

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #9D – Thinley
May 16, 2012

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #9D
2. Interviewee: Thinley
3. Age: 81
4. Date of Birth: 1931
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Dhakpo
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: May 16, 2012
10. Place of Interview: Hotel Tibet, Mcleod Ganj, Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 18 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Pema Tashi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Thinley hails from Dhakpo in Utsang Province. His family was engaged in farming, but he does not recall much of village life because at the age of 13 Thinley was called to serve the monastery of the state oracle in Lhasa. He explains that in Tibet the land belonged to the government, monastery or aristocrats. The common people were subjects of these landowners and must serve in whatever capacity the owners requested or else pay a fine. This was the system of *midhak* 'master' and Thinley was assigned his service based on his father's master, the Nechung Monastery.

The Nechung Monastery was the monastery of the state oracle. Thinley describes in detail the institution of the Nechung, who is one of the main protector deities of Tibet and of the Dalai Lama. A *kuten* is the medium of the deity who transmits prophecies. Thinley talks about the Nechung's role in the Tibetan Government and other institutions. Thinley's job was to clean the living quarters of the *kuten* and he received a small salary in return.

Thinley recalls the final transmission that was sought of the Nechung oracle in the Norbulingka with Chinese troops surrounding the palace. The prophecy suggested that His Holiness the Dalai Lama to flee Tibet. The Nechung oracle and his staff soon left Lhasa as well and Thinley resumed his work in exile in Dharamsala. He served three different *kuten* over a span of 44 years.

Topics Discussed:

Servitude, oracles, first appearance of Chinese, Dalai Lama, Norbulingka.

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Interview #9D

Interviewee: Thinley

Age: 81, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: May 16, 2012

Question: *Pa-la* 'respectful term for father,' please tell us your name.

00:00:11

Interviewee #9D: Name? [My] name is Thinley.

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

#9D: Yes, yes.

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

00:01:40

#9D: Okay.

Q: During this interview if you wish to take a break or stop at anytime, please let me know. If you do not wish to answer a question or talk about something, let me know.

#9D: Okay.

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

00:02:27

#9D: That will not pose a problem.

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

#9D: Okay.

Q: *Pa-la*, I would like to begin by asking you a little bit about where you were born and who was in your family?

#9D: [The birthplace] was Dhagpo.

Q: How many members were there in your home when you were little?

#9D: There were mother, two sisters and two brothers.

Q: What did your family do for a living?

00:03:40

#9D: [We] did farming, cultivating lands.

Q: Where is Dhagpo located, in what area? What is a large city nearby?

#9D: The biggest city?

Q: Yes.

#9D: [Laughs] We never ventured far away, never been. As a child I was called to Lhasa. My family belonged to the Nechung [Monastery] and [I] was called there as a servant when small. Hence, [I] do not have much to say about my region.

Q: Was the land that you farmed, did that belong to the family or was that part of the monastery?

#9D: There was a wealthy family in the region. The land belonged to [them].

Q: Who was the wealthy family?

#9D: I do not know the name.

Q: Did the land belong to the wealthy family?

#9D: Yes.

Q: What were the circumstances that if you tilled the land, what percentage of the harvest did you keep?

00:05:50

#9D: [I] do not know much about it as [I] was small. [My] parents used to handle that and I did not know much. I was called away at a young age. I do not know much about how it was done.

Q: Did you live in Lhasa?

#9D: I lived at the Nechung Monastery in Lhasa.

Q: How old were you when you went to the Nechung Monastery?

#9D: I was 13 years old.

Q: What circumstances brought you to be a servant at the monastery?

#9D: In Tibet, people belonged to someone; the system of *midhak* ‘master’ existed. The Nechung owned [us], which was why [I] was called there as a servant at a young age.

Q: In Tibet were people servants of...were they always servants of a monastery or a government or aristocrats?

00:08:07

#9D: Yes, yes that’s right. We were [subjects] of a monastery.

Q: Were there others that were subjects of the government or private estates?

#9D: Yes, there were. There were those that were subjects of the aristocrats or the government.

Q: What does it mean to be a subject of the monastery?

#9D: There were lands that belonged to the monastery and the subjects worked there. [They] must collect the grains and carry out such tasks.

Q: Did the subjects work on the lands of the monastery?

#9D: Yes, one must work in the fields. Likewise, the aristocrats had their subjects.

Q: Was the work that you did always farmland work or were you called to other duties?

#9D: Yes?

Q: What work did the monastery assign you? Was it farm work or what was it in Lhasa?

#9D: I was called there and [I] carried out tasks within the monastery. I did not have to do any fieldwork.

Q: I see.

00:09:46

#9D: [I] served inside [the monastery].

Q: Was it more favorable to work for a government, a monastery or a rich person? Was there one preferred people?

#9D: [I] do not know. [Laughs]

Q: Were you the only person...I want to understand what groups of people were...what do you call it?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Subjects.

Q: What groups of people were subjects of government or monastery or a rich person? How did people become subjects?

#9D: Each person had a *midhak* in Tibet. The wife would have a *midhak* and likewise the husband would have a *midhak*. I belonged to the Nechung [Monastery]. Being a *midhak*, you could be called to serve.

Q: Who were [your] father and mother subjects of?

#9D: We were the government's.

Q: Who were your father and mother...

00:11:57

#9D: I have never seen my father. By the time I was born, father had passed away.

Q: Whose subject was your mother?

#9D: I do not know. I was small then and have no knowledge.

Q: Do you become a member of a group because your parents were there in the prior generation?

#9D: Right, father was [a subject] of the Nechung [Monastery] and I automatically became one. The legacy was passed from father to son.

Q: If somebody didn't want to become a subject, what would they have to do? If they no longer wished to be the subject of a monastery or government office, what would they have to do or was that not possible?

#9D: One cannot say that [one does not wish to be a subject]. If one was able to, one must go [when the request came] and if not, there was a certain amount of money called *mipho* 'exemption from duty or tax' in Tibet that can be delivered there.

Q: "I do not want to be a subject..."

#9D: One cannot say that one does not wish to be a subject. That cannot be.

Q: *Pa-la*, you said that if you didn't want to go...there was no way you could say that you didn't want to go, but you could pay your way. If you didn't want to go or if your family didn't want you to go, who would they pay money to?

00:14:55

#9D: The money must be offered to the monastery. [It] must be offered to the *midhak*.

Q: And then would the monastery get a replacement for you, is that how they did it?

#9D: Yes.

Q: After the money was offered...

#9D: After the money was offered, you could stay home and do some work. You did not have to go.

Q: What did the monastery do? For instance, if you offered money instead of going there, would the monastery get a new person with the money?

#9D: [The monastery] did not take a new person. [It] did not take a new person.

Q: [It] must take a replacement to do the work.

#9D: Yes, that is right. There were many other people available.

Q: What age was that you went?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Thirteen.

Q: Do you have any idea why the monastery would pick you to go or was it just random selection?

#9D: Selection?

Q: Yes.

#9D: A selection was not necessary. We were three brothers. From the three brothers, while I was called there, the others must pay the *mipho*, pay the money.

Q: For the other two sons?

00:16:50

#9D: Yes, for the others. We were the same. There were three sons and equally obliged to the monastery. It was the same.

Q: You went to work there and there are two other brothers left...

#9D: Money must be delivered for the other two. Another brother was called to work at the *rowo*, where butter and such were made.

Q: Butter?

#9D: Yes. We called it *rowo*. It was to take care of animals—working with animals like *dri* ‘female yaks,’ yaks and such. [He] had to handle this task.

Q: Who?

#9D: My younger brother—no, not my younger brother. It was my older brother. I was the youngest.

Q: Did the animals belong to the monastery?

#9D: Yes, yes. The animals belonged to the monastery.

Q: Instead of paying money, the older brother went to take care of the animals?

#9D: Yes, [he] was called to take care of the animals.

Q: There were three sons. The older one had that and who were the two that didn't want to go?

00:18:35

#9D: The two sons paid money and stayed home to carry out the family's work.

Q: Was that because your parents would prefer to have them at home helping on the farm?

#9D: Yes, that is right. They worked on the farm and such.

Q: What were the benefits, just in general of being a subject to the monastery or the government or rich person? Were there any benefits for you as the subject because they could use you but what did you get from them?

#9D: The monastery gave us a salary for working for them.

Q: In general what benefits would you get from being a subject of the monastery?

#9D: There was no other [benefit]. There was not any.

Q: Couldn't [you] cultivate lands?

#9D: Yes?

Q: Couldn't [you] cultivate lands that belonged to the monastery?

#9D: No, we were engaged elsewhere and there were other people to cultivate the lands of the monastery. We did not have to do that.

Q: [Your] mother farms a land. Did that not belong to the monastery?

#9D: It was not the monastery's land. It belonged to the rich family.

Q: If you were paid a salary, did you give that salary to your mother or father?

00:21:11

#9D: [I] sent a little to the parents, but the salary from the monastery was not a big one. The person belonged there and so there was not much [salary].

Q: What was the little received?

#9D: Yes?

Q: The little received...you received a little salary from there. Did you send it home?

#9D: [I] send it home because they were poor.

Q: When the Chinese invaded Tibet, they said they wanted to liberate the poor people who were the subjects of the monasteries and the government because the subjects were very unhappy and were like slaves. Did that feel like your experience that you were a slave of the monastery?

#9D: Yes?

Q: Is it similar?

#9D: Like?

Q: Is it similar?

#9D: How do you mean?

Q: Were you living like a serf? The Chinese said that all the poor were serfs. Do you feel that you were a serf then?

#9D: [I] am old now. [I] am 81 years old now.

Q: No. You said that you were a servant at the monastery...

00:23:26

#9D: Yes, one must serve there.

Q: [You] lived as a servant. The Chinese claimed that such servants were serfs.

#9D: I see.

Q: Were you like a serf?

#9D: We were not old but young then.

Q: [I] don't mean old but servants, like slaves. The Chinese said that the monasteries and the wealthy were oppressing the poor people. The reason for their coming was for the poor people, the Chinese said. Is that right?

#9D: That cannot be right. [Laughs] That is not so.

Q: What do you think? That isn't so?

#9D: [The Chinese] invaded our country. [They] invaded our entire country and is that helping the poor people?

Q: The Chinese claimed that they had come to liberate the poor.

#9D: Right.

Q: Was the situation so poor that it needed liberation?

00:24:25

#9D: We were not that poor.

Q: Do you mean to say that it isn't true what the Chinese have claimed?

#9D: That is what the Chinese said but we were not that poor.

Q: Was there any way you were free to leave being a servant or being a subject? Was there any way if you chose to leave and go get a job in another city or another town, were you free to do that or were you owned by the monastery or the government?

#9D: How do you mean?

Q: The monastery called you to work there, but if you wished to work somewhere else and not at the monastery—if that was your wish, were you free to go?

#9D: One was not allowed. [We] would not go [elsewhere]. We have paid the money and the person belonged there and [he] was not allowed to go elsewhere.

Q: The monastery had the benefit of your work or the government had the benefit of your work or the rich person did. What did you get in service from, say the government or the monastery; what came to you as a part of that relationship? Was there any benefit?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: That was the payment he spoke about.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: That was it. Just that payment?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: That was it.

Q: Did you feel you got anything besides that payment? Did you get protection? Did you get help? Did you get any kind of care or education? Did you get anything else besides that little salary for going to work in the monastery?

#9D: To the monastery?

Q: From the monastery.

#9D: From the monastery?

Q: Yes, from the monastery to you.

00:27:29

#9D: There was nothing else; nothing else was given.

Q: Wasn't there any other help?

#9D: We continued to serve and lived there. There was not any help that could be given [by the monastery].

Q: Did you feel as a person that the monasteries helped the people whether they were servants or rich? Did you feel that something came, that you got some benefit from all those monks in the monasteries?

#9D: The monastery benefits, but what would I get? [Laughs]

Q: What happened when you went to the Nechung Monastery to be of service? What did you do there?

#9D: What work did [I] do?

Q: Yes.

#9D: The work was cleaning, sweeping and such kinds of things.

Q: What else did [you] do besides cleaning and sweeping?

00:28:58

#9D: [I] went to fetch water. There were no taps in those days like [we] have here. Water had to be fetched. Then [I] cleaned and swept the rooms. [My] responsibility was to serve inside.

Q: Inside what? Inside the monastery?

#9D: Not the monastery. There was the principal figure, the *kuten* 'medium' of the Nechung [one of the main protector deities of Tibet and of the Dalai Lama].

Q: Yes.

#9D: [I] must sweep and do such there.

Q: Inside the living quarters?

#9D: Yes.

Q: In the living quarters of the *kuten*?

#9D: Right, in the living quarters of the *kuten*.

Q: What was that experience like?

00:30:10

#9D: There was not much...[laughs] I do not know.

Q: Was it difficult, easy, joyful; what was it like?

#9D: It was not joyful nor was it very bad then. [I] worked as a servant and was provided with food and lived there.

Q: Can you tell us what is an oracle? Who was the oracle and what does he do?

#9D: *Kuten* is the medium through which the protector deity manifests. [He] is the medium for the protector deity.

Q: What does the state oracle do?

#9D: Yes?

Q: What does the state oracle do?

00:31:39

#9D: The *kuten* is the medium for the protector deity to manifest. [The protector deity] is consulted when we face difficulties. Such things are there in our tradition.

Q: How many years did you clean the room of the oracle?

#9D: Since the age of 13 until 1988. After leaving Tibet, [I] continued to serve and lived at the Nechung Monastery here.

Q: In Tibet?

#9D: After leaving Tibet, [I] continued [my] service here.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Started in 1944. A good 40 years. So 44 years, right?

Q: How many oracles were there between...that you served as individual people between...in those 44 years?

00:33:44

#9D: [You] mean *kuten*?

Q: Yes. How many state oracles have been there between the time you started working there until 1988?

#9D: How do you mean?

Q: How many state oracles have been there?

#9D: How many state oracles?

Q: Yes. How many have been there? It could not have been one.

#9D: No, it was not one *kuten*. There have been three.

Q: Can you please tell us the names of the three?

#9D: I cannot recall [the name] of the earlier *kuten*. The one I served here...When one ages, the memory is not good. [Laughs]

Q: Who was the first one? Do you remember who the...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He cannot remember.

#9D: [Shakes head] ...Really, we...oh, Lobsang Jigme.

Q: Lobsang Jigme, which *kuten* was he? Was he the *kuten* in Tibet?

00:35:01

#9D: [He] was the *kuten* in Tibet and came here. [He] passed away here. [He] is no more.

Q: And the one after him?

#9D: The *kuten* after him is present now.

Q: What is the name?

#9D: Thupten Ngodup.

Q: So when you stop serving the oracle, Thupten Ngodup is still here. Is he here in Dharamsala?

#9D: Yes, he is here now.

Q: Was it scary or an honor to take care of the room and help the oracle? What was that, what did it feel like?

#9D: There's no fear. There is not anything to be scared of.

Q: If you served the Nechung oracle from 1944 to 1988, then you were there when the oracle helped the Dalai Lama escape by giving predictions and help.

#9D: I was there. We were following His Holiness the Dalai Lama when [he] escaped. In the year '59 we were there behind His Holiness.

Q: While in Tibet, the Nechung advised His Holiness the Dalai Lama to leave. When this consultation was going on, were you present at the Nechung Monastery?

00:38:12

#9D: Yes, [I] was. His Holiness the Dalai Lama was staying at the Norbulingka [summer palace of His Holiness in Lhasa]. The oracle prophesied that His Holiness leave. We were at the Norbulingka then. There were numerous Chinese outside.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit—was that Lobsang Jigme who was the oracle at that time?

#9D: Yes, it was Lobsang Jigme.

Q: What was he like as a person because you knew him very closely?

#9D: Yes?

Q: You would have met Lobsang Jigme-*la* many times. What was Lobsang Jigme-*la* like as a person in general?

#9D: I am unable to answer that.

Q: Did you ever see the oracle give a transmission or a prediction?

#9D: Yes?

Q: How can we say this in the honorific term?

#9D: How do you mean?

[Somebody whispers off camera]: *Chendel* 'invoke a deity.'

Q: Have you witnessed the *jendel* of the Nechung state oracle of Tibet?

#9D: [Resets hearing aid] Let me set this.

[Interpreter]: *Chendel*.

Q: *Pa-la*, have [you] witnessed the *chendel* of the Nechung?

#9D: I know the *chendel*.

Q: Have you witnessed it?

#9D: [I] have witnessed it.

Q: When he is getting a transmission, when he's in a state...Can you describe what does it look like when you see that? What do you see?

#9D: Yes?

Q: You have seen a *chendel*. Please describe what it looks like.

00:41:25

#9D: [Laughs and shakes head] When the protector deity manifests, it manifests. [Moves hands and body up and down]

Q: What does he do?

#9D: Whatever is consulted, [the protector deity] gives a prophecy. A consultation regarding a matter is sought and a prophecy given.

Q: Which did you see? Were there any matters that you remember that you were present that he was asked for and then you saw the prophecy?

#9D: Yes?

Q: What were [the prophecies] sought for?

#9D: We would not understand what were asked. One would not understand anything.

Q: I see. Why?

#9D: When matters were consulted, we would be sitting towards the further end [of the room]. And those that sought a prophecy spoke close to [the medium] and [the medium] gave the prophecy but we would not understand it.

Q: What was the *kuten* wearing? I understand he has a big headdress. Can you describe that?

00:43:15

#9D: That is right. The headdress is very tall.

Q: And then? What else was [he] wearing?

#9D: There were many [waves hands near ears] such things made of brocade. There were a number of prayer flags. There were five atop the head and five at the back.

Q: Five?

#9D: Yes, five each.

Q: Five what?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He's moving his hands like flaps.

Q: Did you ever help him move the hat or...because I heard it was very heavy.

#9D: Yes, it is very heavy. We used to say in Tibet that its weight is equal to that of a *khel* of salt. It is very heavy. The base [gestures to top of head] was made of metal with many holes in which five folds of brocade and a *gyaltsen* 'victory banner' stood in the center. It was heavy.

Q: Equal to a *khel*. What is that?

#9D: Yes?

Q: [You] mentioned a *khel* of salt. How heavy is a *khel*?

00:45:14

#9D: There was the *bo* in Tibet, a square wooden box to measure salt. It used to be said that the weight [of the headdress] was equal to that.

Q: You actually saw with your own eyes, the hat, and did you ever see him moving in the trance state?

#9D: I have witnessed the whole [process]. The helpers were monks but we would watch from afar. We were not there [near the oracle] to assist.

Q: *Pa-la*, how often would the oracle be consulted and would there be a transmission or a possession?

#9D: You mean the possession?

Q: How often did it take place?

#9D: It happened often if there were many consultations to be sought. There used to be many in Tibet. The monasteries, the government's aristocrats, the government and His Holiness the Dalai Lama sought [prophecies]. There were many different [departments that sought consultations] and [there were] no limits as such.

Q: Would it happen like once a day or once a week that he would go into his trance?

00:47:52

#9D: There was no fixed time. It could be once a week or once a month. There were not fixed periods.

Q: What is your understanding of who the oracle was getting the transmission from? Where was it coming from?

#9D: Yes?

Q: Which is the protective deity that gives the transmission?

#9D: The protective deity that gives the transmission?

Q: Yes. Which protective deity is it that gives the transmission?

#9D: I do not know that.

Q: Why is he called the state oracle? Why is the Nechung oracle called the state oracle?

#9D: [Speaks before question is interpreted] The protector deity is called Tinlay Gyalpo. It is called Dorjee Dagdhen. There are five forms. There are five forms of transmissions. There are the Dorjee Dagdhen, Tinlay Gyalpo and many others. I cannot say much about it.

Q: So it wasn't just one deity; it was five different types. I see. Do you believe that this was actually happening that a deity was speaking through the oracle?

#9D: Yes.

Q: It's the deity that's speaking?

00:50:04

#9D: Yes, it is the deity that speaks.

Q: Did the voice of the oracle change when the deity was speaking through him?

#9D: Yes?

Q: Did [he] speak in a different voice?

#9D: The voice is different. The usual voice [of the medium] and the one from the deity are different. It is different.

Q: Do you know how somebody becomes an oracle? How were they, like the two that you remember, how did they become oracles? What happened?

#9D: The way of becoming oracles?

Q: Yes. How did...?

#9D: It is passed on. If an oracle passed away suddenly, the deity transmitted through somebody else. It transmitted through a different [person].

Q: In another person?

00:51:38

#9D: Yes. If the present oracle passed away, the deity transmitted through another person. It manifested and transmitted through another person.

Q: Are there other kinds of oracles besides a *kuten*?

#9D: There are others who have transmissions. There are many that receive transmissions from deities.

Q: Where did they live?

#9D: Around here there is one called Yudolma, a deity called Yudolma that transmits. There was the Tsangpa but the *kuten* is no more. [He] passed away.

Q: [I] mean in Tibet.

#9D: In Tibet? There was one called Parithoktsen in Tibet.

Q: Parithoktsen.

#9D: Yes, one called the Parithoktsen. It was a *tsen* 'evil spirit.' There were many but I cannot remember.

Q: It must've been very...

00:53:45

#9D: [Interrupts] Then there was the Samye Monastery. There was an oracle in Samye Monastery. And then...there was an oracle at Lamo Tsangpa. Take Dharamsala for instance, there is the Nechung oracle and there is the Gadhong close by. There is the Gadhong oracle. Then there is the Yudolma.

Q: Do they transmit different deities or the same ones that the Nechung oracle does?

#9D: There are no exactly similar ones. However, the Gadhong and the Nechung are similar. We humans have an older and a younger [sibling], they are likewise. There are many other oracles, but I do not have much knowledge.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Older and younger meaning that the gods were older and younger, or the oracles?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: The deities.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: The deities were older and younger.

Q: So when the Dalai Lama got a prediction from the Nechung oracle he was in the Norbulingka at that time. Is that where the oracle met him or worked his prediction?

#9D: [The Nechung oracle] was at Norbulingka then. [The Nechung] Monastery is located higher up while His Holiness the Dalai Lama was staying at the Norbulingka.

Q: Did [the oracle] come to the Norbulingka?

#9D: [He] came to the Norbulingka.

Q: I see.

00:56:41

#9D: A transmission occurred there [at the Norbulingka] and the prediction was for His Holiness to leave.

Q: Can you remind me why was His Holiness in Norbulingka because it wasn't yet summer? That was the summer palace and it was March, maybe. That's summer but it's quite early.

#9D: It was not exactly summer. It was around the 2nd month if we go by the Tibetan lunar month.

Q: Is the 2nd Tibetan lunar month summertime?

#9D: It was not exactly summer but we say that [His Holiness] lives here in summer and at the Potala Palace in winter.

Q: Do you have remembrances of that night? Would you know when *kuten-la* gave a prediction, a transmission to His Holiness in 1959? Would you know...did you know that it was happening that day or the next day?

#9D: Yes?

Q: When did you come to know about it?

#9D: How?

Q: The advice came that His Holiness the Dalai Lama must leave for India. When did you learn of this? Did [you] learn of it later?

00:58:46

#9D: It was not later. [Seems unsure of question]

Q: The Nechung oracle was invited to the Norbulingka.

#9D: Yes...to Norbulingka.

Q: And a prediction was sought at Norbulingka.

#9D: That is right.

Q: When did you learn of it?

#9D: When did [I] learn of it?

Q: Yes. When did you learn of all this?

#9D: I was there. I was serving there. I was at the Norbulingka.

Q: Did you go where he [the oracle] went?

#9D: Yes?

Q: Did you go along with the oracle wherever [he] went?

00:59:30

#9D: We could not go inside where the transmission took place. We would wait outside. There were monks that served inside while we sat outside.

Q: When, if you found out at all, did you find out what the oracle had told the Tibetan leaders to do? Did you find out at some point?

#9D: We would not know what was foretold inside. It was mentioned that [the oracle] said His Holiness must leave.

Q: When did you hear this?

#9D: When did [I] hear this?

Q: Yes. When did you hear this?

#9D: We heard it the next or the following day.

Q: What did you hear?

#9D: Yes?

Q: What did you hear?

01:01:02

#9D: [I] heard that “His Holiness the Dalai Lama must go out [of the country]. It is not good to stay back.” The Chinese overran the area.

Q: How did you feel when you heard that news that His Holiness must leave?

#9D: [Joins palms] “Now this is extremely good. It would be extremely good if [His Holiness] could leave.” If the Chinese did something to His Holiness, we would be no more. [I] thought it was good and not otherwise.

Q: And what happened to you?

#9D: Yes?

Q: What happened to you at that time?

#9D: To me?

Q: Yes.

#9D: Who?

Q: You heard that His Holiness had to leave. What did you do after that?

#9D: [I] thought that it was extremely good if His Holiness could leave.

Q: What did you do?

#9D: Me?

Q: Yes.

#9D: We were there [at the Norbulingka] and then we returned to Nechung [Monastery].

Q: Back to the Nechung...

#9D: Yes, back...His Holiness had left.

Q: Did His Holiness leave that very night?

01:03:17

#9D: His Holiness left that night and we returned to the monastery, to the Nechung.

Q: The Nechung...

#9D: Yes, to the Nechung Monastery.

Q: And then what happened to you?

#9D: Yes?

Q: What happened to you then?

#9D: Me?

Q: Yes.

#9D: How?

Q: You returned to the Nechung Monastery. And then what happened?

#9D: How do [you] mean?

Q: What did you do after returning to the Nechung...?

#9D: [I] continued to stay at the monastery and serve. One could not move much outside because there were Chinese all around.

Q: And what happened next?

#9D: Yes?

Q: What happened to you next?

#9D: Later?

Q: Yes.

01:04:34

#9D: That very night the Chinese shelled Norbulingka. There were many [Tibetan] soldiers and such at the Norbulingka. The Chinese shelled them all.

Q: And then?

#9D: I do not have much to say. It was immensely sad. It was heartrending.

Q: Was the oracle getting ready to leave himself?

#9D: Yes?

Q: Was the oracle preparing to leave?

#9D: The oracle?

Q: Yes.

#9D: There was the Drepung Monastery, which sought a transmission and the prediction asked the oracle to leave. The deity spoke through the oracle, “The oracle must not remain here. If you can, it is better to leave.” Such was the prophecy.

Q: Was this at Drepung Monastery?

#9D: Yes, at the Drepung Monastery.

Q: [You] went to the Nechung Monastery from Norbulingka. And then...

01:06:12

#9D: We arrived at the Nechung and the Chinese were bombarding everything. So we moved to Drepung. Drepung is more secure which was why [we] moved there. Predictions were sought by many different monasteries about the best way for the oracle and [the prophecy] was, “The oracle must leave.” That night we climbed the pass near Drepung. The oracle was not in good health. [His] legs and hand were not good. We were a few servants with [him].

Q: You left Norbulingka and went to another monastery...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Nechung Monastery.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Back to the Nechung Monastery and then who sought a transmission?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: They shifted from Nechung Monastery to Drepung Monastery, which was more secure, and at Drepung Monastery there was a transmission and during that time it was said that the *kuten* had to leave.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Who gave the transmission? Was it the Nechung oracle?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: The Nechung oracle had another transmission saying that the *kuten* must leave and that’s how...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: And he was the *kuten*.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He was the *kuten* and then it was...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: I got it. I understand. It was the transmission through the *kuten* saying that you, the *kuten* must leave.

Q: Was he an old man?

01:08:58

#9D: [He] was not very old. I am 81 and the *kuten* is a year older. If alive, [he] would be 82 years old now.

Q: So what happened? If he had a problem with his legs, what did you do to get him out of Tibet?

#9D: We, the servants did our best. The mountain pass near Drepung had to be overcome and [we] rode [the *kuten*] on a mule for a distance. One must cross the pass after Drepung since the plains were overrun with Chinese and [we] could not take that route. [We] were on the run. [We] brought him on a mule for a distance and then there were yaks atop the pass. There were yaks in Tibet and [we] hired a yak for the *kuten* to ride.

One reached Gadhong after crossing the pass. It was at night and [we] hired a horse at Gadhong. Other [servants] led [him] away across the river to the other side. We could not proceed that night. After we arrived at Gadhong climbing down the pass, it was dark and there were numerous Chinese vehicles plying on the road.

Q: And what happened to you?

#9D: Yes?

Q: What happened to you after that?

#9D: How?

Q: What happened after you reached Gadhong?

01:12:14

#9D: After reaching Gadhong, the *kuten* was placed on a hired horse and a few senior servants took him across the river where we had an estate. The [Nechung] monastery owned an estate. [He] was escorted to the estate. We could not continue after arriving in Gadhong. So we stayed there.

Q: You stayed at Gadhong and then what happened?

#9D: Yes?

Q: What happened to you after Gadhong?

#9D: I do not have anything to say about Gadhong.

Q: Where did you go after Gadhong?

#9D: We must also cross the river and go to the estate. There were numerous Chinese vehicles passing on the road. That night [we] could not cross the bridge and remained there. Due to the presence of numerous Chinese vehicles, [we] could not cross the road.

Q: And then what happened?

01:13:24

#9D: Early the next morning [we] crossed [to the estate] but by then the *kuten* was not there. [He] had been escorted elsewhere. We followed on foot.

Q: Thank you for a very interesting description of a particular time in history with the oracles.

#9D: Okay.

Q: Did the oracle that escaped, did he continue to give His Holiness predictions or transmissions?

#9D: Yes. [The *kuten*] went to Mussoorie where His Holiness was living then. We arrived later. The *kuten* went to Mussoorie and gave a transmission.

Q: When this oracle died, was there much time before the next oracle came into the picture?

#9D: It did not take much time, maybe around two years. I cannot recall well. I cannot remember but it was not a long time.

Q: So what did you do during those two years?

01:16:51

#9D: I served at the monastery at that time.

Q: Earlier [you] used to serve in the Nechung *kuten*'s living quarters and here?

#9D: I served the monastery. Now [I] live here at Mcleod Ganj.

Q: Thank you. That was very, very helpful for us to understand some aspects of the importance in the work of the oracle.

#9D: Okay.

Q: Is there anything that you would like to add about the story?

#9D: Yes?

Q: Do you have anything to say?

#9D: I do not have anything much to say. [Laughs]

Q: Thank you. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW