiknyung* and it used to be said that the *tsiknyung* type of slaughtering killed instantly. They counted the *tsikpa* and then poked a needle. I do not know what type of life-carrying vein they poked at, but the slaughterers did the killing very easily. Immediately after poking the needle, [the animal] gasped and...**

Q: Were there any special rituals that were performed when these animals were killed?

00:29:33

**#67M: Since one was killing an animal from one's herd, when the killing was to be carried out in the wintertime, blessed pills were mixed with water and were given to each [animal] before it was killed. This [mixture] was also sprayed over their bodies. Besides that, there were no [rituals]. Blessed pills were put into their mouths.**

Q: Can you describe the purpose of giving the pills?

**#67M: First the blessed pills were put into their mouths and a prayer was said, "May he give up the body with four legs and be born as a body with two legs." It meant that the [animal] body with four legs be given up and that it be reborn as a human with two legs. That prayer was said and the [blessed pills] put into their mouths.**

Q: Was this procedure done at a different location or was it done within the boundary of the village or did this person go some distance away to kill the animals?

00:31:58

**#67M: You did not go outside [the village]. It was not carried out within the boundary of the house but a little further away. Once the slaughtering was done, unlike in this country, it was not messy. Once the animal was slaughtered, it was raised up atop a pole and it froze there. There was a small room, a meat room in which they were kept and it did not rot at any time.**

Q: Did you witness this yourself?

**#67M: Yes.**

Q: Did you do it yourself?

00:33:15

**#67M: I witnessed it but the elders did everything. I ate it and know everything about it.**

Q: What went through your mind when you witnessed this?

**#67M: I did not have many feelings then because I was a child. Now that I have grown old, I regret that such things happened. However, it was imperative to take those lives because we needed to use them. We could not do without them. So once [the animals] became old, they were used [in that way]. Here in this country, if one of your cows died, you threw it away and purchased meat from outside. We did not have that in Tibet. It was only for your own use and you could not sell nor could you buy.**

Q: What animals did he [you] kill? Did he kill wolves or what other animals did he kill?

00:35:45

**#67M: No. As a shepherd tending a large flock of sheep, I have used the *wurdho* 'sling shot with long ropes' which hit a sheep and broke a leg or two. I have never killed any.**

Q: When you say you are doing purification practice, you are doing on behalf of other people, of your fellow villagers back in Tibet?

**#67M: Due to the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, there are many monks in this country. We have knowledge on how to say our prayers. I do pray for all the sentient beings of the six realms. It would not be beneficial if you prayed only for yourself. One should pray for all the sentient beings of the six realms. At present we do not know what the Chinese are doing in Tibet. All the wildlife is disappearing there.**

Q: You mentioned horse racing. So I want to ask you about that. What was your first experience of horses when you were young?

00:38:41

**#67M: In my village, every year we had the *yulpay tsechu*, a festival held at the time of harvest. It was a day of ritual, fun and horse racing. The riders raced into the arena and shot arrows at a target. Everyone in the village arrived at the ground to witness the horse race. I was young at that time and could not participate in the horse racing and arrow shooting events, while my older brothers took part. So I used to steal their horses at intervals and run into the race. I have an injured leg from that.**

**Then we used to drive the mother horses to the mountains, while some [boys] stayed back holding onto the younger horses. After the mother horses had gone, we rode on the young horses, which sped off after their mothers. I injured my leg at that time and I am still not steady on my leg. We did not have good doctors in Tibet like we have here. So the joint did not heal well and the bone sits like this [shows leg off camera]. This one [shows other leg] is in its right position.**

Q: How old were you at this time?

**#67M: I was about 16 then. When I escaped, I was 17 years old. It happened a year earlier to that.**

Q: But this did not affect your love of horses. You still enjoyed to ride horses after this?

00:42:45

**#67M: After I became better, I did not have any fear of riding again. However, we did not get to stay there much longer after that. About a year later, we made our escape. Then I became separated from the horses.**

Q: Can you just describe the horse racing event and the whole festival? What it was like and what you saw and your experience there as a 16 year old boy? What people were doing and describe as much as possible what it was like.

00:43:59

**#67M: There were the leaders of the village. This [festival] was a tradition in our village that had been in existence since long ago. A prayer was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> Tibetan lunar month. Then there was horse racing and target shooting before noon. After people came back home in the evening, they gathered inside the large community hall. The older people drank *chang* 'home-brewed beer' and danced. The younger ones collected a little further away and drank diluted *chang*, played games and danced.**

**Unlike here, we performed our traditional dances the whole night in my village and the little children held the hands of the adults and danced. Some adults [shows action of pushing away] said, "Go away, you are disturbing my dance steps" while others held them and let [the children] dance with them. In that way, they [the children] learned by copying the others. There were no separate lessons in dancing; one learned by watching the others.**

Q: How did people dress on this occasion?

**#67M: The attire they wore was the Tibetan costume. However, during the horse race, there was a separate costume that the riders wore. It was called *goktse* [gestures putting on a shirt] and [the rider] placed the arrows on his right and the bow on his left. The arrows and bow were placed thus and he wore a *soksha* 'type of hat' on his head. That was the attire worn during the horse race. At other times, everyone wore the normal Tibetan costume. The *chupa* 'traditional coat/dress' was made of fur and wool.**

**The arrows and bow were necessarily put in their respective place and over the top; they wore the *goktse*, which was white in color. I have not worn it but I have seen others wear the white [shirt]. Then the horse race began. There were two targets: one placed here [points] and the other a little further away. As the horse galloped, the rider removed the bow and arrow and started shooting at the targets. If he managed to hit both the targets, he received a *khata* 'ceremonial scarf' from the village leader.**

00:48:11

**As soon as the race began, [the rider] had the bow and an arrow ready in his hands. He held another arrow in his mouth. Immediately after he had shot at the first target, he took the other arrow from his mouth and shot [demonstrates]. I have witnessed them doing all that.**

Q: Was there a special food that they ate on this occasion?

**#67M: The food was what we generally ate like *pa* 'dough made from *tsampa* "flour made from roasted barley" and tea' and meat. In addition to that, rice was prepared. In those days in Tibet, rice called *zara* was considered a specialty. I think rice did not grow in Tibet and it had to be brought from a long distance. So we had rice for lunch and the other usual food. *Chang* was in plenty. People drank *chang* both day and night.**

Q: What was the target made of that they were having to shoot, what was it made of? What did it look like?

00:50:44

**#67M: [The targets] were about the size of that book there. There were two poles with a rope stretched between them. The targets were suspended on the rope.**

Q: What were they?

**#67M: They were made from leather and stuffed with *bhulo* 'leaf of the *bhu* tree.' The leather pouch was stuffed with *bhulo*, which you can find in Tibet. [The leather pouch] thickened with the *bhulo* stuffing in it. On the side [of the leather pouch] was a circular drawing with a black spot in the center, where the arrow must hit. When an arrow struck the target, a cloud of dust arose. That dust was the *bhulo* within. If [the target] was just leather, the arrow would get stuck in it but there would be no cloud of dust. The attraction would not be there. The attraction was [for the arrow] to hit the target and the cloud of dust to form over it. The arrow remained embedded and quivering in the target.**

Q: Were there any members of your family who were particularly good at this?

00:52:21

**#67M: He has passed away, but Karma-*la* [Mundgod resident?] might know a person named Pema Gyalpo who has a slight limp. He was my older brother, Tsering Nyima's son. He [the son] was the older person in our family and he was very good at horse racing and target shooting. But he has passed away now. His son lives here but he was born in this country. [Laughs] So he has no knowledge [about horse racing].**

Q: How did the crowd react when this was going on? Describe the feeling in the crowd and his feeling? How were the crowd reacting or responding?

**#67M: If my older brother hit a target, we screamed "My brother has hit a target" in great joy. The leader of the village presented a *khata*. There was nothing other than that, but we used to scream "It has hit the target" in delight.**

Q: So this was an annual event, yes?

00:54:18

**#67M: That was the only time in a year when we had horse racing. However, there were other festivals. This event took place at the time of harvest. There was another festival that happened after the sowing was done, just like we do here. This [tradition] is being carried on to this day. That was on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup> Tibetan lunar month when we do the**

*choekhor* 'circumambulating the fields reciting prayers and carrying holy scriptures.' In our village too, we did the *choekhor* and performed an incense burning ceremony. Normally incense burning offerings were made in the center [of the village], but on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup> month, the incense burning ceremony took place at a special area away from the village.

Various rituals were conducted on this day and in the evening, when people returned, they drank *chang*. That was on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup> Tibetan lunar month. It is a prayer festival connected to farming. We do this prayer in this place too. Each camp conducts its prayer and then gathers at the Palace [of His Holiness] where everyone receives a flat bread each. It is the same festival that used to be performed in Tibet. However, there is no horse racing here because there are no horses. That festival has still not declined.

Q: Can you describe the purpose of this particular ceremony?

**#67M:** The main purpose of this ceremony was to protect the fields. In this country, [crops] are attacked by insects and in Tibet it was to prevent hail and such. People did not go [around the fields] empty handed, but carried the image of Lord Buddha and many scriptures. There were many volumes of scriptures and precious images, which was to protect the crops from hail and insects. There was the danger of hail since [Tibet] was a cold country. The main aim was to prevent that, that images of Lord Buddha and holy scriptures were carried [around the fields]. It was hoped that the blessings of the Lord Buddha would yield a good harvest.

Q: So this ceremony would be led by monks?

00:58:05

**#67M:** Ours was a small village and only one monk came to perform the ceremony, which involved performing *tusol* 'sprinkling holy water' in the four directions. He performed a *tusol* in each of the four directions. There were not many monks in my village. Though there were not many monks, there was the *ngagpa* 'shaman' who was invited. The *tusol* was done in the four directions and then the incense burning ceremony and other rituals were performed the whole day. The *tusol* was performed in the four directions. There were no other monks but it was necessary to have one lama. Ours was a small village and there were not many monks. However, whether it was a *ngagpa* or a lama, one of them was required because the *tusol* must be performed in the four directions.

Q: I want to get back to what he is saying about the ceremony and *ngagpas* and everything, but I want to go back just a little bit to when you broke your...or you injured yourself when you rode this horse. Did you actually break your leg? Did you break a bone?

**#67M:** I dislocated a joint. I dislocated this joint [shows leg off camera]. The joint dislocated and we did not have good doctors in Tibet. So the joint stayed like this [shows off camera]. This is good [shows other leg with pants folded up above the knee joint and then shows the knee joint of injured leg].

[Videographer to interpreter]: Could you ask him to show us again and tell us again what happened?

**#67M: If I do this [stretches out leg] this [the dislocated joint] comes here and if I do this [folds leg] it juts out here.**

Q: Completely displaced.

**#67M: This is in its proper position [shows good leg].**

Q: So what kind of treatment did you get for this?

01:01:16

**#67M: When it dislocated, the older people pulled it [shows injured leg] and shook it [points to the dislocated joint]. Then a paste was applied around this [indicates knee] area along with paper and then tied. Then I rested for a few days. The dislocated joint had not been set back in its position, so it became like this.**

Q: After that, did you have difficulty moving for a long time?

**#67M: I did not face any other problems except at times when I walk on uneven surface, then it sort of trembles. It did not give me any trouble up until now. Earlier when I lived in UP [Uttar Pradesh, India], the joint again dislocated. I consulted a doctor at that time. He looked at it and said, "This is [a] very old [problem]. It is not possible to treat it. However, you will not face any problems now because it is covered by flesh and fats. You will have trouble when you become very old." Up until now I did not have any problems.**

Q: Did you get into trouble for taking this horse?

01:03:59

**#67M: On the day of the accident my parents chided me, "You can never remain still. You are always after the horses and one day, you will give your life away." Except for scolding me, they could not do anything. They scolded me a little because they cared for me. I think it was only for about a week that I could not walk. It became better soon. Except for not being set in its proper position, there was not much harm done.**

[Brief discussion between interviewer and interpreter regarding phrasing of questions.]

Q: I want to get back to this crop blessing ceremony and you mentioned the *ngagpas*. Can you describe who the *ngagpas* were and what kind of people they were?

**#67M: Most of them were from the Nyingma [sect of Tibetan Buddhism]. Our [village] was secular in the sense that we believed in all the four sects; Sakya, Gelug, Nyingma [and Kagyu]. There were monasteries of Nyingma, Gelug and Sakya in my village. The main Nyingma Monastery of our village is relocated here in Camp Number 3 [Mundgod]. That was our main Nyingma Monastery. The Gelug Monastery is [relocated] in Camp Number 1 and is called Shambuling and is affiliated to Drepung Loselling Monastery. And the Sakya**

**Monastery you can see there [points]. All these monasteries were present in our village. They still exist in our village and are not in completer ruin. From all these monasteries, Shambuling is in a better condition as it is affiliated to Drepung Loselling and its teachers were sent from Drepung Loselling.**

Q: Can you describe the *ngagpas* and what kind of people they are? Can you describe the kind of people the *ngagpas* are?

01:07:43

**#67M: The *ngagpa* that I can recall from my childhood was one that was named Gelong Lerap. He was from the *ngagpa* monastery in our village. He was a very renowned *ngagpa*. He was later captured by the Chinese and killed. This is what I have witnessed with my eyes. The Chinese did not kill him immediately after capturing him. They charged him, "You have been a red thief and a yellow bandit over the people until now. Now you have a white path and a black path in front of you. If you choose the white path, you have to denounce the Dalai Lama and confess to what you have done so far. If you choose the black path, it is up to you [to tell us] what you will do. This is the order of Mao Zedong."**

**I thought he might have gone mad but it seems he was in his right mind when he replied, "I have spent my whole life practicing the dharma. I will not be able to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Who is Mao Zedong? He exists under my bottom!" He rattled on and was imprisoned. He might have been about a week in the prison, when they [the Chinese officials] saw something [strange]. When he was inside the prison, some of the Chinese officials saw him outside. When they went after [the apparition] wondering how he was released and outside the prison, they found that he was inside the prison. So doubting him, they banished him to Ngari Gar. We did not see him being killed but they told us that he was dead and gave his clothes back. There was such a *ngagpa*.**

Q: I think many people don't understand what a *ngagpa* is, so can you please describe what kind of special person a *ngagpa* was and what kind of status a person had in the community and what did they do? What is a *ngagpa*? Many people don't know that.

**#67M: I do not know much in order to give a detailed description of a *ngagpa*. However, we consider *ngagpa* as someone who can cohabit with a woman. They do the same dharma practice but he is one who has a wife, which is why he is called a *ngagpa*. A monk is someone who cannot take a wife. Except for this [difference] I do not know any other information about *ngagpa*. One who has a wife is a *ngagpa* and one who does not, is a monk.**

Q: And what did people think...What abilities did the *ngagpas* have? Did the people feel the *ngagpas* have special abilities?

01:13:14

**#67M: I do not know what power the *ngagpa* possess.**

Q: It's normally said that *ngagpas* have a special power that is different from the monks...

**#67M: What people say is that the spirit of the dead, which is wandering can be burned by the *ngagpa*. Other than that I do not have any knowledge. There is this fire burning ceremony [through which the spirit is overcome].**

Q: What other situations would a *ngagpa* be invited to do a ceremony apart from a death? Would there be other situations? You said they would also do the crop blessing ceremony. What other situations would the community call for a *ngagpa* to participate to do some kind of ceremony?

01:14:41

**#67M: Apart from that, there was no relation between the common people [and the *ngagpa*]. The *ngagpa* were invited for the incense burning ceremony and other than that, there was nothing special that the *ngagpa* did or did not.**

Q: Does a *ngagpa* have the same status as a monk or a different status?

**#67M: I do not think there's any difference. They practice dharma the same way. I do not know anything about that.**

Q: So this particular *ngagpa*, what was his name? [To interpreter]...that he is talking about, the one who was taken by the Chinese?

**#67M: Lerap.**

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Gelong Lerap.

Q: He lived at a nearby temple, Shambuling? Is that correct?

01:15:59

**#67M: He lived a little further away from our village at Dhongmar. He used to live in a cave. His monastery was Namkha Khyongzom Monastery. That is the small monastery that you see [relocated] in Camp Number 3. The main monastery is in Orissa [India]. His family did not possess farm lands or anything. He used to live in retreat and his wife and children survived on what the people [offered]. They did not cultivate and do farm work as far as I could see. At the time of harvest in autumn, he visited every family in the village to seek alms called *u-long* and everyone made offerings to him at that time.**

Q: Would he service the community? The *ngagpa* also gave back to the community by doing certain rituals?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah, yeah.

Q: But usually when somebody died, you said earlier.

**#67M: The benefit was that whenever there was sickness in a family, we requested him to perform various rituals. He was requested to perform various rites and rituals. If there was**



sickness or if someone passed away in the night, whatever the time he would never refuse to come. He would do the necessary rituals.

Q: Where was the nearest monastery to where you lived?

01:19:15

**#67M: The nearest monastery was at Kardhum called Gadenlang, a Nyingma Monastery.**

Q: And this was a Nyingma monastery?

**#67M: It is a Nyingma [monastery].**

Q: What was the relationship between the monks of the monastery? First of all, how large was the monastery? How many monks were there?

01:19:45

**#67M: There were only two monks in the bigger monastery, a lama and his assistant. In the smaller monastery called Mani Khorchen, [called so] as there were four *mani khorchen* 'large prayer wheels,' there was one person to rotate the prayer wheels. That was it. The main monastery called Khyongzom was located at quite a distance away. So there was a lama, an assistant and an ordinary monk to rotate the prayer wheel. Their salary was met by the Nyingma [Monastery]. The work they did was cleaning the place and making the necessary offering.**

**During summer, they had to guard the region of Kardhum against hail. In Tibet if it hailed just before harvest time, it could destroy much of the crops. So the main responsibility of the lama was to stop the hail. I do not know what he did, but he stopped the hail even when it had started. We did not have a lama in my village, but we possessed an image of the Goddess Tara in our community hall. There was a watchman who ran if it looked like hail, to get the Goddess Tara image and took it to the terrace [puts both hands up to the sky] and the hail stopped right in its track. It was the image of the Goddess Tara that stopped hail in our village. At Kardhum, it was the lama that stopped the hail.**

Q: You saw this yourself?

**#67M: Yes, I did. When we were small, we used to say if it looked like hail, "What is the watchman doing? It's going to hail soon." People used to bad mouth the watchman. "The watchman must run fast." He went inside quickly and showed the image [to the sky]. The image was taken outside to the terrace [of the house]. It was kept outside for just a short while and then taken indoors. The hail disappeared like the mist. When you looked at the mountains after a while, you could see the hail there but it did not come towards the land. I witnessed that with my eyes.**

Q: Did you see this many times yourself?

01:24:14

**#67M: I was around 16-17 then. The stopping of hail needed to be done only during summertime. I have seen it two or three times.**

Q: There were only three monks. How far away was the monastery they lived from his village?

**#67M: The Kardhum Monastery?**

Q: Yes.

01:24:47

**#67M: It was not very far away. For example, if I lived at Camp Number 1 [Mundgod], it was located a little further away from Camp Number 7. [Interpreter estimates the distance as "almost 2 kilometers"]**

Q: Quite close. Did the people from your village go to the monastery for any reason?

**#67M: There was a statue of Lord Buddha at the Kardhum Monastery. As a child I used to go there at times to see the image out of curiosity. It was because sometimes there would be an outbreak of influenza in the village and then all the people went to offer butter lamps to the Buddha. After the butter lamps were offered, people would say, "Now everything is fine. The Buddha has taken it upon himself." The Buddha took the influenza upon himself.**

**During this time, it was a must for us to pay a visit there. When the Buddha took the illness upon himself, the golden paint on its face became damaged. Normally the face is painted in gold and the gold paint became damaged when he took the illness upon himself. Once that happened, people did not suffer the illness. Later, the golden paint on the face had to be touched up.**

**We must go to see [the Buddha image] at that time. Everybody in the family went to see when the Buddha took the illness upon himself. Normally everyone was involved in his work and did not go everyday [to the monastery].**

Q: What year would this have been when this flu epidemic happened in your region?

01:28:13

**#67M: Illnesses were rare in our region because of the clean [environment]. People would keep saying that an epidemic of influenza was coming. Then the caretaker [of the monastery] informed the people that the Buddha had taken the illness upon himself. When they learned that the Buddha had taken the illness upon himself, the entire population went to see the image and offer butter lamps.**

**The face of the Buddha image revealed whether it had taken the illness upon himself or not. [When he took the illness upon himself] the gold paint over the face sort of became detached. Later when the illness disappeared, the gold paint had to be re-done. The illness did not affect the people.**

Q: Did many people die of this disease?

**#67M: As far as I can remember, nothing happened. I would not know if such things happened earlier to that.**

Q: What was your experience of monks when you were growing up? What was your impression of them? What was your relationship with them?

01:30:50

**#67M: When I was young, I used to wish ardently that I was a monk. However, if it was not in one's destiny, it does not happen. For a Tibetan, *lama* 'religious teacher,' *choe* 'Buddha dharma' and *gedun* 'monks' are considered very important. There is not much [devotion] in this country, but in my village a monk was [held in high esteem]. Many beggars clad in red robes came to beg and people would say, "A *gelong* 'ordained monk' has come" and gave him more alms.**

Q: And when you saw monks, what kind of feeling came in your heart?

**#67M: If there was an audience with a monk, there was a lot of rush to see him as each one wanted to see him first. If one received the blessings of a high lama, it made you feel a tingling sensation over your body. High lamas used to visit our village and we made preparations. All the families in the village, whether there were 10, 15, 20 or 30 families, each one of them kept their horses saddled when the lama was to arrive. Since all the families had prepared their horses, the lama rode on one horse for a short distance and then changed horses until he had ridden on all the horses. Each one wanted the lama to ride his horse and by doing so, it was considered a blessing for the horse. Such used to be the rush.**

Q: Was there any feeling of fear of the monks?

01:34:13

**#67M: There is never such a feeling. [There is] only the feeling of joy.**

Q: *Pasang-la*, can you describe the role that the monks played in your community: their importance, the role that they played?

**#67M: To take our village as an example, the most special benefit [received from monks] were prevention of hail and the growth of lush grass in the region. Ours was a small village and if there was no snow, there'd be no water. If a water spring dried, monks were invited to perform consecration rituals. Where there was just a trickle of water today, in a day or two it became abundant. Such was their benefit [for the village]. I do not know how the monks pleased the deities and the spirits of the region, but it was due to the monks that we have good grass, air and everything.**

**These days the Chinese are doing so many things, but they destroyed the wildlife and the domestic animals do not have grass to eat and there is scarcity of water. The benefit we**

received [from the monks] is that we take refuge in the monks in this life and even in death. If a father of a family died, his horse and clothes were offered to the monastery.

Q: Did the monks require something from the community in return for these services?

01:37:57

**#67M: That was up to you. In our case, we offered a little part of the harvest to the monastery. However, it is not so in this country. Here everyone hopes for a lama to provide this or provide that. In our village in Tibet, each one on his part made as much offerings as he could to the lama and it was never the custom to [expect to] receive anything from a lama. Each one thought of making whatever contributions he could to the lama and never entertained the thought of receiving anything from him.**

**In this country, people look to the lama for donations but in our region you made offerings to the lama, but did not receive [any monetary help] from a lama except blessings and holy pills. There was no tradition [of receiving help from a lama]. The amount of offering depended on the [economic] condition [of the family]: a rich person made a bigger contribution and a poor person offered less. No one looked to receiving [from a lama].**

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Could you ask that question one more time?

[Question is repeated.]

**#67M: In Tibet, its citizens performed labor services to the government, which [in turn] was for the monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Gaden. It was the government which provided food for [the monks of] Sera, Drepung and Gaden Monasteries. We used to complain that the government was subjecting its people to labor service, but the government had to provide for the three great monasteries for which it had to take labor service from the people. That was the relationship. There was nothing that a family was obliged to give to the monks directly. We performed whatever labor service as demanded by the government and the government provided for Sera, Drepung and Gaden Monasteries.**

Q: If you could you try to look at Namgyal because the reason is, when people see it there going to wonder who you're looking at over there because they're not going to see him. So please try and look at Nagyal-la the whole time that you're speaking.

Q: The community did not have to pay tax to the monastery or to the monks? They didn't have to pay any kind of tax to the monastery?

01:41:55

**#67M: The lay people did whatever the government demanded and that was our tax. We paid tax to the government and the government provided for the monks. However, the taxes we performed were not necessarily for the monks. The government looked after the welfare of the three great monasteries. The government, in turn, taxed the people.**

Q: Did the community give to the monastery in any other ways?

**#67M:** The Tibetan government provided for the three great monasteries, while there was a local monastery in every village. [In the village were] two different groups [of people] called *chueshi* and *shungpa*. The *chueshi* [people] were tax payers to the monastery, but they were not obliged to serve the government. The *shungpa* [people] paid taxes to the government, but did not serve the monastery. That was the difference.

Q: The *chueshi*, how much was that?

01:44:17

**#67M:** One did not have to pay a tax directly. The monastery owned lands and the *chueshi* [tax payers] were obliged to sow the fields owned by the monastery. The *chueshi* performed all the field works. The harvest from the land was utilized by the monastery. Other than that, we were not obliged to give a share of our [harvest]. The monastery owned land as well as yaks and sheep. The *chueshi* had to send people for the purpose of [looking after] the yaks and sheep of the monastery.

So it was labor service that we had to provide for the monastery by working in their fields. We did not receive any wages. There was sowing, harvesting, thrashing and once everything was over, [the grains] were given to the monastery. A person from the monastery came to oversee the work; a person sent by the *chanzo* 'business manager.' The village did not have to give any of its harvest to the monastery. It was the lay people who were obliged to work in the fields of the monastery as well as look after its yaks and sheep. There was no wage for the work performed.

Q: Your family did not pay tax to the monastery, you did not pay *chueshi*?

**#67M:** In the upper region, they were both *shungpa* and *chueshi*. In the lower region, we were not *chueshi* but *shungpa*, paying taxes to the government. There are some families here in the settlement who used to be *chueshi* earlier. As *chueshi*, they performed labor tax for the monastery and not the government. As for us, we performed labor tax for the government and did not have to pay again to the monastery.

Q: Did your village make offerings to the monastery in other ways, voluntary offerings to the monastery and to the monks?

01:48:21

**#67M:** That's similar to what I told you. If one is financially sound, one can make a contribution of whatever one wishes. One made an offering but there was never the custom of receiving [donation from the monastery]. [Laughs] That's just what I told you earlier. Since early times, it was the tradition to offer whatever one wished to. If there was a death in the family, it was imperative to make an offering, not only to the monastery, but to all the hermits who dwelled in the caves.

Q: When did you first hear about the Chinese coming to Tibet?

**#67M:** When I was young, I wonder...They had arrived a few years earlier but they did not cause any suffering. It was in 1959 that they started to oppress us and occupied the whole of Tibet. It was then that people started to escape. It was towards the end of '58 and beginning of '59 that they captured the district of Porang and destroyed it. Besides that, they captured the *chanzo* of Shambuling Monastery.

I witnessed the *chanzo* of Shambuling and others being brought out of prison. Some of them carried containers on their backs. I heard that the containers contained human excreta. Human excreta was mixed with water and shaken well. They [the Chinese] had cultivated vegetables on a large area of land. That [human excreta] was to be applied to the vegetable crops as manure. The *chanzo* of Shambuling, who was called Datsang Bubwa, was the highest authority [of the monastery]. He was known as Datsang Bubwa Maygyal. The Maygyal was very, very old, who walked with the help of a walking stick. I witnessed that myself. I have not witnessed anyone being beaten or oppressed.

01:51:55

I saw him carrying human excreta on the back and being driven [by the Chinese] only once. [He was] walking with the help of a cane and carrying the vessel on the back. [He was] not allowed to walk silently, instead he had to sing a song "The Chinese are good, the Chinese are gentle." I saw him go like that only once. However, I did not witness them being beaten or killed. I was told that he was carrying human excreta on his back, but I did not look into the container to check if it was human excreta. I was told that he was taking it to the vegetable field.

Q: You saw this?

**#67M:** Yes, I saw him carrying the container on his back to the vegetable field. I was small at that time and saw it once. I heard that they [the monks] were beaten a lot, but I did not witness that. I saw him carrying the container with my very eyes.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: This lama, he was one of the three that he mentioned earlier?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah.

Q: He said there were only three monks in that monastery. He was one of the three?

01:55:05

**#67M:** That was the Gadenlang, the monastery near our village which had only three monks.

Q: How many monks were in this [Shambuling] monastery?

**#67M:** There might have been 300-400 monks in the Shambuling Monastery. I do not know the exact ceiling figure of monks at the monastery, whether it was 300 or 400, but if that figure was not reached, the monastery's tenants or the *chueshi* [tax payers] were obliged to send a son as monk to the monastery according to *bhu sum bharpa*, which meant

**that from among three sons, the middle son must become a monk while two could stay home.**

Q: *Pasang-la*, could you describe exactly what you saw when you saw this man with a tin on his back and what he was doing? You said you saw this with your own eyes. Can you describe exactly what you saw?

01:56:49

**#67M: The monk was very, very old at that time. He was walking with the aid of a stick and trembling. He was trembling as he walked. When we saw this, someone said, "We must not watch such things. Times have turned upside down and we are seeing such dreadful things." The older people would not let us watch and we moved away fast. They said we were seeing such things because times had turned around.**

Q: Was he being guarded by guards, by army, by soldiers?

**#67M: There were two or three soldiers behind him. There were not many soldiers with him. I do not know if they were overseers, but one was walking in front and two or three were behind him. He was not the only one. Likewise there were other prisoners. He was the most popular person of Shambuling Monastery, but there were others with him like the leaders of the region. There were around 10 people being driven along in a row.**

Q: What was your feeling when you saw this?

01:59:03

**#67M: I was not very young then, perhaps about 17 years old. I thought, "Will my parents too be subjected to such things? What is going to happen?" I was terrified and could not think right.**

Q: Did you want to communicate with him? Did you have a feeling you wanted to communicate?

**#67M: No, it never occurred to me because of the fear.**

Q: Just to back up a little bit, when you said that you saw the Chinese come, how did they come? How did they arrive in your village?

02:00:28

**#67M: When they first appeared, they did not have vehicles. They arrived on camels and horses. They came but did not cause any problems to us. The soldiers seemed hungry and stayed there rather poorly. They did not do those things immediately. It looked to me as if they were facing a lot of difficulties. They did that much later.**

**I think I was 10 or 11 years old when I saw them come. Some people remarked that they were Chinese. They arrived but did not cause any problems to us. They engaged themselves in work. When we were harvesting our crops, they came to assist us. That was at the very beginning.**

Q: So that was 1955. Approximately how many settled in your area? How many Chinese people?

**#67M: I guess the number [of Chinese] that arrived in my village was similar to the strength of monks at Shambuling Monastery. I think they [the Chinese] were more in number and not less than that. A large number of them arrived.**

Q: Were there women as well as men?

02:03:08

**#67M: No, there were no women at all. There were no women to be seen.**

Q: How were they dressed?

**#67M: They wore pants and shirts and a cap that covered them like this [brings hands over forehead].**

Q: Were they in uniform or civilian clothes?

02:03:27

**#67M: When they first arrived, they were in civilian clothes. Much later the soldiers wore dark blue. Those that appeared initially were dressed in white.**

Q: So in the beginning, how did they act towards the Tibetan villagers?

**#67M: When they first appeared, their attitude was such that they seemed humbler than us. Besides saying that they were going to help us in the future, they were extremely humble.**

Q: What was your feeling towards them at that time? Did you have a feeling of trust towards them?

02:04:54

**#67M: There were no feelings then as I was a child. I did not fear them nor did it ever come to my mind that they even had a country of their own. I thought they'd just wandered around and came to live in our village. I was a child then and it never occurred to me that they had a country of their own and that in the future they would do this to us.**

Q: Did they all live in one place together or in different places within the community?

**#67M: They lived together. They lived near the banks of the big river near our village. Then they lived at Porang where they presently have a large army camp. They prepared to construct houses at Gyalthikhar. Wood was abundant in our region. So they cut trees and every one of them carried the wood on their backs. They did their work and did not bother us at all. In fact they were in such a situation then that we needed to sympathize with them.**



**They did not have animals to transport their loads [laughs] and they carried the wood themselves.**

Q: What was the name of the army camp?

02:06:50

**#67M: Presently it is known as Gyalthikhar. They have built a huge army camp in Porang called Gyalthikhar.**

Q: So this started in 1955 when you were 11. These people came and they were dressed in civilian dress and they were helping out the villagers in their daily life. So when did this start to change? When did things start to change? When did he see other Chinese coming in and how did it change?

**#67M: As the years went by, they gradually [changed] and at one point their vehicles arrived in our village. When they came in their vehicles they said, "We will implement liberation. Liberation will be implemented in Tibet. Then you will be very happy. You will be able to buy a yak load of rice for one *dhayen* 'Chinese silver coin.'" [Laughs]" They said that we would be extremely happy.**

**When the vehicles started to roll in, initially they were army trucks and about 26 of them arrived together. It was around wintertime. They arrived together and atop the first vehicle was a huge photograph of Mao Zedong. When the vehicles arrived bearing the photograph of Mao Zedong, just like we await the arrival of His Holiness the Dalai Lama these days with *khata* 'ceremonial scarf,' in the same way all the people was made to stand in line. The District Administrator of Porang was attired in his full regalia and made to stand at the head of the row. He was made to offer a *khata* to it [photograph of Mao Zedong]. Then for the whole day, there was a show of dances, which the Chinese called *tangsi*. Oh, there was such a lot to see.**

02:10:04

**They said that they would show us a movie that night and that we were to come and watch it. Ours was an isolated village and we did not have electricity in those days in Tibet. They burned a light which was so bright that you could not differentiate between day and night. I felt that they were making our village into such a happy place! There were the movies and everything.**

**Then they presented everybody with gifts which they said were from Xinjiang. They were walnuts and something called *chongoli*, which they cut into slices and gave to everyone. It was a grand celebration. I was a child then and I thought that they were going to make our village into a very happy place. After that, calling it as liberation, they captured all the district officials and made them suffer. Later when His Holiness the Dalai Lama left for India, nobody felt like staying back. All those who were able to [fled].**

[Tape change]

Q: So this is 1959. Can you clarify?

**#67M: Yes, it was 1959 that they [the Chinese] did that. And His Holiness the Dalai Lama left. We fled in the year 1960. All those who were able to escape did so between the two years of 1959 and 1960. We fled in '60.**

Q: When the Chinese army arrived, approximately how many came to your village?

02:14:20

**#67M: I think they were only about 300 or 400 when they initially came to my village.**

Q: Were they wearing army uniforms?

**#67M: Yes, they were in army dress. Later they became much in number. There was a large army camp in Porang.**

Q: What color was their uniform?

02:14:52

**#67M: I think it was dark blue.**

Q: Was it dark blue or dark green?

**#67M: I thought it was dark blue. Is it not dark blue? Yes, it was dark green. It was dark green.**

Q: Were they carrying guns?

02:15:08

**#67M: Of course, they would carry guns. [Laughs] Even when they went to look for firewood, they carried their guns upon the firewood [indicates on their back]. [Laughs]**

Q: Do you remember your feeling when you first saw the army coming? Do you remember how you felt about it?

**#67M: I was a child then and I never had the feeling that they would seize and occupy our country. It never ever occurred to me that they would occupy our country. Later when I escaped along with my parents, they [parents] said that our country was lost. I did not think earlier that we would lose our country.**

Q: So when they came and they had the ceremony and they have this big picture of Mao Zedong, did you know who Mao Zedong was?

02:16:56

**#67M: They [the Chinese] told us that Mao Zedong was their leader and how great he was. They said that we would see his picture that day. We wondered what Mao Zedong was like and were anxious to see his picture.**

Q: And when they showed the movie, what was in the movie?

**#67M: Perhaps we did not know how to watch a movie. When I look back, I think they were showing us a movie about farming. There were scenes of [someone] plowing a field and sowing, followed immediately by crops growing. Then immediately someone was harvesting the crops. There were scenes of old people kneeling and cutting the crops. And immediately there was a scene of grains being collected. They showed such [a movie].**

**We remarked, "How can one sow and immediately reap and do all those things?" We thought that way because we had never seen [a movie] before. When I look back now, they were showing [a movie] on farming. At that time we thought that the movie was useless because how would it be possible to sow the field and immediately have the crops grown and harvested? That was how we thought.**

Q: Was the attitude of the soldiers different to the Tibetans than the attitude of the earlier Chinese who came?

02:20:09

**#67M: There was no difference at all. Their way of adhering to their rules was the same.**

Q: Did you have any personal interaction with the Chinese and can you describe what that interaction was like?

**#67M: I do not have anything to say on that [because I did not have any interactions with the Chinese]. Never.**

Q: What about members of your family?

02:20:55

**#67M: When we fled in '60, there were 17 members in my family, including my parents, elder brothers, sisters-in-law, etc.**

Q: And did they have interactions with the Chinese at all?

**#67M: There was never any such [interaction].**

Q: So the Chinese never came to your house?

02:21:32

**#67M: No, there were never such things. We'd heard that the leaders were being captured and such and such things were happening. They [the Chinese] said that so-called rebels, meaning our soldiers, were arriving and that we had to go to resist them. They announced that we must bring our yaks and go to fight the rebels and took a list of men and the youth. Our family had many male members and my parents feared that their children would be recruited, so we fled. [The Chinese] made a list of the people who were to fight the rebels, which was why we fled and not because we fell into the hands of the Chinese.**

Q: So this is the reason that your family left because of fear of the younger members being recruited by the army?

**#67M: Yes.**

Q: Was it the fear of being recruitment by the army or fear of the young people being sent to China for education? What was the fear? What does he [you] mean when he said they were taking?

02:23:48

**#67M: No, [they were not being taken to China for education]. There was fighting going on in Tibet, in Lhasa. They [the Chinese] said that they were the rebels, now I understand that they were the [guerrillas of the] Chushi Gangdrug [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] who they could not overcome at times. They said that the rebels were coming and that we had to join their army in fighting them.**

Q: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

**#67M: I had eight brothers when we left [Tibet].**

**Q: Sisters?**

02:24:58

**#67M: There were three sisters. Then the rest [in the family] were children of my older brothers and my father and mother.**

Q: Were all the eight brothers from the same set of parents?

**#67M: Yes, all the eight brothers were from the same set of parents. Only two brothers survive from the eight now. Only the two youngest survive. I am the second youngest and the youngest is Kunsang. Except for the two of us, all the older brothers have passed away.**

Q: Where did they die?

02:25:28

**#67M: Most of them died in this region. Two or three of them died when we lived in Uttar Pradesh. Most of them died in this region. The youngest two survive.**

Q: I want to get back to that certainly, but do you remember hearing the news that His Holiness had left Tibet?

**#67M: I was a child when we left Tibet but my parents told me, "It is being said that His Holiness the Yeshi Norbu 'Wish-fulfilling Gem' has left for a foreign country. If we can follow him, [it will be good] but if not, we shall all die of starvation. They [the Chinese] will treat us very badly." Had His Holiness the Dalai Lama not escaped [into India], we would not have been successful in our flight because the Indians would not let us come at that**

**time. Once His Holiness had left, all of us managed to flee with great difficulty. It was our parents who struggled at that time. We just followed our parents [smiles].**

**When we escaped, my parents dug up the earth inside our house and put our valuable items in it and covered it with soil. Some other articles were also hidden in the mountains. That's what they did. I think they planned to escape temporarily and return after a year or so. I think they did not plan on anything else [laughs] because many things were hidden in the ground.**

Q: When your parents told you that Gyalwa Rinpoche had left Tibet, do you remember what went through your mind, remember what you thought?

02:28:57

**#67M: When I heard that Gyalwa Rinpoche had left for abroad, I had never seen His Holiness then and I thought that Gyalwa Rinpoche must be a huge deity and how did it go? I thought he was a huge deity and did not imagine that he was a real human. I wondered how this huge deity went [to India]. Can deities also go like that? The elders knew the Gyalwa Rinpoche. It never occurred to me then that the Gyalwa Rinpoche might be a real human. We have deities in the monasteries and I thought the whole of Tibet possessed a huge deity like that that had gone abroad. That was how I felt.**

Q: Did you hear about the fighting that was being done on part of the Tibetan resistance? Did you hear about the Tibetan resistance? Did you hear about the Tibetans who were fighting the Chinese? Did you hear stories about this?

**#67M: When we made our escape, we heard that there was fighting and that the long-sleeved rebels were arriving. Our main fear was that we would be made to confront and fight the “rebels,” the Tibetan soldiers. Since there were many brothers, our parents feared that and we fled. I had heard about the fighting.**

Q: Did you want to fight, Pasang? Did you want to fight the Chinese?

02:32:54

**#67M: I did not feel that way. I wished to escape as soon as possible. When I heard that the Gyalwa Rinpoche was in India, I thought if we go soon to India, I might see this huge deity. I was eager to see him. I did not want to fight them.**

Q: When your family left, do you remember what they took with them? What did you take with you when you left your house?

**#67M: Since we lived just over the mountain pass, we drove some goats and sheep. We removed the old clothes that we were wearing and put on new ones. It seemed like we were going well dressed for the escape [laughs], putting on the good clothes and throwing away the bad. We drove some goats and sheep. We sold our goats and sheep along our journey to India and survived.**

Q: Did you bring any household items?

02:34:19

**#67M: We did not bring any household items. Whatever the elders were wearing on themselves, were with them. Other than that, they were hidden underground. Even the agricultural implements were either hidden in the mountains or underground. I think they planned to return in a few months or a year.**

Q: Do you remember anything that you brought?

**#67M: I do not remember bringing anything from Tibet. Presently I have a butter lamp or two in my home. Besides that, there is nothing in the house [from Tibet]. Even if the elder did bring anything, they might have sold them in order to survive.**

Q: Do you still have these [the butter lamps]?

02:36:14

**#67M: Yes, I do. One is made of copper and the other of silver.**

Q: You still have them in your house?

**#67M: Yes, I do.**

Q: They are the only things you brought?

02:36:28

**#67M: There is no other thing. I have a small statue of the three Buddhas. They are the Thongkhorsum with Sharibhu and Mawongabhu on either side of the Buddha. It's about this size [shows right palm]. I do not have anything else.**

Q: Why did you bring those things?

02:37:02

**#67M: [Speaks before question is interpreted] It is not big at all. It's about this size [shows right palm].**

[Question is repeated.]

**#67M: My parents might have considered it precious and brought it. They brought it with them and I did not notice it. I have it at home and make offerings to it.**

Q: On the journey out, was there any incident that stood out for you during your escape? Any particular thing you remember?

02:37:51

**#67M: Of course, it was difficult during the escape. After we reached here, the government sent the children to school. I felt sad at that time. The selection process for admission to school was according to the age and height of the child. After measuring my height, I was**

told I could not join school and that I was too old. [Laughs] I wished I could go to school then. I remember that but I did not face any other difficulties.

Q: Because you were too tall?

**#67M: I must have been tall. I wanted to go to school with the other children, but they checked the height and their list. On being measured, I was termed among the older children and was refused admission to school.**

**All those children who were admitted to school were issued a small children's pass each. I could not be grouped into the children's category and just about reached the adults' group. They took impressions of all my fingers for the pass like they did for the adults. I felt sad when I was grouped with the adults. I felt, "I am an older person." I did not face any other difficulties.**

Q: Pasang-*la*, I just want to ask you, first of all, the livelihood of your family—what was the livelihood of your family in Tibet?

02:40:55

**#67M: The main occupation was farming.**

Q: Can you describe your village? What did it look like?

**#67M: I know very well the region I lived in. A large river flowed in the middle of the region. On one side of the river were the regions of Ronam and Dhongmar. They belonged to a different locality. The other side [of the river] where my village was located was called Dho. Dho was towards the direction of Dip. And another large river flowed within our village.**

Q: What was the name of the river?

02:41:51

**#67M: It was a large river which we called as Bubchu. The water mills for making *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley' were located on this river. We did not have machines then. The mills were powered by water. There were two water mills. On either side [of the village] were farmlands.**

Q: And monasteries?

**#67M: There were no monasteries in our village. As I told you earlier, the nearest monastery was Gadenlang.**

Q: How many families were there?

02:43:08

**#67M: There were only about 15 families in the small village.**

Q: Do you miss Tibet? Do you miss your life in Tibet?

**#67M: Earlier I used to wish we could go back to Tibet. Now I feel that there is not much use if I go back because the body has weakened. I am 66 years old. I used to be strong and did not realize I had weakened until last year when I was harvesting and could not lift the [bag of] grain. I thought and remarked that the grain was very heavy that year. Later when we weighed the grain, it was the same weight. It was my body that had declined.**

**I do not have that ardent desire to go back to Tibet. If it was possible, I wish I could die when His Holiness the Dalai Lama is living. I am afraid to witness something bad if I continue to live. If His Holiness was no more and if I lived, I would witness the terrible thing. I wish that my life ends before His Holiness. I hope to go before I see terrible things. Tibet is lost and I wish to die before His Holiness. That's what I feel.**

Q: When he [you] said he was young, when he was excited to go to Tibet, what did he think he was going to do when he went there?

02:46:08

**#67M: Earlier when I was young I used to feel, "If only I could do the kind of work that we do in this country in Tibet." I would feel [proud] that we have such [progress] in my country. I would have a country to call my own. Here if you walk away onto the road, the Indians say, "You cannot cut trees. You cannot do this. Everything is 'cannot.'" I feel this is what it is like for a person who does not have his own country. I have that sort of feeling.**

Q: *Pasang-la*, is there anything else you want to add that we haven't covered? Any part of your story you want to tell us that you haven't told us?

**#67M: I cannot remember any such thing at the moment. If I recall in the next few days, I shall tell you.**

Q: I just want to ask you a couple of questions again. So is it okay to use your real name for this project?

02:47:32

**#67M: Yes.**

Q: There will be no problem?

**#67M: I do not have any problem. What I have told you is my life story. It is the story of what happened in my life and I have not claimed to have witnessed things that I did not or done things that I did not. I will not have any [problems] on account of this [story].**

Q: I just want to ask you once again because you have told us your story, if this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?



02:48:03

**#67M: There will be no problem. I have not told any lies. If one has lied, he might feel that he would be exposed, but I have not lied and related whatever occurred in my life. If any question arises later, I would know what happened in my life and can provide an answer. There will be no problem whatsoever.**

Q: Thank you so much for sharing your story.

**#67M: [Smiles]**

END OF INTERVIEW