

# ASIAN ALPINE E-NEWS

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Panorama view of Minya Konka massif northwest face, Sichuan, China (photo: Wuri Wusa)

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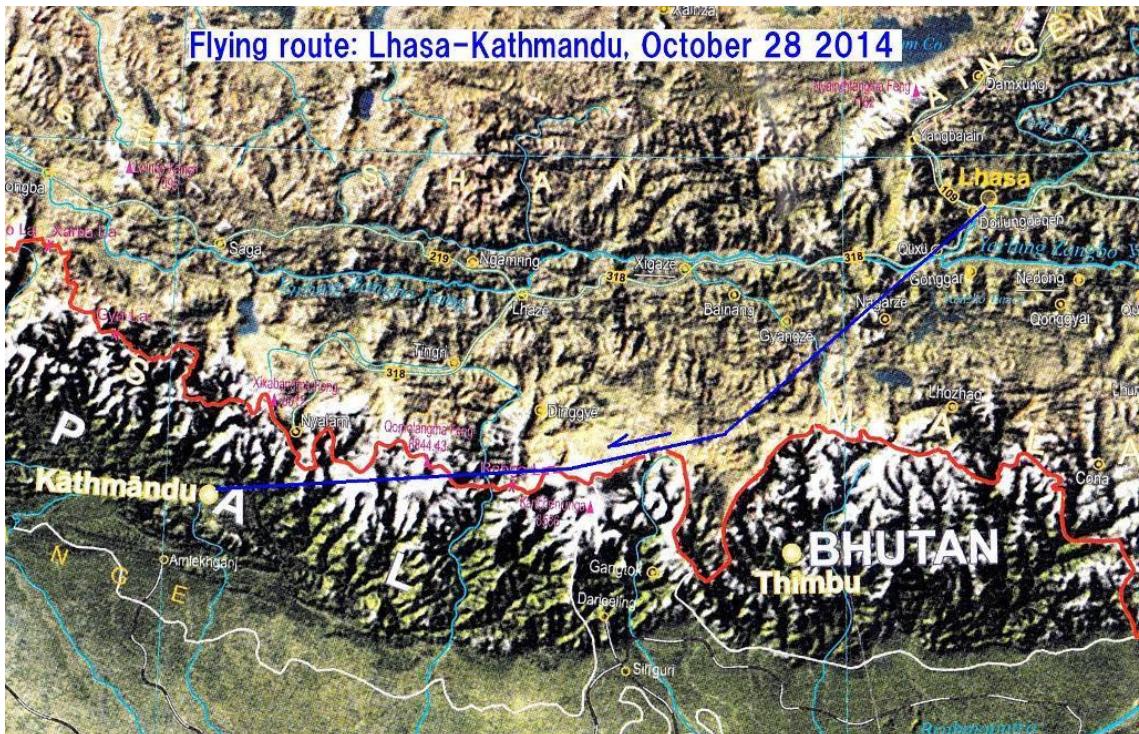
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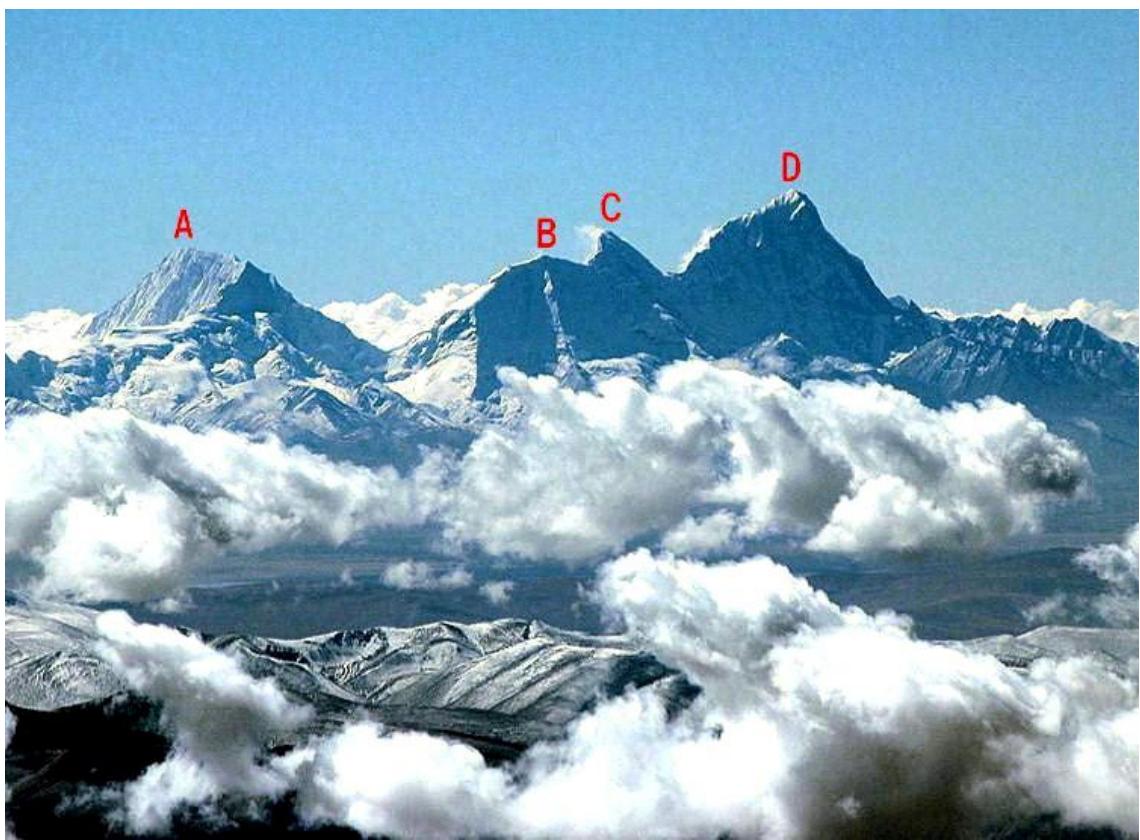
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① Kaluxung 6647m west face (left end) and Lake Yamdrok south of Lhasa

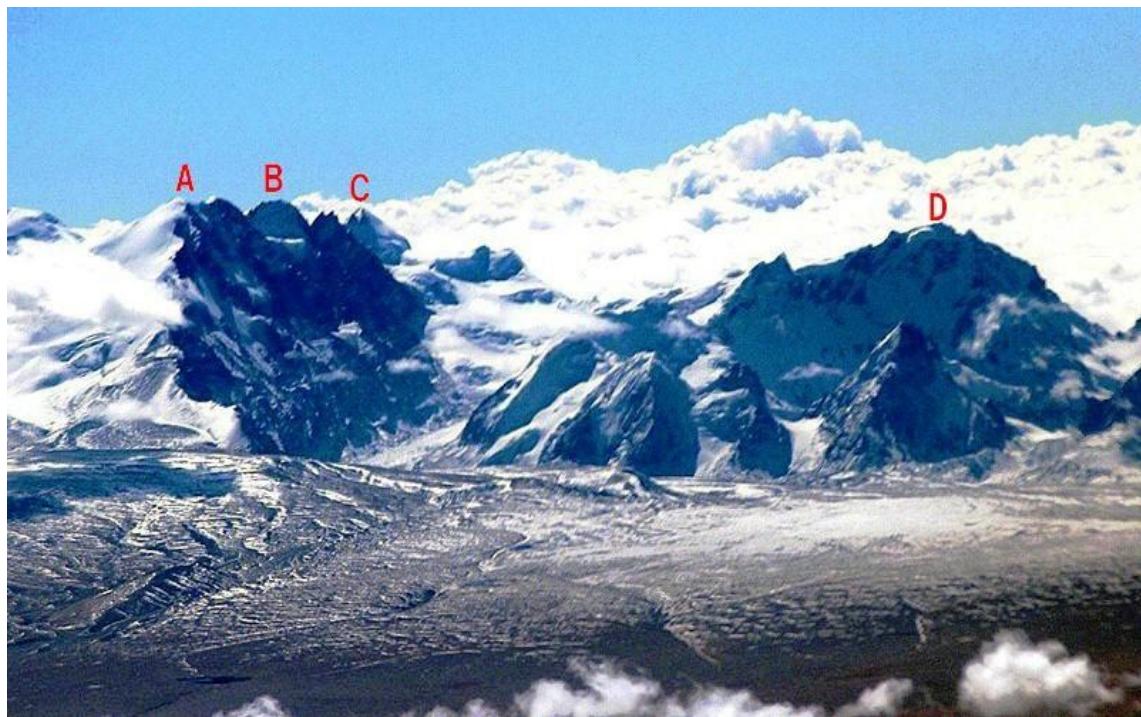
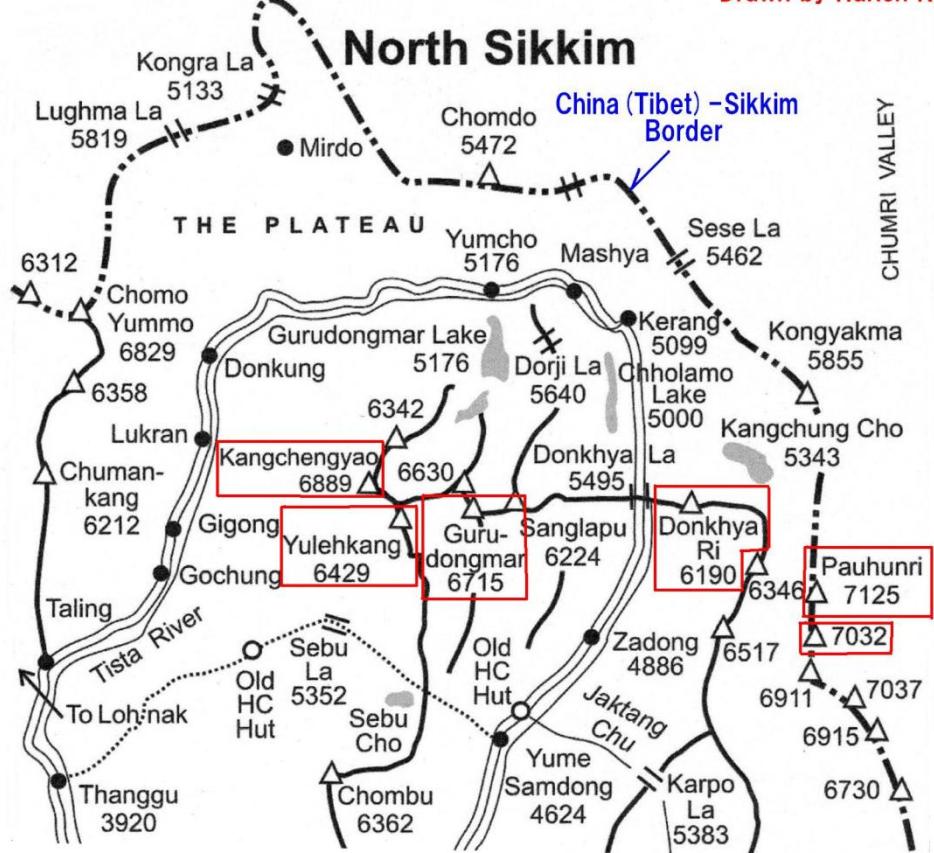


② Masa Gang 7194m inside Bhutan close to China (Tibet) border, NE of Chomolhari



③ A . Jitchu Drake 6793m, B. Chomolhari II East 6920m, C. II 6972m, D. Main 7326m

Drawn by Harish Kapadia



④ A. Pauhunri 7125m, B. Unnamed 7032m, C. Peak 7037m, D. Dongkhyia Ri 6190m  
Foreground: THE PLATEAU SIKKIM



⑤ Kangchengyao 6889m (left), Yulekang 6429m (right)



⑥ Gurudongmar 6715m (left)



⑦ Peaks of “THE PLATEAU SIKKIM” , Tibetan Plateau starting in foreground



⑧ Siniolchu 6887m north face in Sikkim 17km east of Kangchenjunga

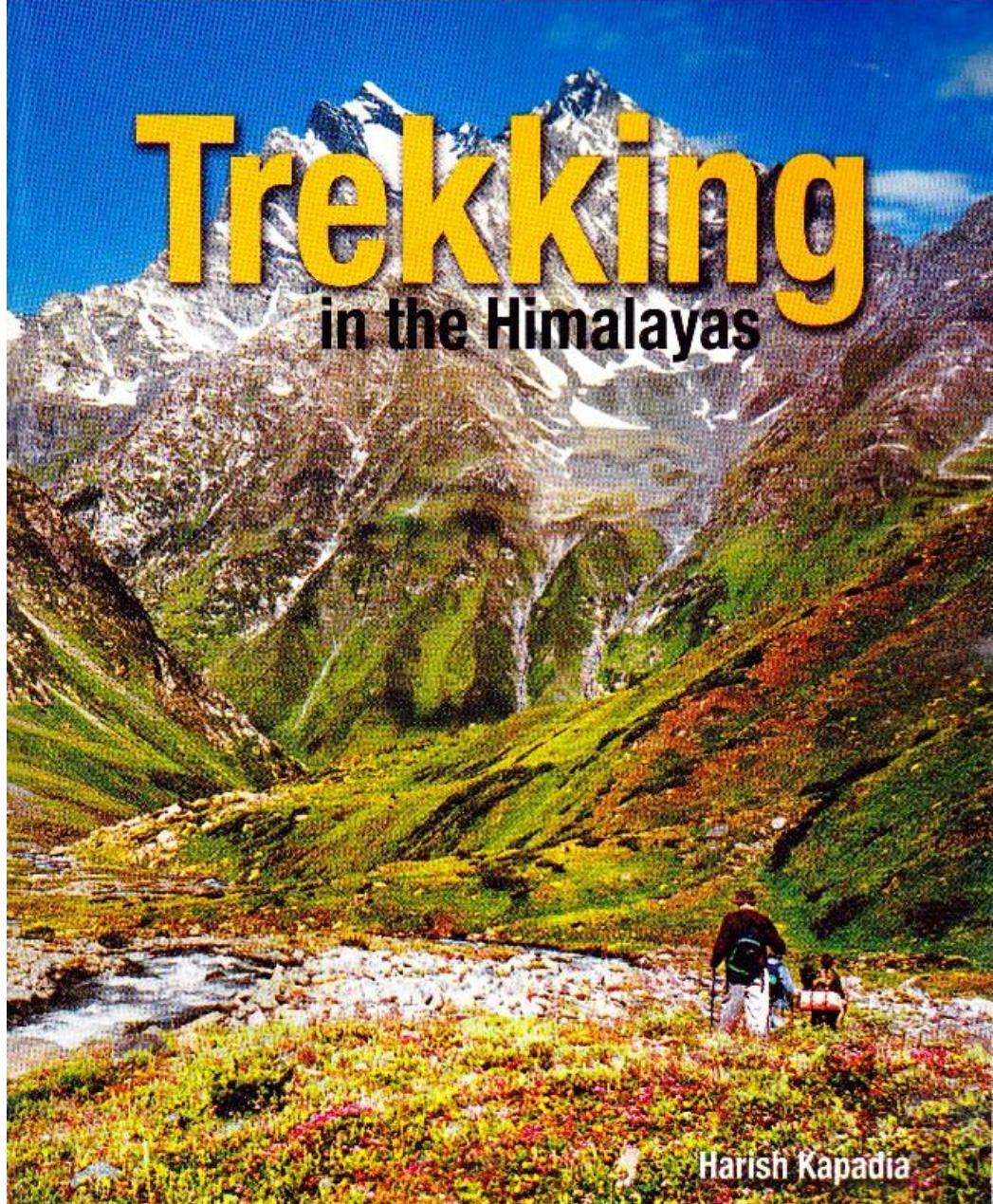


⑨ (from left) Kangchenjunga 8598m, Yalung Kang 8505m, Kanbachen 7903m



⑩ Kangchenjunga Main & South (left), Jannu 7710m (centre), Kabru (right) west face

# Trekking in the Himalayas



Harish Kapadia

Co-Sponsor



Co-Sponsor



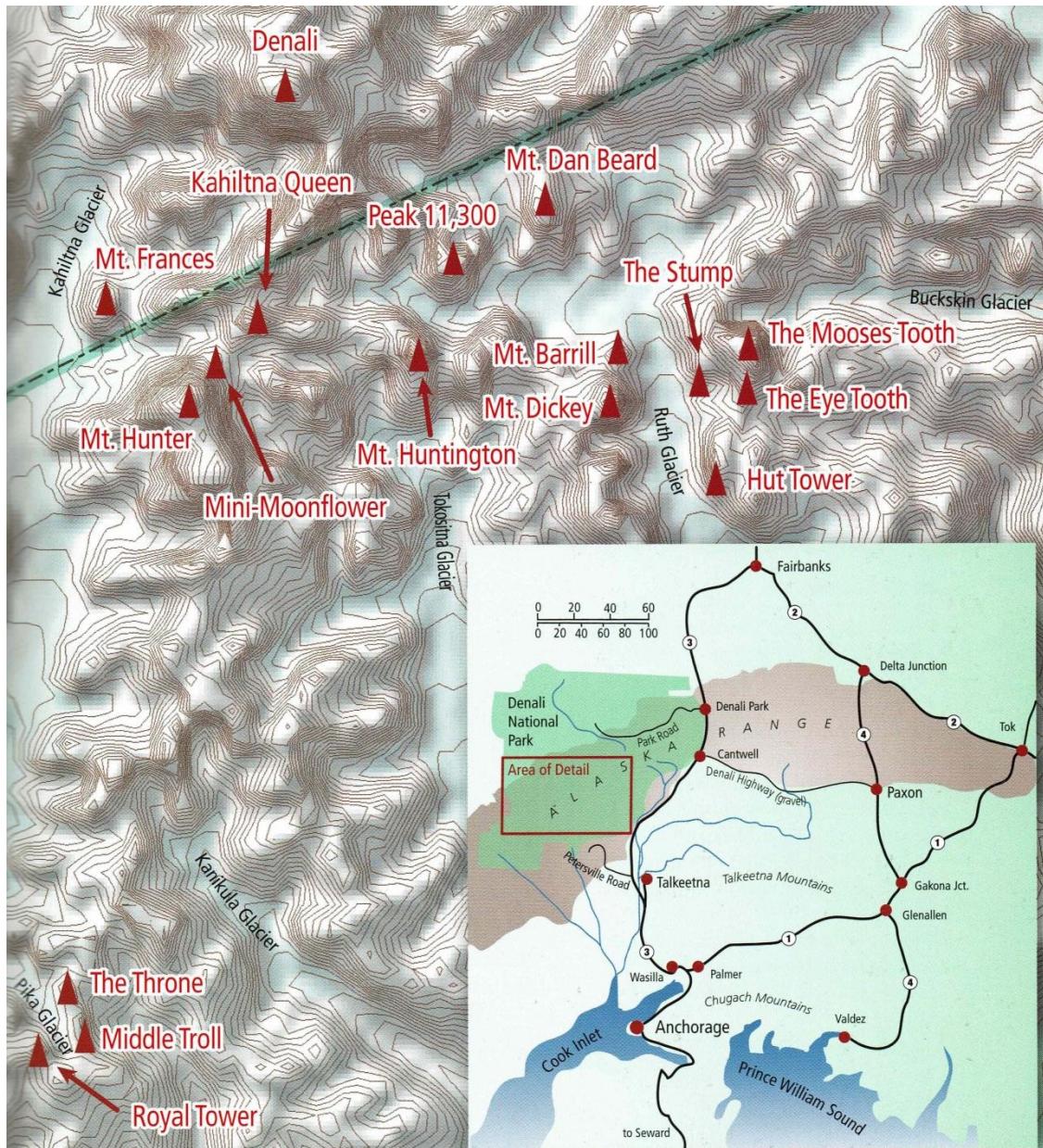
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SUGURU TAKAYANAGI  
Mount Hunter Expedition, Alaska, 2016  
Photos by Yuji Yodogawa and Suguru Takayanagi

Awful snow storm! Why is it so heavily snowing? Blaming against snow continuously dropping down over us, we tried to desperately keep our route on the wall.

**Moonflower – North Buttress, Mount Hunter, Alaska**

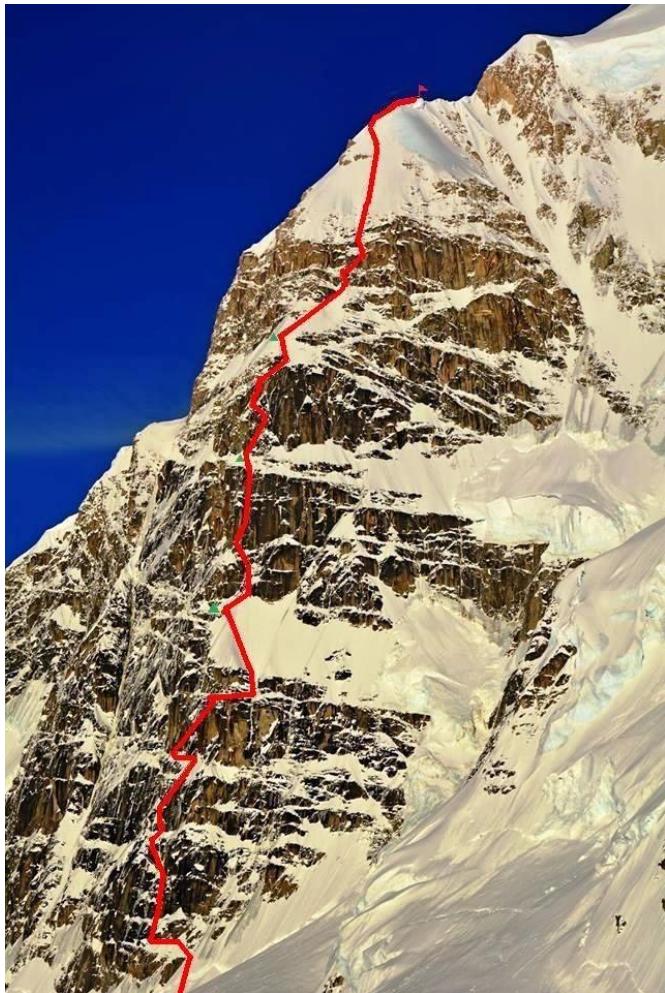


At the beginning of our expedition, as fine weather continued for a while, we optimistically judged we could start the climbing of Moonflower Buttress at any timing we want to do, and it would be easier to reach the top of the Buttress. However, while challenging to “Mini Moonflower,” the weather turned to be unstable conditions. After all, such unlucky conditions remained unchanged until we climbed down from the mountain. In this mountaineering season of Denali, Alaska, it seemed to be all the way unstable weather.

Almost two weeks had passed during we spent our days to do nothing but watching sky at Base Camp. Getting tired for just waiting, we finally decided to start climbing on the next day. Also, we got information from the captain of BC rangers in Denali National Park that according to weather forecast, conditions would improve two days after tomorrow, and fine weather is likely to continue for two days. As originally planning the completion of climbing Moonflower Buttress within 3 days and 2 nights or 4 days and 3 nights, we simply expected that we would achieve our tasks if we endure first 2 days even in bad weather. “The time has come. Let’s climb the wall tomorrow.”



**Mount Hunter north face**



Climbing Line on Hunter north face



Clear sky – The Vision

#### May 8: First day (From Base Camp - 1st Ice Band)

We headed in on the wall at a line of “Mugs Start,” which is one of lower part of variation routes under “Moonflower Buttress” and merged with the original line of routes at 7p. of “The Prow.” “Mugs Start” is almost grade 4 and we orderly earned the height of climbing at relatively good speed. There were a little bit difficult points to find out our way of line, but it was not so big problem to find the route.

We smoothly climbed up on the wall by ensuring our way steadily, but the weather gradually began to change to be worse. When we reached at 7p. of “The Prow,” it was blowing a strong wind and snow very much. From “The Prow,” we focused on going up wiping fresh snow on the wall. This simple but hard works of wiping snow continued endlessly as if being in the northern area of Japan. However, we could reach “The Prow,” while removing snow as well as enduring snow showers. At last, we could climb free in the section of tension traverse. Fighting against snow showers frequently dropping

down, anyhow, we were able to reach 1st Ice Band on the first day.

#### **May 9: Second day (1st Ice Band - 2nd Ice Band)**

We also struggled with falling snow to maintain the ascending route. Due to heavy snow in the morning, we had to put off our departure time for several hours. To wipe away snow at every pitch, we consumed much time. Especially, at the pitch graded as 5.8, we made tremendous efforts to shovel overhung snow. We managed to go through the pitch with artificial aids, not all free because of heavy snow.

At the next ice point of "The Shaft," although the vent was almost covered by large quantities of snow, reliable my partner, Yodogawa aggressively challenged and broke through the point. However, since it took much time to shovel snow, we determined to take a rest at this 2nd Ice Band in the night. I closed eyes wrapped up in fully drenched sleeping bag even though yet 2nd day. "The weather will be fine tomorrow." I strongly wished.

#### **May 10: Third day (2nd Ice Band - 3rd Ice Band)**

As expected, hoped-for sunlight shone gloriously. "Thank you, the sun!" We extremely appreciated the sun like never before. Since we slept in discomfort sleeping bag for several days, we overslept in the warm and calm atmosphere and awoke far after sunrise. We started in a hurry, and our climbing pace was excellent under the sun.

As today's core vision included traverse, we divided the route into 2 pitches. Fortunately, the route was steadily iced, we could go up to 3rd Ice Band easily. At the same time, the weather was gradually changing to windy and snowy conditions. We built a snow shelter for hoping comfort bivouac. Regretfully, we spent a night shaking wrapped by drenched sleeping bag.

#### **May 11: Forth day (3rd Ice Band - Top of Buttress - 3rd Ice Band)**

The wind was blowing and snow was drifting very much on the next day after we spent a freezing night. "Oh, no. Weather forecast said today might be fine." But, we should accept the conditions obediently. That's the way it is.

My partner, Yodogawa asked me that it should be better to stay here today. However, we had only got foods left for this morning. In such plight, I felt that it was impossible to choose bivouac at this point. After the debate, we determined to continue climbing. Under the bad conditions from the first day of the climbing, we consumed foods economically to provide against sudden cases. It bears fruit.

This day, we could go over Final Ice Band. At last, we achieved to ascend to the head

(top) of Buttress. Although the sky was cloudy, I took some blurred pictures. Immediately after taking pictures, we started descending on the wall without spending time to soak in the emotion. Contrary to what we expected, considerable time was required on the way back to the 3rd Ice Band, because the route developed at our ascending had been already covered by iced snow.

Finally, we could come back to 3rd Ice Band. “Oh, my god”! “Where’s our shelter?” We were going around looking for the snow shelter in which our foods were deposited. After searching for 30 minutes or so, Yodogawa finally found the place covered with heavy snow. We came by remaining foods and took a rest. Thank you for olfactory sense of Yodogawa!

#### **May 12: Fifth day (3rd Ice Band - Base Camp)**

The remaining excursion is only the part from the 3rd Ice Band to the foot of the mountain. Repeating stupendous descending exercises, we were able to come back to the ground, even though a trivial mistake occurred. I felt at ease. Though it was up to the head of the Buttress, we accomplished climbing the Buttress. I was fulfilled with a sense of the achievement. It was fortunate that we could climb up and down with no accident even though drifting snow had slowed our progress.



**Climbing in fine day**



**The Prow**



**Tamara Traverse**



**Aided pitch**

Through this expedition, there was no big accident but a trifle of snow blindness occurred on Yodogawa because he did not have sunglasses. Even though spending 5

days and 4 nights, we were able to challenge the head of Buttress during bad conditions as well as ascending the towering Northern Buttress of Mount Hunter. I was deeply satisfied with our successful results.

As a summary of this climbing, I have affirmed my confidence that our repeated training in Japan is a very effective to climb such steep wall, no matter how much precipitous may be. Of course, when seeing a towering wall like Moonflower, higher than those in Japan, the scale of the wall overwhelms us as well as daunting our feelings. But this expedition identifies that our diligent practices in Japan has led to the success. Moreover, our stance that we don't care getting wet, which is cultivated through climbing mountains in Japan, takes advantages in a bad weather. On the other hand, there was no serious problem on our climbing techniques, but we have keenly realized that it is most important to develop our body strength as well as accelerating our climbing speed further more.

This Mount Hunter expedition was a precious experience which gave me the confidence to challenge other mountains in the next year onward.

#### **Climbing Schedule (Date/Time) May 8 through 12, 2016**

May 8: am 6:30: Start climbing, pm 10:00 1<sup>st</sup> iceband

May 9: am 8:20 1<sup>st</sup> iceband, pm 11:00 2<sup>nd</sup> iceband

May 10: am 11:00 2<sup>nd</sup> iceband, pm 9:00 3<sup>rd</sup> iceband

May 11: am 9:00 3<sup>rd</sup> iceband, pm 4: Top of Buttress, pm 9:00 3<sup>rd</sup> iceband

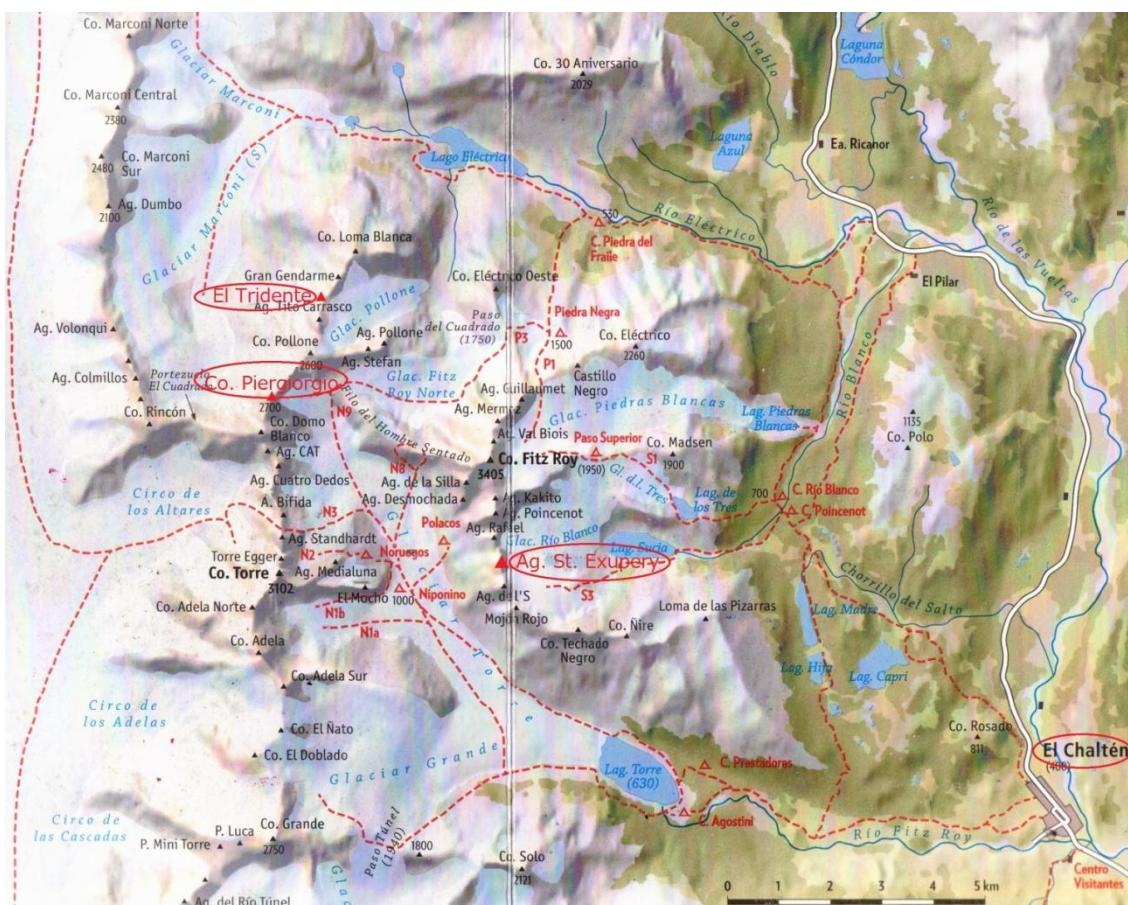
May 12: am 8:00 3<sup>rd</sup> iceband, pm 7:00 Landed

KATSUTAKA YOKOYAMA

## Two New Routes in Patagonia

South summit of El Tridente, West face & Cerro Piergiorgio, West face

Since first visit to Fitz Roy massif in 2012, I and my climbing partners have visited to the same place with even more motivation because the more we visited to there, the more possibilities in the mountain we found.



*The mountains where we climbed in 2016 are marked in red circle  
(from Patagonia Vertical, Sidarta, 2012 ©Roland GARIBOTTI, Dorte PIETRON)*

In this range, I first wished to do bigwall free climbing which needs high level climbing skills. But as soon as we got there, I was totally realized that our climbing skills were out of question for such a big ambition. Since then, I and partners has trained for that kind of climbing in all over the world, and returned to Patagonia, tried some untouched lines in the mountain. At the same time, we were taken in by Fitz Traverse that is whole ridge line traverse of Fitz Roy massif, finally first done by two strong American

guys in 2014. Though Fitz Roy massif has a rich climbing history for nearly 100 years, there are still countless possibilities for the first ascents.

In January of 2016, I and my partner Takaaki Nagato returned to El Chalten where the base camp for Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre massif. Our main aim was Fitz-Traverse; this is

still big project for a climber, worth trying! But for us, it needs at least a week of good weather window to try that. So, we had some of other objectives in our mind, and would try those as any cases.

Once the weather turns to be bad, it seems almost impossible to get into the mountain. Sometimes bad weather will continue a couple of weeks.



***Photo) Bouldering around the town is fascinating.***

In 2014, third and last visit to Fitz Roy massif, whole period of our two months in El Chalten was suffered by endless rain and strong wind. All we could do was just bouldering around the town; we understood this was also an aspect of Patagonia climbing, but not wanted to at all.

This time, we got luck! The first window came soon after we arrived. My partner Nagato who couldn't do anything in 2014 got psyched just to go outside of the town. Anyway, we first needed to do warm-up, so headed into Torre Valley.

#### **Jan. 10: Aguja St. Exupery, South Face, “Last Gringo Standing”**

#### **550m 13 pitches 5.11c, First Free Ascent**

We onsighted all pitches finding difficulty up to 5.11c. The route is quite nice with solid rock, following obvious splitter all the way. The crux pitch was a little bit icy and wet finger crack, but we were able to put good protections into it. We understood the reason why first ascensionist didn't do free climb, should be filled much ice and snow inside the crack.

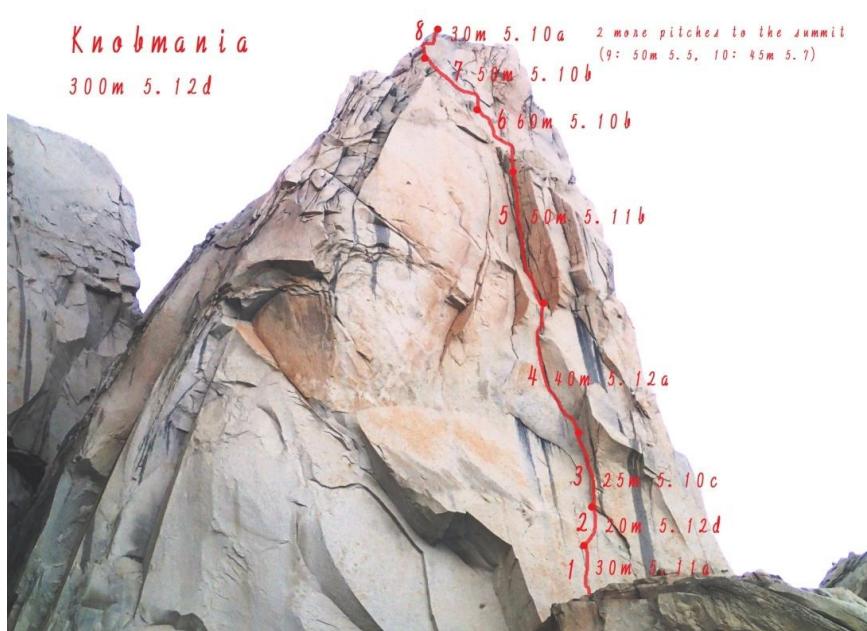
We stood on the summit at 8 pm, rappelled via Austriaca. After 13 times of rappelling, we reached to the base of the wall at 1 am, then kept descending on approach gully.

With short nap under small cave, we finally reached to our tent at 7am of the next day. It took 27 hours roundtrip from Niponino to Niponino. This was a good, pretty tough, and very fun warm up. While resting at the town, we enjoyed bouldering around there. This is also a good reason why I head down to the South this season. There are over 2000 boulder problems around. This time, we rented a cabin named Sur Azur located at the end of the town. From there, it takes only 5 minutes walking to impressive boulder, Vaca Muerta. We bouldered almost every evening, and sent some fun boulder problems.

Well, the weather forecast said it would be good window again for several days. But we didn't try Fitz Traverse this time. It seemed to be pretty short window for that. And we needed one more warm-up. For those reasons, we decided to head for Glacier Marconi Sur where has some of unclimbed objectives.

We hiked into the glacier on Jan. 18th. Our main aim was traverse of Pollone massif. But as we arrived to the base camp just above the glacier, we met to Carsten von Birckhahn and his partners who were going to try the same objective next day. We didn't like to race with anybody in the mountain, so decided to try Plan B; which looked pretty nice alternative. The west face of El Tridente has steep face, solid rock, connecting some cracks. All of which would be factors of good challenge to free climb. For us who are not strong climbers, it was clear to take long time to free climb all the way, so we carried bivy gear.

**Jan. 19, 20: South summit of El Tridente, West face, "Knobmania",  
300m 10pitches 5.12d, new route**



We left our base camp at 4 am, reached the base of the wall in 2 hours easy walk. Easy snow gully took us to the base of obvious crack system.

P1: 30m, 5.11a;  
Perfect splitter on a vast face with lots of knobs

around. Except for cold temp, climbing itself was enjoyable. We found an anchor on top of the crack should be left by a team tried it in 2014.

P2: 20m, 5.12d; Crux pitch. The first part of it looked puzzle; traverse 5 meters to the right to next crack using slopy knobs with only one piece of small cam.

I was thinking this part should be a crux. However the moves were very technical with scary run-out, this part was not a true crux (5.11+). I managed to reach to next crack, then put second gear. As I looked up the rest of part, crack was shallow and flaring on slightly overhanging face.

With more technical sequences and steepness of the wall, my forearms soon got pumped.

I took a fall on 2/3 of the pitch. It was regrettable for sure, but my mission had not been finished. I kept climbing upward with cleaning inside cracks, figuring out all moves. After all works to small ledge where I made an anchor, I realized it would take long time to red-point this pitch, or couldn't it in a day. So I left some gears that I set on 1<sup>st</sup> try; this meant I would do pink-point. It took 4 tries to free climb this pitch, over three hours of struggling and bleeding from my hands.

I'm not sure the real grade; for me, it's almost impossible to rate an accurate grade only for one portion of the mountain; but pretty sure this wasn't easy, and more important fact was, this pitch was super fun and challenging climb! What this climb of this pitch made me more memorable was, I tried this pitch with much of pressure not to execute my mission- free climbing. I'd never had such kind of feeling in the mountain. It was totally different type of pressure from what I had in other mountain before.

If some stronger climber would try this pitch, I hope them to link first two pitches for better climbing style; ledge to ledge, if so, the grade should be at least 5.13a/b.

P3: 25m, 5.10c; Fun corner with tons of knobs to slopy ledge.

P4: 40m, 5.12a; Second crux. As seen from the base camp, this part looked overhanging wide crack. In fact, there were another crack and good holds to the left of main crack. Still, this pitch was too steep to climb with comfort, especially after climbing of 5.12d. Technical corner to fun face climbing to pumpy overhanging layback. Nagato sent this pitch on third go.

P5 to 9: 240m, up to 5.11b; Except for some loose section, climbing was fairly easy and fun with solid rock. The higher we climbed upward, the less steepness the terrain got. After an easy slab climbing, we found a small notch where we bivied.

Next morning, we climbed the rest part (P10: 45m 5.7), then stood on the summit. However strong wind was blowing, we were very happy to reach a real goal with better style. Even though the wall was not any big, I can say this was my hardest rock climbing in the mountain range so far.

At the point of our bivy site, we luckily found a rappel anchor heading to the col between this peak and southern neighbor Tito Carrasco. 6 easy rappels took us to the gully, then walked off. We reached to our base camp by noon.

We named this new line, “Knobmania” which regards for lots of knobs on the route, especially on crux pitch. Without those knobs, I can imagine the climbing would be way harder.

Next day, before back to the town, we walked into the base of the west face of Cerro Piergiorgio for searching new lines. Red colored steep pillar which locates on the right end of this huge wall looked cool, and seemed to be unclimbed. So we left some gears on the glacier for next climb.



*Left) Nagato leading the 1<sup>st</sup> pitch (5.11a), perfect splitter with hands size.*

*Right) Nagato following crux 2<sup>nd</sup> pitch (5.12d). It took over three hours to solve it.*

After a week of rest and bouldering exercise, we got another weather window, what a lucky trip this was. Now, we had two options; Fitz Traverse or Piergiorgio, both seemed attractive. We were not sure this window would be long enough for Fitz Traverse. And since last climbing on Glacier Marconi Sur, Piergiorgio had been even more challenging target in our mind.

We went back to Glacier Marconi Sur on Jan 29th, set a camp on obvious ramp that leading to the bottom of Piergiorgio’s massive west face.

Jan. 30, 31: Cerro Piergiorgio, West face, “Pilar Canino”,



500m 17pitches 5.12b, new route

Our aim was not only climbing the pillar itself, but also reaching to the real summit of Piergiorgio. So we carried crampons, ice axes, ice screws for climbing on summit ridge. In addition to that, we wished to put up new route as “all free”. This meant we needed to carry bivy gear as well.

P1 to 3: 110m, up to 5.10d; Mostly easy, some nasty corner to the big ledge.

P4: 40m, 5.12b; Crux pitch. Very powerful fingertip layback. Technical and pumpy. Nagato led it on 2<sup>nd</sup> go. You can also bypass this by climbing to the left of wide crack.

P5 to 10: 230m, 5 of those were 5.11; Crack varied all sizes. In all pitches, there were offwidth. The rock and cracks were super solid. We were able to climb those pitches as if we would climb in Yosemite!

When we reached to a perfectly flat ledge, the sun timely set. We had a good night at there.

Next morning, we headed for left hand of super clean overhanging face which has some cracks that expected as “perfect hands crack”. But after two pitches of climbing (P11: 50m 5.10b, and 20m of 5.11d), we understood that wasn’t hands size, that was actually flaring thin finger crack on overhanging wall. We rappelled 10meters, then tried to join right hand obvious crack system that we originally avoided because of looking nasty overhanging offwidth. Traverse to that crack system was scary slab climbing with poor protection (P12: 20m 5.11a), climbing directly up from bivy ledge is recommended (40 to 50m, around 5.10?)

P13, 14: 50m 5.11c; Overhanging hands crack all the way. Super exposed!

P15, 16: 60m 5.11c; Very tough overhanging offwidth. This was totally nightmare for us.

Nagato led pitch 16 at the last moment of water-free condition. By the time I started to follow this, frozen rime ice above has already melted, then water has been running on the line...Then the terrain finally got easier.

P17: 60m 5.6; An easy slab to one of the small peak of summit ridge.

As soon as we saw the summit ridge heading to the real summit, we totally realized keep climbing to there was out of question for our gear. It was obvious, so we didn’t get any much regrets.

We soon started to rappel the route. Luckily, there were some rappel anchors by two American guys, so descending was quite easy. Three hours later, we safely reached to the base of the wall, then walked off. We went back to our base camp at midnight.

This climb was not especially hard, but totally tough because half of the route was offwidth. Anyway, we are very happy to put up new route on such an impressive wall.

And thanks to two American guys; Joe Kauffman, and Jonathan Schaffer, who tried more or less the same line two weeks before we climbed. They kindly gave us some beta, and shared the joy of climbing there.

We named this line as “Pilar Canino”; because of its appearance, cracks on whole route bite us like mad-dog, and as a memory of our close friend Kenshi Imai who disappeared in Himalaya in November of 2015. Canine in Japanese is Kenshi.



*The crux pitch with fingertip layback*

*Half of the route was offwidth  
This pitch, Nagato following Overhanging  
15<sup>th</sup> pitch (5.11c).*

After coming back to the town, we still had nearly a month for climbing here. After three “warm-up”, we were finally ready to go our main target. It took nearly a week of rest to recover our body from climbing on Piergiorgio. In the meantime, the weather had been changing. Even in the town, we got rain every day, strong wind was blowing. The mountain was covered with thick cloud. We woke up in the morning with hope, but as soon as checking the latest weather forecast, we hung our heads. Still, there were many activities that we could do here. Hiking, bouldering, and time trial on multi pitch crag by the town.

After all, we left the town at the end of February. But that's OK. Three climbs this time were all substantial for us. Even if all of those were not especially hard, not big, but totally awaken us to free climb on virgin wall.

There should be more lines like that somewhere in the world. I really would like to seek those in the future.

And I'm sure I will come back to Fitz Roy massif again. I and my partners have a solid feeling that this massif would make us even stronger as a climber.

URBAN NOVAK  
First Ascent of Cerro Kishtwar's East Face, Piolets d' Or 2016  
Two New Routes on Cerro Kishtwar and Chomochior in 2015

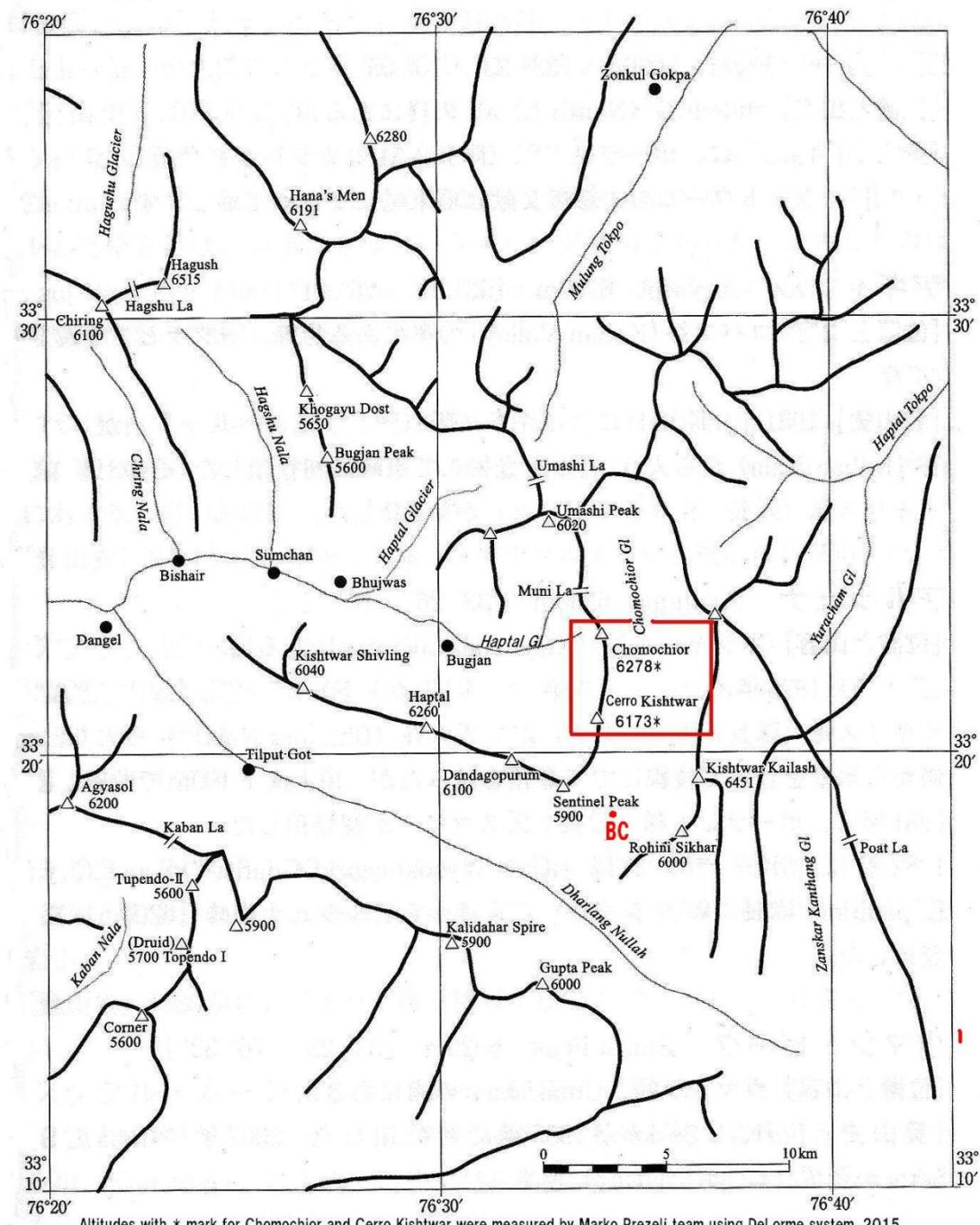
*“The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short: but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.”*

Cerro Kishtwar's East Face new route Light before wisdom (foto: Marko Prezelj)



## KISHTWAR-East

(from "Indian Himalaya" JAC Tokai Section, 2015)



In the fall of 2014, during the ascent of Hana's men, Marko Prezelj took a picture of an exceptional accumulation of mountains in eastern Kishtwar. Of all the mountains in the photo, the black pyramid of Cerro Kishtwar (6173 m\*) stood out the most. I was intrigued enough to start thinking about going there.

Before Kashmir became officially closed to foreigners, the area had been "claimed" by British mountaineers. It is no wonder that they have been involved in all attempts and ultimately also in the first successful ascent of Cerro Kishtwar. Before they gathered the courage and tried to climb Cerro Kishtwar, they had summited the nearby peaks. In 1983, Stephen Venables and Dick Renshaw climbed the north face of Kishtwar Shivling (5935 m) in pure alpine style. In 1988, Roger Everett and Simon Richardson made the first ascent of Chomochior (6278 m\*) along the west ridge. Foto below: south ridge new route 2015 of Chomochior. [Note] All fotos are of Marko Prezelj unless otherwise specifically mentioned.



The first to stand below the north-west face of Cerro Kishtwar were Mick Fowler and Mike Morrison (in 1989) with no positive yield. The first real attempt to climb this mountain was made in 1991 by Brendan Murphy and Andy Perkins. They managed to

climb to 100 meters below the summit via the north-west face. They were climbing in “capsule style”, and spent 17 days on the wall. In 1993, Mick Fowler returned together with Stephen Sustad. They climbed up ice runnels in the left part of the north-west face. The route leads to a notch on the north ridge, from where the British continued along the north-east face to the north peak. The neighboring south peak appeared to be higher, and hence traversing there was inevitable. This was also the last year when it was possible to obtain a climbing permit for this part of India.

Alpinists officially revisited the area only in 2011. That year, the Swiss Denis Burdet and Stephan Siegrist, the Austrian David Lama, and the American Robert Frost climbed a new mixed route on the right side of the north-west face of Cerro Kishtwar, which leads to the south peak. All the ascents and attempts on Cerro Kishtwar were made from the Haptal glacier, which lies on the north-western side of the mountain. The valley on the opposite side of the mountain has not seen a lot of visits from alpinists in the past. In 2013 it was visited by Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden, when they accomplished the first ascent of Kishtwar Kailash (6451 m). In the summer of 2015 the area was also visited by a Swiss expedition which intended to climb on Chomochior .

In addition to Marko’s enthusiasm about the region and his photo, Mick’s photo of Cerro Kishtwar and the neighboring Chomochior, which he took while climbing on Kishtwar Kailash, was convincing enough that on October 10<sup>th</sup>, a group of people met in Delhi: Hayden Kennedy (from the USA), Manu Pellissier (from France), and Marko Prezelj and Urban Novak (both from Slovenia). We drove to Manali and met our agency above 14,000ft, Kaushal Desai.

In two days we arrived at Gulabgarh, starting point of a four-day trek to base camp. The first two days we walked along a populated trail towards a village of Machail of a famous Hindu temple. The second half of the hike to base camp led us through the colourful Darlang Nullah valley with no more permanent settlements. The eastern Kishtwar region is also interesting from a cultural point of view, since three religions interweave here: Buddhism from the north, Hinduism from the east, and Muslim from the west. Fotos below: left-Trek to BC down to Darlang Nu valley, right-ABC in the middle of glacier.



Our base camp was set up at the mouth of the Chomochior valley. After a day of rest, we began to explore the eastern side of Cerro Kishtwar and Chomochior. After a three hours hike up the valley, we set up ABC on a small sand dune in the middle of a glacier covered with stones and rocks. Before onset of bad weather having lasted for a few days, we examined the possibilities of ascent on Chomochior and Cerro Kishtwar. There was very little snow and ice on the faces. The lower halves were dry.

At 3900 metres base camp, it rained and snowed from 21 to 23 September. After shoveling 30 cm of snow in 23 September morning, impending floods happened. From the steep eastern slopes just above base camp, the rain flowed in waterfalls to the plain near the camp. Only a mound of shoveled snow around the base camp ensured that most of our tents remained dry. Manu had no such luck; he became homeless due to flooding of his tent. In the coming hours we made drainages.

On 26 September, we began ascent of Chomochior. We went up to ABC, a broken tent and wet equipment. Then we repaired the tent. From ABC onwards we broke trail through deep snow. During snowfall we set up the first bivouac in an excavated flat area on a broad saddle between Cerro Kishtwar and Chomochior. Due a lovely sunrise, the departure was postponed to later in the morning. From the saddle we were looking for the easiest way along the south ridge of Chomochior. In the upper part the ridge became exposed and in places also technically demanding. We made three short rappels to bypass sharp gendarmes. By the evening we had climbed up to the end of the snow-covered rocky ridge, and set up a second bivouac at a height of approximately 5900 metres. The next morning we set off towards the peak without any bivouac equipment, and we reached it, in favorable conditions, around eleven in the morning.

Throughout the climb from the second bivouac, we admired the outstanding scenery of peaks dominated by the neighboring Cerro Kishtwar.

[Cerro Kishtwar got its name precisely because of its spiky form, reminiscent of the Patagonian peaks]. During the days of climbing on Chomochior we were wondering how our friend Manu was doing. His chest pain had disappeared after two days. He, too, was ready to climb on our main goal. Fotos below: left above-Second vivy at 5900m to Chomochior, right above-To the summit of Chomochiar, below large foto-Summit of Chomochior.



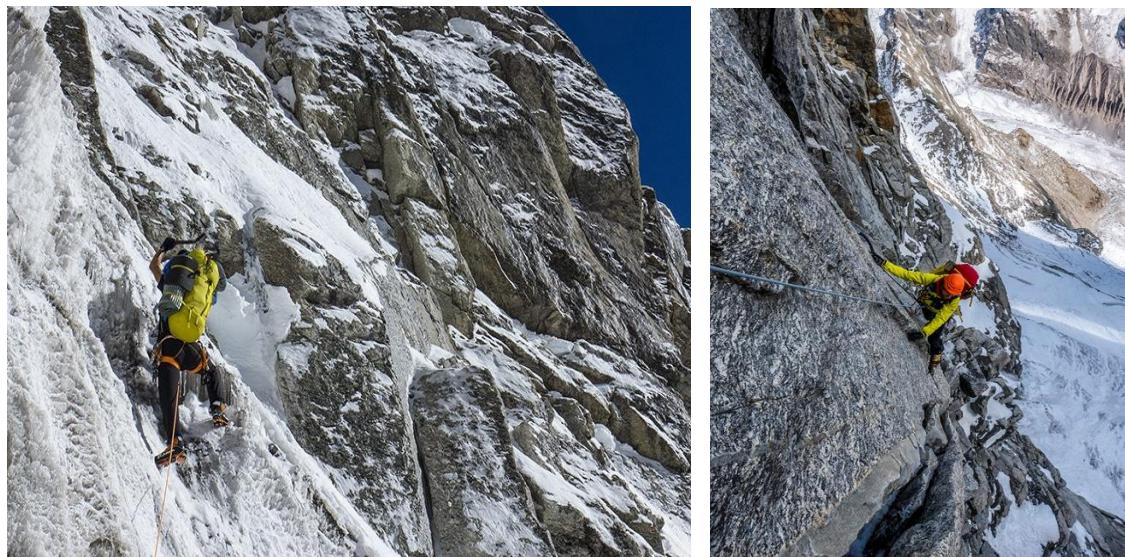
Following three days of rest, we were back to the ABC. In the afternoon, we continued the approach under the east face of Cerro Kishtwar in cloudy weather and a light whirl of snowflakes. Initially, we seriously examined the north-east face of Cerro Kishtwar. The face seemed to offer many possible routes, but the view from Chomochior had revealed that it was covered by a large amount of fresh snow. During this time of year the face received almost no sun, so we did not count on any major changes that would improve the conditions during our rest in base camp. The alternative was the east face. Since this face is steeper than its neighbor, and because morning sun reaches the wall when the sky is clear, we expected less fresh snow and thus more favorable conditions for climbing. Foto below: Cold and clear morning on a wide pass between Cerro Kishtwar and Chomochior.



On 4 October, while it was snowing till night, we set up two tents under the east face. . In the morning we made a two-hour approach to the face. Uncertainty ahead and technically challenging wall put pressure on the younger and less experienced part of the team. Towards the left a prominent couloir offered more feasible route. Marko showcased why he is what he is in alpinism. On the first day we made mainly climbing almost 300 metres wall. In the evening we pushed another two rocky pitches, and in the snow below them, we dug a narrow ledge for two small tents. The night was

“comfortable” with clear sky. On the following day we continued to climb the steep and softened ice corroded by sun leading to four pitches of a long ramp of hard ice. The ramp ran into a branched system of corners. About half way up these corners, we were caught by the night. At two o’clock in the morning after gaining a total of about 600 metres of elevation, we crawled into our sleeping bags on a small ledge dug into steep snow. The sky was clear.

Fotos below: climbing on Cerro Kishtwar east face, left-by Urban Novak.



A wide crack and a chimney with a steep ice brought us to a point difficult to find the route ahead. It appeared to be two difficult pitches where we would have probably needed to employ some aid climbing skills to be able to reach the summit slopes. A diagonal traverse towards the right led into the north-east face. Soon he set up an anchor on the north-east face covered in a heavy blanket of snow, and shrugged: “I do not know if this goes??” “Give me the gear!” was Marko’s response. A man of action. Thirty metres of complex slabs covered with piles of fresh snow, and still a raised thumb followed. We all just laughed. Powdery snow made sure that the climbing continued far into the night. The exit chimney ended at the last anchor in the rock below the cornice, about twenty metres from the summit of Cerro Kishtwar. Manu and Marko set up their tent on the very top, and Hayden and I set up ours just a metre lower. direction. We descended from the summit along a couloir in the left part of the east face, mostly by rappelling. In the upper part we were surprised by the fact that there was no snow/ice

there. Owing to three days of clear weather, the descent in the lower part was more like canyoning than descending an ice route on a six-thousander. In all 1,200 metres, we could only set up one Abalakov anchor, all the other anchors were set in rock, one of them with ice screws. We caught the perfect time for climbing, because after we descended, the bottom part of the face had no more ice which had enabled us—in spite of its questionable quality—a successful ascent.

Foto below: morning on the summit of Cerro Kishtwar.



We reached base camp that same night. The next day we cleaned up base camp, and a day later, on 10 October, we started a quick descent back into the “synthetic” world. In two days we descended 60 km to the road in Gulabgarh, and the next night we arrived in Manali. That was followed by an overnight ride to Delhi and then our flights home.

#### **FACTUAL INFORMATION AND REFERENCE:**

Cerro Kishtwar and Chomochior lie in the eastern Kishtwar (Indian Kashmir Himalayas). \*We measured the altitudes of their peaks by using the DeLorme system .

We met in Delhi on 10 September 2015. The base was set up on 17 September at the mouth of the Chomochior valley. The grassy plain at the height of 3900 metres, under a 20-metre granite wall (where the Swiss expedition equipped a few sport climbing routes), offered us a safe shelter for those 22 days which we spent in this valley. We left India on October 16. Foto in next page: base camp at 3900 metres.

Climbing part of the team: Manu Pellissier (FRA), Hayden Kennedy (USA), Marko Prezelj and Urban Novak (SLO). Indian part of the team: guide Bagwal Thakur (India), cook Amer Gurung (Nepal), federal officer Mohan Lhak (India), and cook's assistant Bhupender Kumaar Thakur – Betoo (India).

– **Chomochior (6278 m\*)**: south ridge, D+, 1400 m. A new route and the third ascent of the summit. Ascent accomplished between the 27 and 29 September 2015; climbers were Marko, Hayden and Urban.

– **Cerro Kishtwar (6173 m\*)**, east face: Light before Wisdom, ED+ 1200 m (5.11, WI6, M6, A2). A new route and the third ascent of the summit. The route, which we named Light before Wisdom, was climbed between 5 and 8 October 2015 by Marko, Manu, Hayden and Urban.

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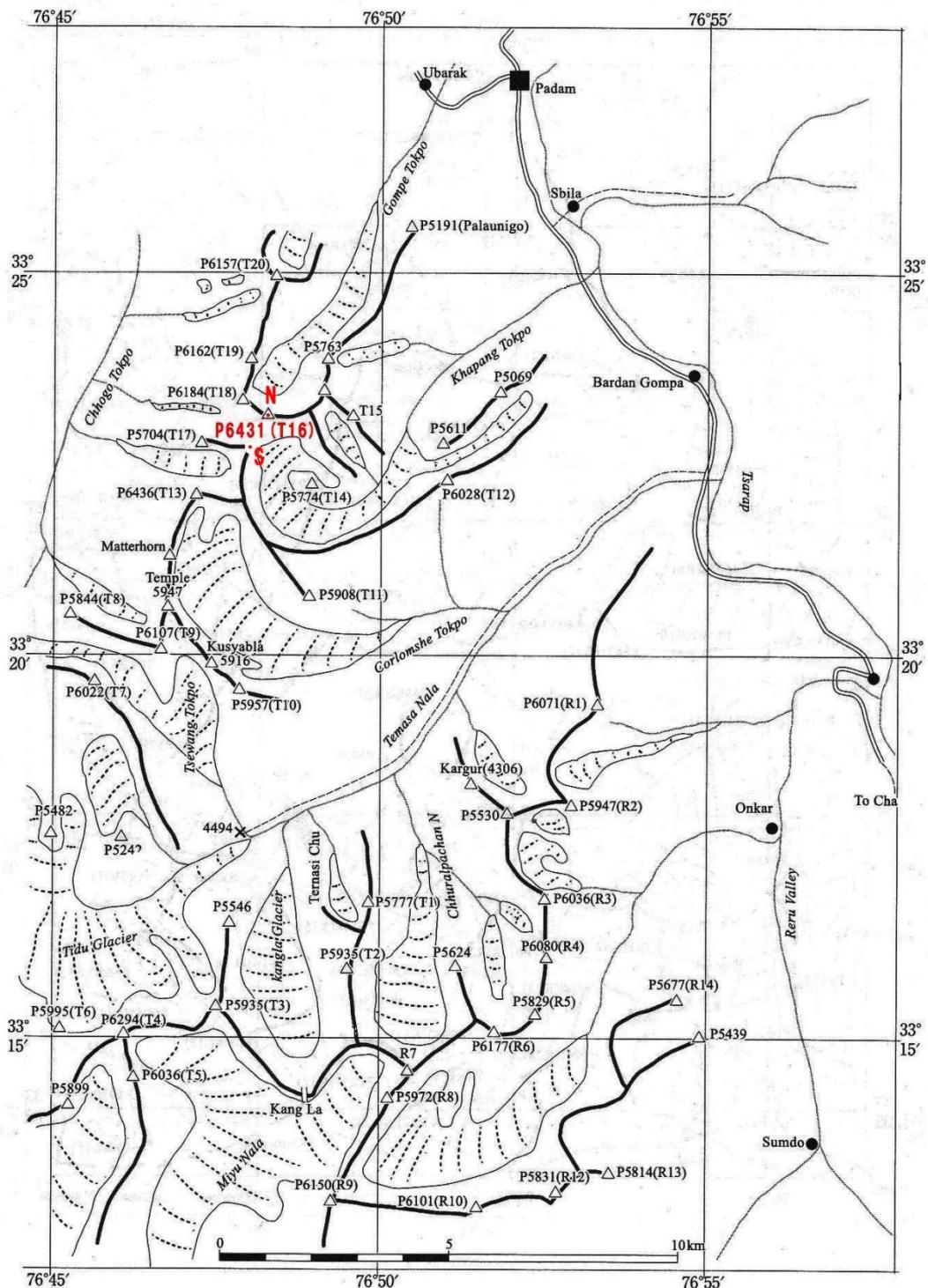
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12. We were receiving weather forecast via the Delorme system from Yann Gierzendanner and Monika Planinc. We did not use a satellite phone.

The report written by: Urban Novak

COSMIN ANDRON  
First Ascent of T16 South Summit “Supercouloir” ED  
Zanskar-Temasa in the Indian Himalaya, June 2016



## ZANSKAR-TEMASA



A Japanese senior's expedition of 2011 trekked in the area and photographed few and mapped most of the open peaks in the area. The Japanese expedition's write-out was an invaluable source on the area where the IMF had listed only code-names (P 6431),

altitudes and GPS coordinates. By Google Earth we roughly identified some of the peaks hidden by the code-names. (See Google image, Russian Topo Map and peaks map)

On June 2nd we left Delhi heading to the village of Padum. We travelled by public bus from Delhi to Jammu (about 10 hours) where we switched to a shared taxi and we stopped, 12 hours later, in Srinagar. From Srinagar took another van to Kargil for 10 hour journey. On June 5th we were in Padum (3600m). A local boy, taxi driver by trade, Tenzing Thapa was officially appointed our sirdar, cook and BC manager. Next day was spent on a recce trip up the valley towards our objective looking for a way across the river, Chhogo Tokpo, our intended destination.



Photo © Cristina Pogacean



**“Photo taken before turning left into Chhogo Tokpo. Rocky rib on left foreground is Pobrang (H17). Peak at end of the valley probably H13: Photo Cosmin Andron”**

Weather was perfect. On June 7th, we headed towards our intended Base Camp accompanied by Tenzing and 12 porters: 6 Nepali and 6 Ladakhi. Despite the rather

short distance (12 km from where the truck dropped us) to our intended BC we decided, for acclimatization purposes, to stop at 4200 m on a grassy shelf full of boulders.

On June 8th we set up the BC at 4900m on a moraine and the following day the porters finished bringing all luggage. A quick recce up the moraine/glacier showed our initial objective, T13, quite unlike it seemed on Google Earth. The N face of T13 looked quite barren of ice with unstable snow patches and with all the lines quite hard and no easy way up as we hoped for our acclimatization / training climb. We deemed all the lines but the West Ridge unfeasible for our group and we decided to go for it after a day of rest.

On June 11th at 3 AM we left our BC. The day before we discussed then voted if to set up an ABC up on the glacier or set off directly from BC. Laziness won.... We planned on taking bivy gear as we did not expect to move too fast (this being acclimatization climb) and we envisaged spending 1 night on the ridge. We moved decently over moderate ground with only a couple of belaying places up to close to 5900m. Unfortunately, unlike the Google Earth imagery, the ridge was not continuous but more a convergence of ridges running from S to N and stopping into the W ridge of T13.

From where we stopped, above a couloir of snow on the N side of the W ridge the way ahead looked long and progressively more difficult culminating with several abseils and wall climbs before reaching the summit of T13.

That night we were back in BC tired and a bit regretful. Not having photos of the area but only computerized imagery led us to believe that easy lines are possible on T13. Reality showed us it was not the case.

Cristina and I were pondering on our next target and since the time in BC was limited to 11 days in total. The alternative was the S side of T16, right opposite the N face of T13. I saw a beautiful, perfect, natural line – a couloir running from the bottom to the top; a perfect line.

The problem was that the upper third of the couloir seemed pure rock, possibly overhanging. We decided to set up an ABC in the middle of the glacier, right between the two faces. Karn and Prerna reached the conclusion that all the lines on T13 and T16 were beyond what they were ready, as a team, to tackle.

After two days rest in BC and a gluttony competition, on the 14th of June, Karn, Nishit and Argos left for Padum with the mission to usher the porters our way on the 17th by evening, Cristina and I left to set up our ABC at around 5200m.

The couloir was pretty much straight forward. We were hoping to get off the snow and in a sheltered spot before the sun hits the couloir as we were anticipating at the least slush and rockfall. The N face of T 13 was always looming in the background.

The snow section of the couloir ended with a constriction and a foretelling of what was to come higher up. The 5–7m of mixed and ice was anything but pleasant and Cristina managed to draw the short straw... Rotten ice and polished rock required some inventive shimmying up the pitch.

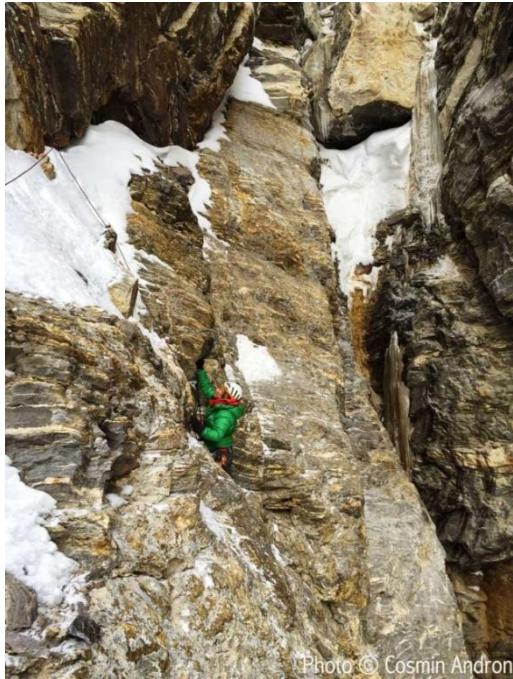


Photo © Cosmin Andron



Photo © Cristina Pogacean

By the time we were done the sun was moving in and we scurried to find a sheltered place. The rocks were whizzing around. The sun was upon us and without much room to move if we wanted to stay away from the volley we stripped to base layers and put our GoreTex shells on top of our heads. By 5 PM the sun went over the ridge and by 7 PM the rocks stopped falling. Did another pitch on easy snow up to an icefall but since it was more of a waterfall by then and without it looking easy even frozen we decided to return to the little ledge, sort out the bivy and have an early start in the morning. We settled in after an hour or so of digging at the ice base of our ledge.

Morning dawned beautiful. After the warm-up pitch on the frozen snow up from the bivy, at the gear recount I had the opportunity to congratulate myself for only bringing 2 ice screws. One was promptly sunk in the base of the icefall and I was expecting that the following 30 m (what was visible from the icefall) would be pleased with the remaining one. Little did I know that out of sight, cork-screwing, the icefall was to be a full rope length. I moved in between ice and rock wondering what the meaning of the 'easier way' could be. Half way up, with sinking heart, I had to call down to Cristina asking for the

lower screw to be sent up on one of the ropes – quite a matter of dexterity as I was hanging of one tool with feet in both ice and a crack. The ice was old, brown, thin but “at least” it was brittle. Out of sight the exit was burly on mixed and I managed to clean the upper bit straight on the belay below.  

A pitch higher the couloir was blocked by vertical, frozen mud with rock stuck in it – some sort of dubious looking, ‘improvised’ conglomerate. An attempt up on it produced little progress, moderate amount of fear and loads of doubt. We opted for the ‘sporty’ option and we ended up negotiating overhangs and thin mixed. I felt well in control of my tools but not necessarily of my emotions too since the pro was scarce and mainly on ball-nuts, the run-outs long and the ice was thin. Luckily I was spent enough so I could not tap it too hard hence preserving some for Cristina as well on her way up.

After a few wet and snowy pitches on decent rock but with fingery moves we ended up on a beautiful face. Sun was out, the rock was dry, protection about right and I was happy seconding. We left all the bivy gear at the bivy spot and we took only what we deemed necessary. We climbed in rock shoes. We soon passed the fake summit (the white triangle visible from base camp) on the face to its right (by it’s E side) and we carried on. The higher we went the better the climb became. Towards the exit to the final ridge we both experienced some of the best rock climbing we did in the higher mountains.

The sun was shining yet not scorching hot and the wind, for one, stopped. The rope-lengths were succeeding one after another. After a while we could not be bothered in switching our rock shoes to negotiate the snow bands and at the base of the final arrete we left behind the backpack, the camera (we only kept my iPhone) and the big boots. We were gunning for the top and it was all rolling too nicely. The afternoon was approaching and we were keen to touchdown and start getting down.

Like in the case of T13 the final arrete was the meeting point of several ridges, including the two sides sheltering our couloir. We exited the couloir already by its left (W) side onto the face by then and the ground ahead was fairly moderate. One could see the flat, table-top, N summit of T16 ahead and the S summit above. With the end in sight we moved ahead as it was already passed 4 PM.



Photo © Cosmin Andron



Photo © Cristina Pogacean

The N summit was at least 1 Km away and the ridge was up and down with quite a few pinnacles in between – all pretty much at the same level, of course depending on the perspective. We were not keen on hopping on each and every of them and not planning to tag the N summit either (especially since we had no idea which is higher anyway as the IMF records only mentioned one altitude for a two summits peak). Quite a bit passed 5 PM we started heading down, down-climbing what we could, abseiling where we could not or where it was faster.

We recovered the backpack then the stuff left at the bivy and by the time the dark set in we were abseiling in the void, above the icefall, above overhangs, past the first bivy and into the snow couloir. We started down-climbing until tiredness caught up and we encountered the steeper bits. We alternated between abseils and down-climbing until the slope gave in and we started walking face out towards the glacier below.

We both moved, quite apart and quite in silence as each step required both care and effort. Next morning, June the 18th, we woke up earlier than we wanted and later than needed. We started packing the Base camp and headed down towards Padum.  
-----On June 25th we arrived at Delhi putting an end to our adventure.

## A note on geography and other tidbits

We did not initially plan for T16 but we had it as a possible alternative. The IMF list gives T16 the height of 6431m and the Japanese trip report shows a two peaked mountain, photographed from the East, from Gompe Tokpo. We and IMF had no idea which of the two summits of T16 is higher: the N summit (the flat top) or the S summit (the pointed top). From the photographs and from base camp we believed it to be the S summit – now we think it might be the N summit or a pinnacle in between. In either case we believe the difference in height (in whichever direction one swings) is quite small but the length of the ridge separating them (we guess over 1 Km) and the drop in between warrants for a neat distinction. Actually most of the peaks identified there are along long ridges but not being a geographer I will not venture any opinion on prominence and such. In either case we doubt a bit, based on our altimeter readings, the official height of either of the N or S peak as being 6431 and we believe they are closer to 6300 than 6400.

Regardless all of the above, and given the circumstances, we are not comfortable claiming the “virgin” summit of T16 as the N summit may be higher and the two are, at least as it stands now, bundled together. We are happy however to tie ourselves to our route, the obvious, logical line from the bottom to the top of the S summit. The peaks seem to have no names up these valleys as locals do not tend to venture up them. It’s not our place to name any of them, not even those we momentarily ascended. We would like, however, to name the route we climbed and by only possible and obvious name: **Supercouloir** (both due to the line and its resemblance to its French counterpart). The line goes up in excess of 1000m (close to 1200m) and grade wise we propose ED snow 75\* max, WI 4+, M5/6, 6b, C1.

DEREK BUCKLE  
**Explorations from the Bazar-Dara Valley, Tajikistan**

In September 2013 Matt Traver and a colleague, Jamie Bunchuk, travelled to Tajikistan's Alichursky Mountains to make a documentary about a Kyrgyzstani-Tajik hunter and herder called Orozbek. As a result of this expedition Matt subsequently gave a talk at the Alpine Club in London in July 2014 and later he published a detailed account.<sup>2</sup> The duo had little opportunity to climb during their trip, although they did visit several of the valleys neighbouring the Alichursky Plain. From their photographs one area in particular, the Bazar-Dara Valley in the northern Alichursky range, attracted our attention since it appeared ideally suitable for ski mountaineering. As far as we are aware, few of the peaks surrounding the Bazar-Dara Valley have been climbed, despite the fact that a motorable track to a disused silver mine leads over the 4,464m Bazar-Dara Pass. According to the 1:100,000 Russian military map this pass is only navigable from May to September.

Following discussions and correspondence with Matt Traver, Alex Reid (leader), Anna Bushe, Stefan Jachmich and I planned to explore the side-valleys of the Bazar-Dara Valley on skis in the hope of attempting one or more of the unclimbed mountains either side of the Bazar-Dara Pass. Unfortunately, shortly before we were due to depart Alex was unable to join the team, so on the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2016 just three of us flew *via* Istanbul to Osh in Kyrgyzstan where we met up with Jyrgal, the representative of our in-country agent.

On leaving Osh we travelled south by car along the potholed M41 trunk road that winds its way through the Pamiri chain before reaching the small town of Sary-Tash (3,615m). After Sary-Tash the road continues to climb south to the Kyrgyz border and then to the 4,280m Kyzylart Pass close to the Tajik border post. Although crossing both borders was a time-consuming process, involving customs, drugs, military and passport controls, neither presented any problems since we had arranged access permits to the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast region of Tajikistan prior to leaving the UK.

From the Tajik border the road descends towards Lake Karakul before rising again to cross the 4,655m Akbajtal Pass and dropping once more towards Murgab (3,630m) where we spent the night. On a clear day the enormous massif of Mustaghata (7,546m) is visible from Murgab, but hazy conditions denied us this pleasure. Leaving Murgab on

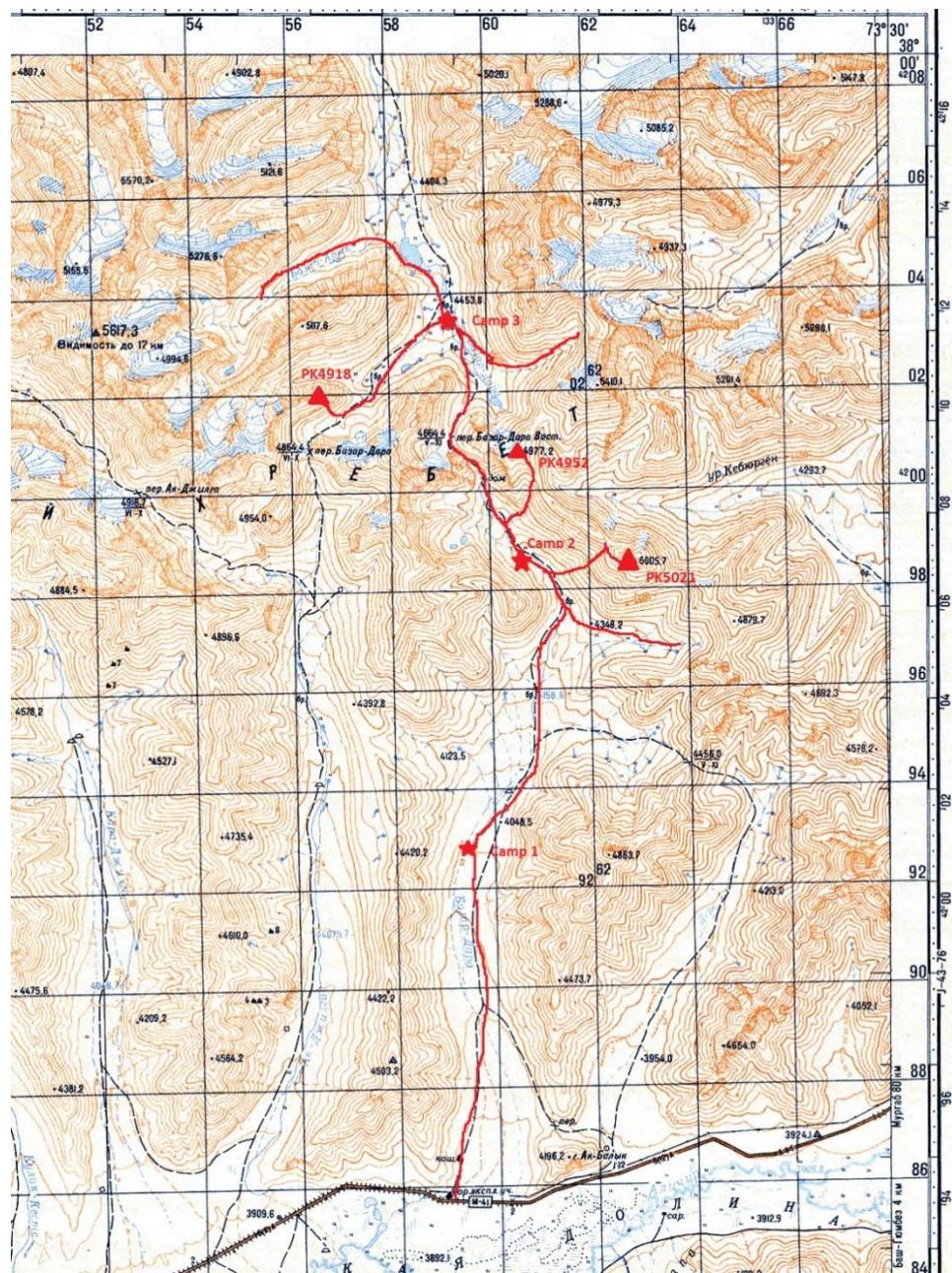
11<sup>th</sup> April we immediately encountered increasing quantities of snow as we followed a long line of Chinese trucks south towards the road-head of the Bazar-Dara Valley. At 3,902m the valley was deep in snow at this time of the year and we were now obliged to leave our transport and to tow our tents, food and equipment on skis using a haul-bag system that we had used successfully on previous expeditions.

Inadequately acclimatised, it was to take us several days to cover the 20km to our proposed base camp a little beyond the Bazar-Dara Pass; a journey that would have been impossible without skis, or possibly snow shoes. Along the route, and at every camp, the snow was both deep and of poor load-bearing quality. Removing skis immediately led to severe post-holing, often up to a metre deep! We travelled almost 7km the first day before making Camp 1 on a broad plateau in the valley centre at 4,047m (see Map for camps and routes taken). High winds and poor weather kept us tent-bound the following day, and it was not until the 13<sup>th</sup> April that we could continue to follow the valley bottom before establishing Camp 2 at 4,349m, some 7km further north.

The next day we skinned up to the Bazar-Dara Pass to stash food and technical gear before skiing back to camp. With energy to spare Stefan then skinned up the south ridge the obvious peak to the north-northeast of Camp 2 before completing the last few metres to the 4,952m summit on foot to make what we believe was the first ascent. We subsequently called this Pik Perestroika (in recognition of the Russian Reformative Movement).

The following day we decamped to return to the pass and our stashed equipment before descending northwards to establish Camp 3 at 4,525m, some 2km south of Bazar-Dara Lake. In continuing fine weather we explored the side valley to the west of camp on 16<sup>th</sup> April, taking care to avoid the extensive avalanche debris descending from the steeper slopes. On reaching the central peak of the bifurcating valley Anna then returned to camp while Stefan and I skinned up the 35-40° south ridge and gully to reach a short rocky ridge that we climbed on foot to the 4,918m summit.

We believe that this also was the first ascent of this peak, which we subsequently named Pik Glasnost (Openness Peak). After carefully skiing back down the south ridge we returned to Camp 3, narrowly avoiding an avalanche as we passed the valley entrance.



1:100,000 Russian Military map with camps and routes marked

Over the next two days we explored the valley due east of Camp 3 and the valley to the west of the lake, but neither of these valleys offered a safe route to any of the surrounding summits on account of either their steepness or the state of the prevailing snow conditions. We therefore decided to return to the site of Camp 2 and explore further opportunities there. On 20<sup>th</sup> April we planned to attempt the 5,000m peak to the south-east of camp, which we approached by way of its steep south-west gully until reaching a corniced col at 4,856m. At this point Anna decided to return to camp while

Stefan and I continued eastwards to the base of a short rocky outcrop. Climbing this on foot gained the compact 5,021m summit which we believe was the first ascent. We named it Pik Druzhba (Friendship Peak) in keeping with the names chosen for the other two peaks that we climbed.

With our time in the Bazar-Dara Valley now running short we explored one further valley a little to the south of Camp 2 before returning *via* Camp 1 to the road-head. By now the snow was noticeably thinning as we approached the main road, but it was still sufficient to entrap the 4x4 when Jyrgal attempted to drive a little nearer to pick us up. An hour or so of digging eventually freed the vehicle and we were on our way back to Murgab and then to Osh for the journey back home.

### References:

1. For a full report see: Derek Buckle, Alichursky Mountains Ski Expedition, Mount Everest Foundation Report ref. 16-08, 2016
2. M. Traver, *Alpine Journal*, 89-93, 118, 2014

### Acknowledgements:

The team gratefully acknowledge the support of the Mount Everest Foundation, The British Mountaineering Council, the Julie Tullis Memorial Fund, the Austrian Alpine Club and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland.



Pik Glasnost in the centre of an impressive cirque. Photo: Derek Buckle



Stefan approaching the summit of Pik Glasnost: Photo: Derek Buckle



The west ridge of Pik Druzhba. Photo: Derek Buckle

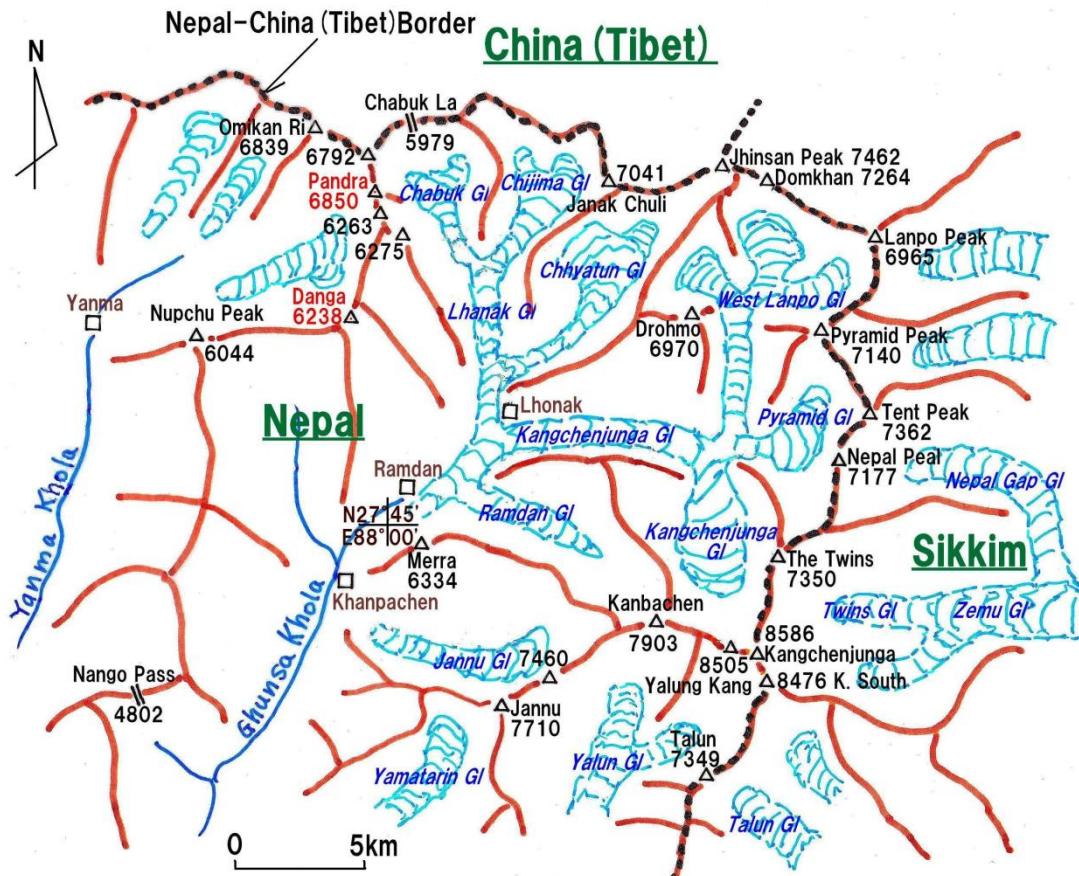
TOM NAKAMURA & JUNJI WADA  
**Kei Taniguchi's Last Journey 2015**  
**Attempt on New Route—East Face of Pandra 6850m**  
**Kangchenjunga Region, Janak Himal, Nepal**

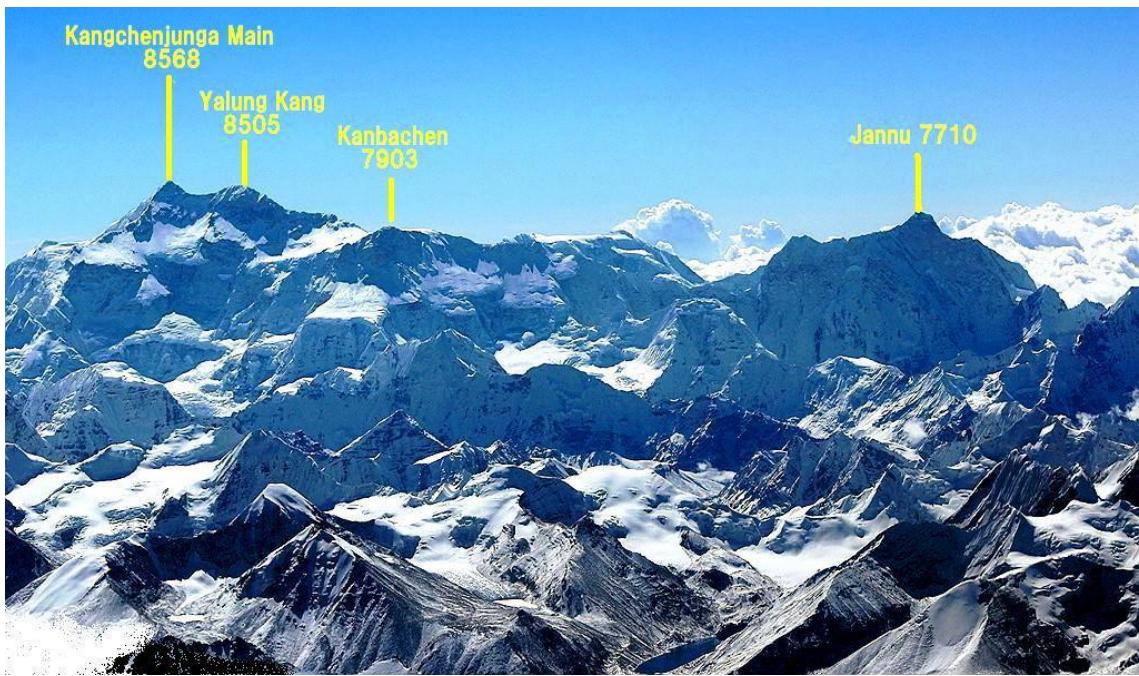
【Obituary】 "Kei Taniguchi, Alpine Climber and Artist of Life's Journey" written by Masami Onda was published on the Asian Alpine E-News No.1 Issue, May 2016, where Pandra was mistakenly described as unclimbed peak since Taniguchi had so recognized. Taniguchi wrote a report to The Japan Sport Council's symposium 2016 on the overseas mountaineering. It became her last journey in her life. She headed to Pandra 6850m with Junji Wada for exploratory expedition since to her best knowledge Pandra must have remained still untraversed.

## 1. Nakamura's Introduction

### Kangchenjunga Region—Janak Himal

(Drawn by Tom Nakamura)





Kangchenjunka Massif north face & 6000m peaks to N-NW (Photo: Tom Nakamura)

Less-frequented Pandra 6850m is located in the Kangchenjunga Region, Janak Himal of the easternmost Nepal sharing the national border with China (Tibet) and Sikkim, and was opened to foreigners in December, 2001, as one of the 103 New Open Mountain Peaks in Nepal.

Attempts on Pandra were made only twice till today, Danish expedition 2002 and Japanese team of Taniguchi and Wada in 2015. This is confirmed by Richard Salisbury, co-author of *The Himalaya by the Numbers—A Statistical Analysis of Mountaineering in the Nepal Himalaya* (2011).

The Danish party made the two first ascents of Pandra 6850m (GPS reading 6673m: N  $27^{\circ} 51.897'$ , E  $87^{\circ} 59.547'$ ) via south face and Danga (GPS reading 6238m: N  $27^{\circ} 49.023'$ , E  $87^{\circ} 58.598'$ ) from south glacier. They also attempted Tinjung but were not successful. The AAJ 2003 reported their climbs in details. The Danish expedition members were Henrik Jessen Hansen (leader), Allan Christensen, Bo Belvedere Christensen and Jan Mathorne.

Taniguchi pair attempted a new route on east face but could not summit and this was her last journey because she was lost in the mountain of Hokkaido in March 2016.

(Note) Janak Chuli East 6978m was first climbed by a Japanese party of Aoyama Gakuin University in 2013.

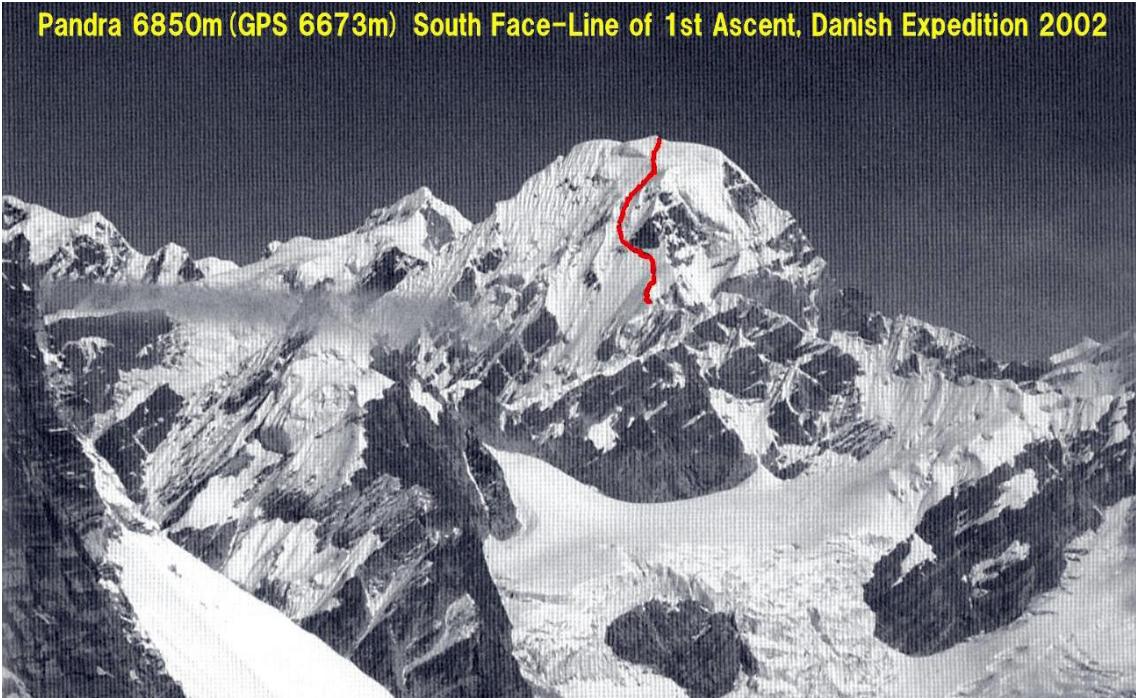
**PAND-023-01 Pandra Denmark Autumn 2002 –  
Route summary compiled by Richard Salisbury**

4 Oct all members went to 5380m biv northwest of Lhonak and next day 50m higher (but long distance to snow-covered rocky area at start of glacier east of Danga). 6th up glacier northeast direction to Col east of Tinjung at 6000m biv. 7th climbed East Ridge to East Face of Tinjung to 6137m; above this dangerous ridge (avalanche danger), then down down to Lhonak BC. Now snowing.

10 Oct up Lhonak Glacier to 5250m biv on moraine on west side of glacier. Hansen now had flu and returned to BC. 10 Oct other 3 members biv at 5500m on northwest of Lhonak Glacier to see feasible route up Pandra. 12th went up short distance, no visibility of mountain now so back to BC. Could not see mountain through snow and clouds. 14th same 3 members returned to 5500m and on up glacier to biv at 5740m in the basin southeast of mountain.

16 Oct to summit of Pandra (6673m GPS) up South Face via couloir leading to col South Face and back to 5740m biv - face steep ice and snow so very difficult. 17th to Lhonak.

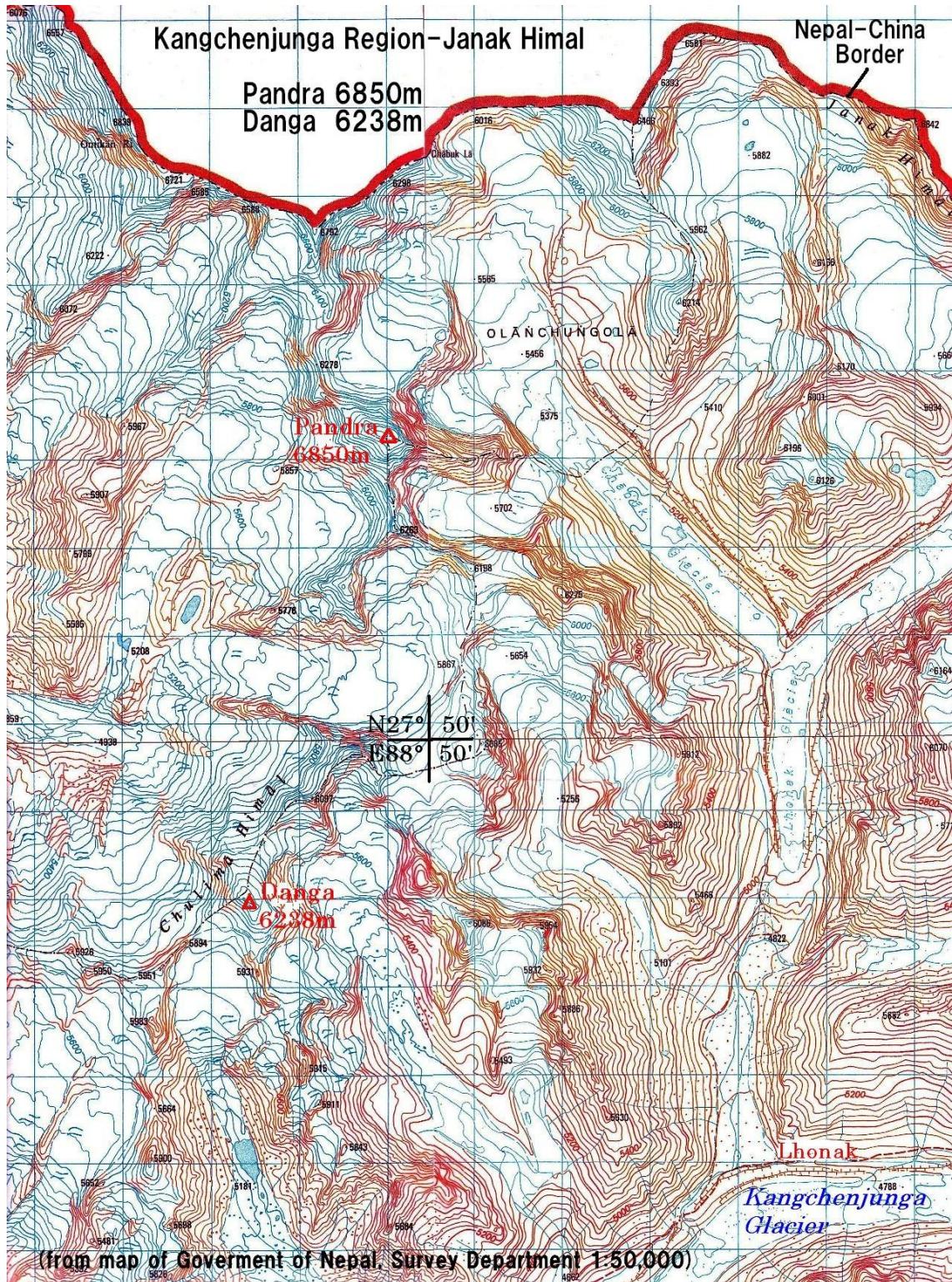
19 Oct for Danga altitude up high end of glacier to 5225m and biv here. 20th all except Hansen to top via South Glacier and South Face of Danga; steep steps and easier climb in between and all back BC. Achieved this goal of exploratory climbing.



**Danish Expedition 2002 –First Ascent of Pandra 6850m via South Face (AAJ 2003)**

## 2. Junji Wada's Report

### New Route on Pandra (6850m) – Attempt 2015



**Period: October 12 to November 29, 2015**

**Area: Kangchenjunga Region, Eastern Nepal**

**Member: Kei Taniguchi and Junji Wada**

In less than a month after returning from Nepal, Taniguchi was suddenly lost for falling down in the mountain of Hokkaido, northern Japan. She was my partner not only in the Pandra expedition but we climbed often in a pair also in the mountains of Japan. Her death was a great shock to me. Pandra expedition recalls me to the sad fatal accident. This report is a token of best wishes for her last journey, which she would hopefully be delighted to read.

Approach to Kangchenjunga Region is rather difficult. There would not be the best option of transport measures. The easiest way is to change air-planes from Kathmandu to Taplejung, a starting point of trekking, but this option requires much expense and there is a limit of carrying luggage, not realistic for us. We studied an option to charter a car, but as shortage of fuel supply was getting serious in Nepal and this caused higher charter fees. We finally chose local public buses, changing one to another, to the destination. The lowest point of approach is about 900 meters a.s.l. After three days trekking through sub-tropical hot zone we gradually gained altitude.



We reached a place for base camp (BC) after three days bus transport and eight days trekking. Places to get water were scarce perhaps because of season or local conditions. Therefore selection of BC site was limited. It was not possible yet to view a whole profile of Pandra. We commenced small and quite BC life with two Nepalese staffs.



On November 1, we began a reconnaissance after four days rest in BC. As it snowed until the previous day, it was not easy to walk. We ascended mainly on side-moraine and crossed twice a glacier. Large rocks en route hindered us and consumed our energy before reaching Pandra.

On November 2, we managed to arrive at a flat terrace where we could see the Pandra east face in front which was an objective to open a new route. There was a clear pond and in immediate upstream there was a spring in comfortable location. The pond is indicated as Pokari on the map. To set up ABC we deposited climbing gears there. To access to a starting point of climbing the east face, it was felt that we must traverse the Chabuk Glacier and further go across small crevasses on the glacier. Search by a binocular had us decide to progress with no reconnaissance.

On October 3, we ascended a peak behind ABC to mid way and pitched a tent for acclimatization, and took many pictures to find a viable line on the east face of Pandra. On October 4, we reconnoitered a glacier for descent. We ascended the main stream of Chabuk Glacier to about 6,000m. We made GPS measurement here. We were exhausted but could confirm a route for descent. On November 5 we once returned to BC.

On November 10, the final assault began. We could reach Pokari in a day though it had taken two days at the time of reconnaissance. We felt that we had been well acclimatized. On November 11, gas burner got in a trouble. We used a spare small burner but this caused inconveniences during climbing later on. We traversed the Chabuk Glacier and entered a small glacier leading to the east face. Crevasses that had looked small when seen from far distance were fairly large. We roped each other, belayed by an ice-screw and carefully ascended. When we reached the foot of the east face, the sun was setting behind the shoulder of Pandra and it became soon colder in the shadow. After preparation we started to climb at about 13:00. We followed a prominent band stretching upwards to right which had been viewed from far distance. We reached a stable tent site in four pitches and ceased climbing.



Ascent 4th day, Taniguchi followed.



Ascent 4th day, Taniguchi led pitch.

On November 12, climbing was resumed on a vertical ice-wall. Taniguchi led the rope. Vertical ice-wall at 6,000m was hard to climb for not warmed-up bodies. The ice zone continued 40 meters and then snow wall appeared. We opened a line on which we had kept our eyes during reconnaissance. It was a wonderful climb and we enjoyed to satisfaction. In succession we entered couloirs. It was already time of vivy. But no suitable place was found. We were forced to dig ice beneath rock in two hours and set up a tent.

On November 13, we climbed a wide couloir. The angle was  $50^{\circ}$  –  $60^{\circ}$  but snow surface was so firm and solid that we could steadily put crampons and carefully climb. Here and there big holes were seen on snow faces. These must be made by gigantic falling-stones, which were dangerous. We passed through the dangerous zone praying for gods. The snow face changed to hard ice on which screws were well workable. Angle increased to some  $70^{\circ}$ . Getting over a ridge we came to a tent site. Though it was a bit early, we pitched a tent at 13:00. We fixed a rope of one pitch length on the ridge but we later repented of fixing the rope.



Taniguchi traversing to north face



Wada traversing to north face

On November 14, it was fine but wind was a bit strong and power snow avalanches frequently broke out. We continued to climb a ridge following the fixed rope. Taniguchi first led the climb of a snow ridge gradually becoming steeper by putting screws. It looked difficult. I led the next pitch, extremely difficult. The right side of the ridge formed a cornice with shear drop and on the other hand the left side was loose sugar snow. Where no liable belay was kept we continued climbing. When I finished the difficult pitch, my mind broke down too easily. A remaining route to the summit was still far away. We could not surely complete the climb even if we tried best efforts. I told this to Taniguchi when she joined me. Then to my surprise she began to traverse to the north face side with shear drop. However she was stagnant as the route seemed difficult.

My body was getting colder and colder while belaying and mind to climb was fading out. The whole north face was a huge ice wall. We repeated rappelling for descent. Five – six rappelling took us onto the northern glacier very close to a point that we reached at the time of reconnaissance. Defeat was chiefly due to weakness of my mind. We should have investigated feasible climbing line in detail looking over more widely. We followed fix-rope ridge with no doubt, which resulted in tackling with difficult ridge which was unable to overcome,

On November 15, we started descent in morning sunshine and went down staggeringly to BC, at which we arrived at 21:00. I soon regretted that I had abandoned the attempt, and I told this to Taniguchi. She was angry at first, but she proposed to return to unclimbed mountains in Eastern Nepal. I was moved and delighted to hear her generous and encouraging words, which inspired me to again challenge a new objective of the expedition by my own leadership in 2016.

### **Nakamura's supplementary notes:**

Pictures of peaks surrounding Chabuk Glacier are very few. In particular very few have been published of these peaks from the north, so it is difficult to make identifications (Richard Salisbury). Two pictures are shown below.



**Chabuk Peak southwest face from Nupchu 6046m (Richard Salisbury's Data file)**



**Probably Chabuk Peak (6792m) north face  
Aerial view: Photo taken between Lhasa and Kathmandu on 28/10/2014 (Tom Nakamura)**

SANJAA ZAYA  
**Mountaineering in Mongolia**

**Distinguished Mountaineers**

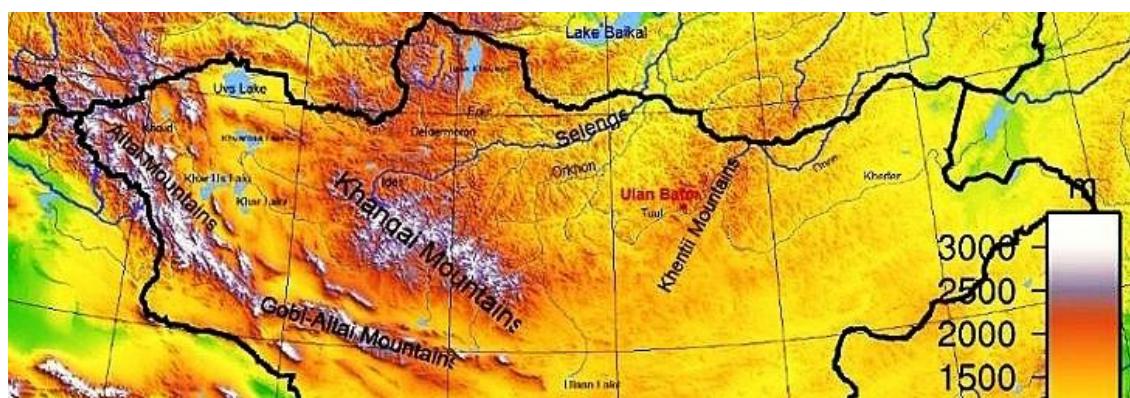
**Radnaabazar Zorig:** Mongolian honored teacher, Mongolian famous climber and 10 times boxing champion boxer, a founder of mountaineering sport in Mongolia, the first president of Mongolian Mountaineering Federation and Mongolian Central Mountaineering Altai Club, a full member of the UIAA and UAAA, made progress mountaineering sport in Mongolia, an author of more than 20 sport history books. International Master of Mountaineering Sport. 7000-er climber. Leader of Mongolian team –Peak Pamir 1972.

- Baldan Tserendash: General trainer, Colonel, Famous boxer and weight-lifter, International Master of Mountaineering sport, 6000-er climber.
- Jalil Khairulla: Physician-in-chief Ph.D, hero of labour, Mongolian Public doctor, Mongolian state prizer, Professor, A merited doctor, A master of mountaineering sport, one of Mongolian senior climbers.
- General Secretary: J.Tsanjid, Colonel, Chuluundorj Ph.D, S. Batmunkh. Ph.D, S. Zaya. Delegates for the UIAA & UAAA GA, CM in Switzerland, Malaysia, France, Italy, Nepal, Nederland, Switzerland, Korea, China, Taiwan, Kong Hong, Makedonia, Azerbaidjan, UK, Japan and Sweden, 1996.1997.1998, 2000. 2002. 2010. 2011. 2012. 2013. 2014. 2015.
- Begzsuren Ganbaatar: President UAAA member club, Mongolian Central Mountaineering Altai Club, Leader of Mongolian Everest Blue Sky team, International master of mountaineering sport. 8000 –er climber, Captain.
- Tseren Tsogzolmaa. A leader of Mongolian women Himalayan team. Everest climber./ 19.05.2012./ General secretary of MCMAC. Chairman of Children's Development Center in Baga-nuur. Coordinator "Mongolian Women " non-government organization . International Master of Mountaineering Sport.

- Sanjaa Zaya: Mongolian Honored Sportsman Academician, Mongolian counsellor teacher, Magister of pedagogy, President of the UAAA member “ Club Alpine Mongolia ”, vice president of Mongolian Masters Federation, Executive member of Mongolian Senior Sportsman Committee, Foreign relations. Corresponding & expert member of the UIAA YC 2013 - As confirmed by the MC Zaragoza, Spain.Barch 2015.
- UIAA YC Global Youth Summit 2013 – Mongolia Terelj



## Mountains of Mongolia





Altai mountains



Khangai mountains

Mongolia has four major mountain ranges. The highest is the [Altai mountains](#) in Western Mongolia, which turn into the [Gobi-Altai mountains](#) as they extend southeast into the [Gobi desert](#). The [Khentii mountains](#) lie to the east of [Ulan Bator](#), and the [Khangai mountains](#) cover most of central Mongolia.

The highest mountain of Mongolia is Mt. Altai-5 bogd. It was opened by Russian researchers V. V. Sapojnicov, M. B. Tronov, and Russians climbed in 1916. The first ascent by Mongolian team was in 1956. Poland did first climbing in 1967. Tavan Bogd Mountains are the highest mountains in Mongolia with Khuiten Uul ('Cold Peak') at 4374 m being the highest.

These permanently snow-capped mountains form a bowl around the Pontuninii Glacier, which covers 23 square km. The other peaks are Nairamdal ('Friendship', 4180 m), Malchin ('herder', 4050 m), Bürged ('Eagle', 4068 m) and Olgii ('Cradle', 4050 m). From the peak of Kuiten Uul, it is possible to see Kazakhstan 30 km away on a clear day. Khuiten Uul was renamed Ikh Mongol ('Great Mongol') in 2006, the Altai mountains in Bayan-ulgii province.

The park is divided into two regions, the Tavan Bogd Mountains in the northwest and the Lakes Region to the southeast. The park stretches along the Chinese border from the Russian border to 200 km south following the Altai Mountains, which form the borders of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia.

The Tavan Bogd Mountains and glaciers: the total area of the glaciation in the Tavan Bogd massif area amounted to 204 km<sup>2</sup> in 2009. Out of the countries that share the massif, the largest glaciated area is in Mongolia; it includes the [Potanin Glacier](#) (Mongolia's longest) and the [Alexandra Glacier](#).



Glacier in Altai Tavan Bogd mountain



Potanin Glacier

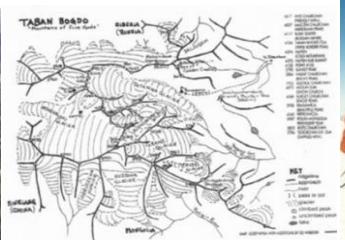
### Peaks over 4,000m of mountains in Mongolia

Name	Peaks	Height (m)	Range	Location
	<u>Khüiten</u>	4374	1	
<u>Tavan Bogd</u>	<u>Nairamdal</u>	4180		<u>Bayan-Ölgii</u>
	<u>Malchin</u>	4050		
<u>Mönkh Hairhan</u>	Sukhbaatar	4204	2	<u>Mongol-Altai</u> <u>Khovd, Bayan-Ölgii</u>
	Tsast	4196	3	
<u>Tsambagarav</u>				<u>Bayan-Ölgii, Khovd</u>
	Tsambagarav	4165		
<u>Sutai</u>		4090	4	<u>Gobi-Altai</u> <u>Govi-Altai, Khovd</u>
<u>Harhiraan</u>		4037	5	<u>Uvs</u>
				<u>Mongol-Altai</u>
<u>Höh Serkh</u>	Tahilt	4019	6	<u>Bayan-Ölgii</u>
<u>Otgontenger</u>		4008	7	<u>Khangai</u> <u>Zavkhan</u>

## Climbing History & International Cooperation



In 1956 Mongolian climbed Altai 4374 m. In 1970. First International expedition organized Climbers: from Russia, Germany, Poland, Hungary and six of Mongolian climbers got certificate № 1 of Master degree of Mountaineering sport in Mongolia.



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- ① In 1992: the first climbers from Himalayan Kingdom UK team with a Mongolian guide S. Zaya and David H President of the UIAA Medicine Commission.
- ② Map of Altai made by Poland Josef Nyka with additions by Everester Ed Webster from American climbing magazine “Rock and Ice” 55 May / June in 1993
- ③ Everest hero Apa Sherpa from Nepal who did 22 times Everest climbing and Iman Gurun on the second top of Altai Burged Khairkhan/ Denzin Norgei / with Mongolian climbers of Mongol Altai club Ts.Tsogzolmaa, S.Zaya, B.Ganbaatar.

1993: The first collective agreement in Kathmandu. / R. Zorig, Z. Altai, S. Zaya

1995: The second agreement about Himalayan joint expedition signed by Mongolian President N. Bagabandi with Nepal government.

1994/9/29: Mongolian Blue Sky team of 14 climbers did first successful climbing in Himalaya.

1994/11/23: First Mongolian Women Himalayan team climbed Mt. Nayanhan 5898 m, Leader- Ts. Tsogzolmaa. First Mongolian Man team climbed Indian Jaonli Mt. 6636 m, Leader-D.Otriyad. R.Zorig- expedition leader, B.Tserendash- general trainer, J.Khairulla -physician in-chief

1996/5/12: First Everest attempt, Colonel N. Jukov with Indian Army expedition reached 7850 m.

### **Tsagaan deglii-Kharkhiraar-Turgen 4250m**



1959.6: The first ascent organized in Uvs province named by The first Mongolian Youth Festival.

1963.5.6: Mongolian team climbed Kharkhiraar-Turgen-Tsagaan deglii 4240 m mountains. The Kharkhiraar mountains in the Altai range are in Uvs province in Western Mongolia.

1969: The first Japanese team headed by Ozava Shiego, scientist mongolist successful climbed.

1989-90: Made the first documentary by German film expedition.

1989: First Japanese women team of five ladies headed by the first woman Everest climber in the world, Junko Tabei did success. Mongolia women team of five climbers from Khudulmur Association on the top of “Olympia”.

1973 & 1990: Mongolian climbers did successful climbing in Japan.

2009: Mongolian climbers celebrated 50 years anniversary of the first climbing mt Kharkhiraar. Students team of Uvs province on the top..

## Otgon- tenger mountain 4031m, The highest top of Khangai range



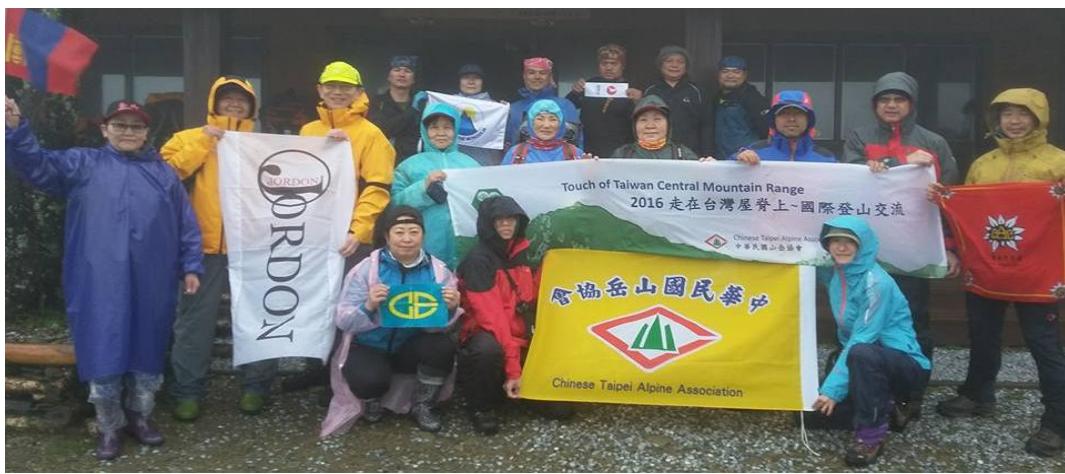
1955: First ascent by mongolian man team headed by R.Zorig. 1969: First Mongolian women team headed by S. Zaya, trainer: International master of mountaineering sport B.Khaltar, G.Naidan. 1971

Mongolian people celebrate the special religious ceremony every four year. The Last ceremony was on 19.07.2016. This mountain protected in 1818. First time in Mongolia protected Mt. Bogdkhan in 1778 and it renamed in 1957 by Mongolian marshal Khorloo Choibalsan.

## Contributions to Asian Mountaineering Community

Asian climbers in Nepal, Korea, China, Taiwan, Japan, Russia, India and Turkey participated in the conferences and joint expeditions:





## Supplements

### Publication: Books about mountains and mountaineering history of Mongolia.

- The history written by people/ chapter of Mongolian mountaineering/ Zaya Sanjaa Honored Sportsman of Mongolia.
- The way to the top. Radnaabazar Zorig Mongolian Honored Teacher.
- A climber and mountain eagle. Auyrzana Davaasambuu /writer/
- Snow tiger. Denzin Norgei translated from Russian. Gurbazar Amar/ translator /
- The fate of eternal heavenly life. Zaya Sanjaa Honored Sportsman of Mongolia.
- Women and sport / History articles / Zaya Sanjaa Honored Sportsman of Mongolia.
- On the silver white tops poled, of the blue sky Zaya Sanjaa Honored Sportsman of Mongolia.

A diary of climbing two 8000m Mt., Cho-oyu and Shishi-Pagma. Everest climber Buyarsaikhan Luvsandorj. Ph.D

NANDINI PURANDARE & DEEPA BALSavar

### The Climbing Sherpas of Darjeeling – *An ongoing project*

"I happened to be in a bank queue once with my aunt Lhakpa Diki. In the front, there was a man in a suit and a felt hat; next to him was a Tibetan woman in a baku - they were a bit shorter than me. I saw his face, it looked familiar, but then there are so many people in Darjeeling you know, and old men often look familiar ... Uru, my aunt said "is this Lama Dawa?" Do you know who it was? It was the great Pasang Dawa Lama! What old age does to a man! He was a giant when I was a little boy and we used to be scared of him you see. He was rough; he was a dangerous man, even to the kids. And here this man was much smaller than me, old, stooping and standing in line for his work in the bank. So my Uru said "Au – Au Pasang Dawa Lama!" Au is uncle. "Hrrr" he grunted. Same old man; same old arrogance, but now to see the size, I could handle ten of those!"



**The Tiger Medal**

This is a story from Darjeeling. It is one of the many we came to hear in our attempt to record the lives of the remarkable community of climbing Sherpas.

Pasang Dawa Lama, as those who know their Himalayan climbing lore will tell you, was one of the great Sherpas of the 30s, 40s and 50s. In 1954 he went down in history for his famous climb to the top of Cho Oyu. He went from Marlung at 13,000 ft over the Nangpa la at 19,000 ft and up to the summit of Cho Oyu at nearly 27,000 ft in just three days and that too without oxygen! He was 43 years old at the time and it is written that he did it for a wager. He had told his prospective father-in-law that if he made the first ascent of Cho Oyu, he would take Yang Tshin (who became his third wife) for nothing. If he didn't make it, he would lay no further claim to the girl and also pay her father one thousand rupees as penalty. Pasang Dawa Lama went on to climb other mountains and it is said, each time he came back with one more wife!

Darjeeling was that cradle of early expeditions to the Himalaya and that crucible in which Sherpa strength, prowess and fame was tested. We had read expedition accounts and stories of heroism or disaster from books about the mountains, but it is the tales from the families in Darjeeling - those sons, daughters and grandchildren of the Sherpa men and women who carried loads up some of the steepest mountains in the world - that we went to listen to and record.



**Toong Soon today**



**Porters on early expeditions**

From April 2012, over the course of six extended stays we have dived into the narrow pathways of Toong Soong, the first refuge to most of Darjeeling's Sherpa families, and listened as age and distance have distorted some memories and etched others more sharply in the minds of the tellers. From colleagues and friends of Sherpas in Delhi, Mumbai, Nagpur and Dehradoon we have heard amazing stories of men shorn of the stereotypes that we were so accustomed to read. From books, journals and interviews, from archives and libraries, we are collecting the background that helps put the stories we hear into perspective.

And stories there are plenty. Sona Sherpa is now the last living TIGER medalist in Darjeeling. Not a Sherpa, the old sticklers will tell you, but from a related tribe, a Kerompa. He sits there, impoverished and rheumy-eyed, his trembling hands betraying a terrible addiction. He was the last TIGER recipient in 1965, awarded for his role in the first successful Indian expedition to Mount Everest. "Do you remember this badge?" we ask him showing him a picture of the medal. A fog momentarily lifts from his eyes. "I think so" he replies. "Where is it?" we ask. "Back in the hut I used to live in at Gwaldham I think", he replies. He looks puzzled and cannot understand why we would want to talk to him. "I am nobody important" he says.

With over 120 in-depth interviews, audio and video recordings, we have been learning not only about the lives of the climbing Sherpas but also about their families and work in Darjeeling; the connection between climbers; their faith and their beliefs. Just a

handful of families have thought it important to preserve the porter books and certificates, the letters and memorabilia of their climbing forefathers. Sometimes things are discovered decayed and crumbling in forgotten corners. They fall apart as we examine them.

We are already late. Most of the old climbers are gone. Even 15 years ago we would have found many who grew up hauling loads for expeditions. During the course of our quest at least five of those interviewed have passed away, including Nawang Topgay, Tenzing Norgay's nephew and the last 'proper' Sherpa TIGER. Families have scattered leaving no traces behind and Toong Soong, the traditional home of Darjeeling Sherpas has opened its straggly arms to newer communities and people who are unaware and unconcerned about the history beneath their feet. We hope that in the next year we are able to finalise for publication a book that records these oral histories and an audio storybook in Nepali so that the older members of the clan can hear what they cannot read.

To preserve these stories is important, so we have entered into an understanding with the University of Toronto, Scarborough. They will digitize and eternalize the full set of audio interviews and video recordings. For the University, our collection extends their Himalayan studies section and will be available with limited access to researchers and scholars once our book is published and with written consent from those interviewed.

The work is not yet at an end. We still need to make a trip or two to Darjeeling, to fill in blanks and interview those who have lately come to our notice. Some professionally taken photographs will help bolster our amateur efforts and if we are ever able to raise the finances, we would like a trip to Nepal to see the landscape that gave birth to these children of the mountains.

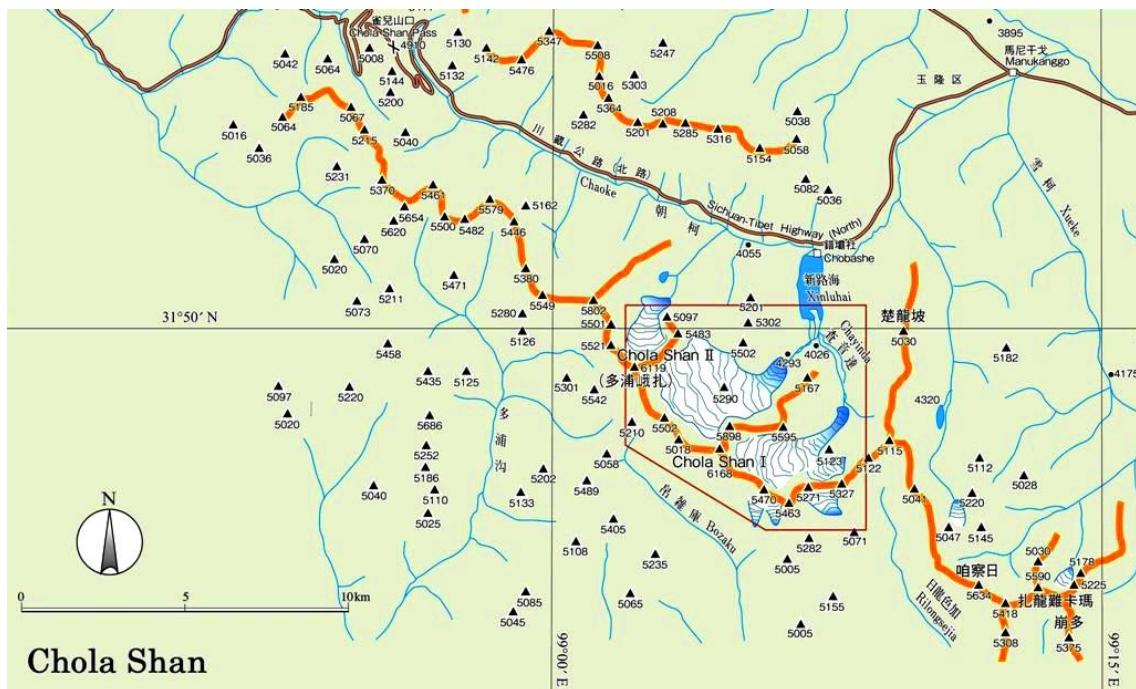
These stories were meant to be told; these voices meant to be heard, to honour the magnificent Sherpas without whom no early exploration of the Himalaya could have been undertaken.

***Postscript:*** The Himalayan Club is the institutional sponsor of the Sherpa project, without any financial commitment. The research duo comprises **Ms. Nandini Purandare**, Honorary Secretary, Himalayan Club; Honorary Editor, Himalayan Journal; researcher and writer and **Ms. Deepa Balsavar**, writer and illustrator. For more information on the project or suggestions please write to [projectsherpa2012@gmail.com](mailto:projectsherpa2012@gmail.com)

BRUCE NORMAND  
**Winter Alpinism in Southwestern China**

Following our successful reconnaissance and climbing missions in winter 2014, Marcos Costa (Brazil), Garrett Bradley (USA), and I (UK) returned to Sichuan and Yunnan in February 2015. This year Kyle Dempster (USA) joined us in the search for first ascents and challenging new routes above 6000m in the alpine country of the eastern Himalayan uplift.

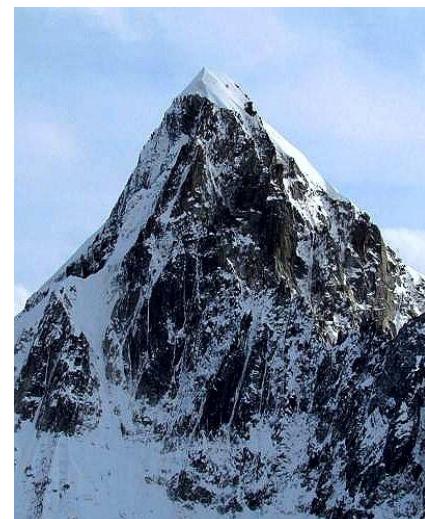
**Chola Massif**



After some brief acclimatisation in the now-overregulated valleys around Siguniang Shan, Marcos, Kyle and I headed for the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Region in the far northwest of Sichuan, where few official barriers exist to hinder alpine activity in the Chola, Shaluli and Gongkala ranges. The highest points of the granite core of the Chola peaks are Chola I (6168m) and Chola II (6119m), and Marcos and I had established in 2014 that the North Face of Chola II is accessible directly from 4000m on the paved road between Ganzi and Dege. While the glaciated northern flank of Chola I is popular with climbing schools and guided parties, Chola II is thought to have been climbed only once, by Charlie Fowler, solo, in May 1997. Fowler's route took the East Face from the

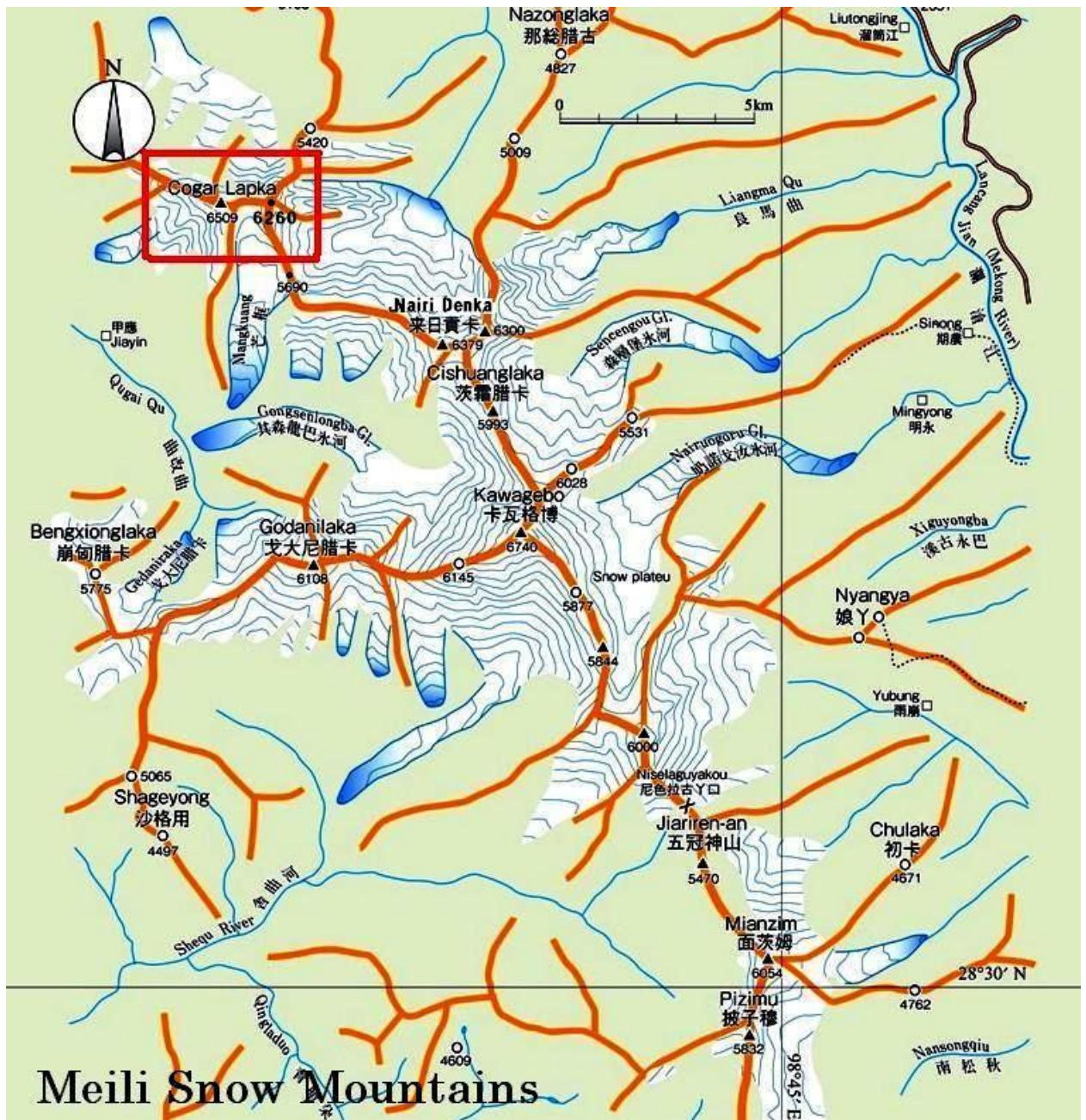
main Chola Glacier, but what was then a 50-degree snow slope is now a serac-rimmed face unsuitable in ascent or descent.

The 4km approach hike ascends a drainage containing the most amazingly continuous frozen mountain rivers any of us had encountered; the lower valley also features a number of frozen waterfalls with clear route potential. A passing weather front brought high winds and light snow to accompany the bitterly cold temperatures of the Tibetan winter. With daytime highs well below -20C, we moved quickly up easy gullies and needed to belay only the pitch below the summit ridge, where Kyle became dangerously chilled by the winds at a notch around 6000m. In moving above him, Marcos dislodged some of the very loose rock and Kyle was hit in the jaw by a sizable block, causing an injury serious enough to force a retreat. We rappelled the deep gully which cuts across the North Face below the summit, crossing the icefall at the base of the face to regain our high camp, where we found that Kyle's mouth was swollen but otherwise not badly damaged. We chose nonetheless to walk out that evening for the relative warmth and recovery options of Ganzi. This allowed our stubborn streak to reemerge, with none of us, least of all Kyle, deterred by the low temperatures. We returned to our high camp two days later, reclimbed the slopes below the upper NW Ridge but then traversed into the true North Face above the prominent gully. Kyle then completed our route by leading two mixed pitches to put us on the upper snow slopes and then finally gain the top of Chola II. We descended again by the same gully and icefall.



Previous page photos: (left) Chola Shan I 6168m viewed from Chola Shan II 6119m  
 (right) Northeast face of Chola Shan II

### Meili Xueshan (Meili Snow Mountains)



Joined now by Garrett, we continued to the Meili Xueshan (Meili Snow Mountains), also known as the Kawagebo Range, which lies in the Deep Gorge Country of far northwest Yunnan province, forming the border with the southeastern corner of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Although most famous for the beautifully fluted triangular peak of Mianzimu (6054m), the range's highest summit, Kawagebo (6740m), is the second-most sacred mountain in the pantheon of Tibetan Buddhism after Mt. Kailas.

In 1991 it was the scene of one of the darker episodes in the history of both mountaineering and Sino-Tibetan relations, when the Chinese authorities granted climbing permission to a joint Chinese-Japanese team, over the strongest possible objections of the Tibetan community. The situation was resolved only when an avalanche took the lives of the entire team (17 members) and the range has been closed to climbing for over 15 years.

At the northern end of the chain, located fully on the Tibetan side of the divide, is the second-highest peak in the range, Cogar Lapka (6509m). Following a reconnaissance by Marcos and me in 2014, we began our approach near the Mekong River (2100m) but spent much of the morning discussing with the villagers and local police at the last settlement, where Garrett's excellent Mandarin abilities and diplomatic skills cleared our passage. Steep and overgrown trails led us through thick, mixed forests of bamboo, conifers and moss-hung deciduous trees, where we camped on the first night by the rushing river.

On the second day, we passed the treeline and unused settlements in summer yak pastures, all overlooked by cascading glaciers. The third approach day took us from a small, stone-covered glacier up loose snow and stonefall-threatened gullies to 50 degrees, which gained the 5500m col between Nairi Denka (6379m) to the south and a peak, P6260, to the north (height estimate from Google Earth). Beyond the col, we climbed north along the ridge towards P6260, then downclimbed and rappelled some 150m to the glacier below the precipitous East Face of Cogar Lapka, placing our final camp in a snow-filled crevasse at approximately 5650m.

This East Face contains no routes that could be judged objectively safe. When the following morning dawned clear, we headed rapidly towards the north end of the glacier

basin with a view to gaining the col between P6260 and Cogar Lapka, and thus the upper East Ridge of the latter. Two steep ice pitches (to 60 degrees) brought us to this col at the same time as a descending white-out with howling winds, which drove us back to camp.

The next morning was clear again, but Garrett was too tired and Kyle too tired of the constant objective dangers, and so only Marcos and I regained our high point at the col (6050m). From here we continued up the East Ridge, circumnavigating minor cornices and occasional crevasses as the dramatic views across to P6260 and over the Kawagebo Range were blotted out by incoming clouds.

The snow deepened as seracs pushed us to the north side of the ridge, where Marcos surmounted the last difficulty with an extremely athletic move through an overhanging ice bulge at a Bergschrund. However, my inability to repeat this feat left him hauling up my sorry carcass while contemplating the value of the belay knife as his legs sank ever deeper into the soft snow. A final wallow brought us up the summit crest, where we felt around in the white-out for the highest point.

Marcos' GPS watch reading of 6516m confirmed that we were there, but the weather eliminated the views we had hoped for into southeastern Tibet, and particularly towards Damyon. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first and only summit to be climbed in the Kawagebo Range.

An uneventful descent was simplified by a snow-stake at the overhanging bulge and the storm abating above the col. Two V-threads took us down the ice face as night fell and the snowfall restarted, but Kyle and Garrett guided us to camp with their headlamps. On another clear morning, we climbed back out of the glacier basin and along the ice ridge in wild winds, then descended to the col, dropped down the stonefall-threatened face and continued on the glacier, sleeping that night in the yak pastures at 4000m.

We walked out through the forests on the next day, then spent a few days thawing out by rock-climbing in the spring weather at 2000m on the floors of the deep gorges.



East face of Cogar Lapka, 6509m



Climbing to East Ridge leading to Summit



Bruce Normand on the East Ridge of Cogar Lapka

### Daxue Shan – Minya Konka Range

For a final mountaineering quest, we turned our attention again to the unclimbed peaks south of Minya Konka (7556m), also reconnoitred from the south in 2014 by Marcos, Garrett, and me. Then, despite the cold winter weather of early February, we were able to climb P6460, finding it to be only the western sub-peak of P6468. Retracing this approach almost a month later in the year, we climbed to the 5800m saddle separating P6124 from Longshan (6684m) and dug in a solid campsite to withstand the extreme winds. Marcos had contracted a stomach bug and took no further part in the climbing.

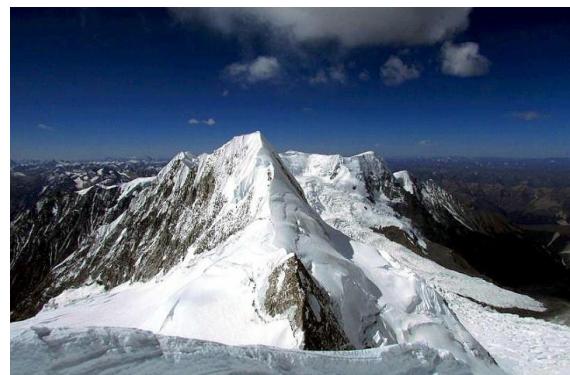
Garrett, Kyle, and I made a reconnaissance of Longshan by climbing the northeast ridge of P6124 on snow to 40 degrees.

Despite low clouds and high winds, we were able to view the south and west faces of Minya Konka, the western flank of Longshan and the snowy dome of Nyambo Konka (6114m) to the west, then still unclimbed. As the next day dawned clear, Kyle and I made an attempt on Longshan by ascending the hanging glaciers above the saddle, climbing two vertical Bergschrunds and continuing up a long ice slope, which brought us to a shoulder at approximately 6500m. By this time the weather had deteriorated significantly, with a solid cloud deck falling and the ever-present winter winds rising.

The summit was still several hundred metres distant and the ridge leading towards it became soft, corniced snow, steeply fluted on the east (Hailuoguo) side and falling away in vertical rock on the west. This forced us to retreat, and we regained the tent a few hours after dark. Yet another clear morning clouded up on strong winds as we walked down to 4000m, and by the following evening we were back in Chengdu at the end of our winter expedition.



**Nyambo Konka, 6114m, from top of Pk 6124m**



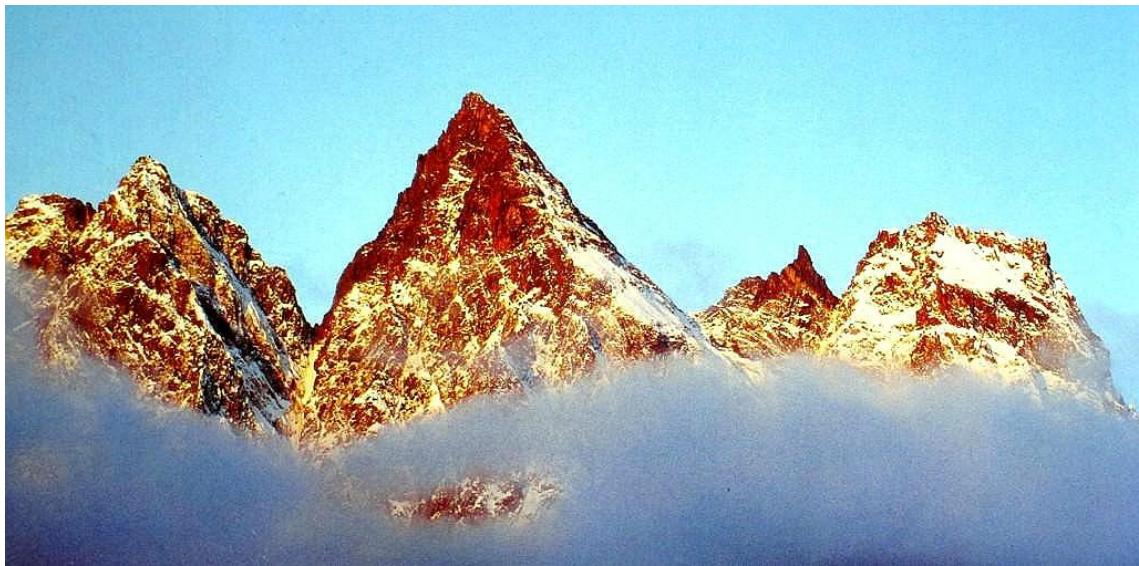
**Pk 6124m from 6100m on Longshan**

TOM NAKAMURA

## Holy Mountain Balagezong

Future Climbing Paradise in Shangri-La, Yunnan





Holy Balagezong 5545m (center: highest peak) east face viewed from near Bala Village

### Remembrance of William M. Bueler

In January of 2004 a letter came from William M. Bueler living in Colorado. It contained a brief note of his reconnaissance of Balagesong with maps and pictures in October 2003 and his book "**Roof of the Rockies—A History of Colorado Mountaineering**". Our contact had begun through the American Alpine Journal and the Japanese Alpine News. I knew of this soaring peak since I had seen it far in distance in 1993.

To my best knowledge he was the first to have reconnoitered Balagezong for attempting to climb. In the next month, however, he told me that tumor had suddenly been found and it was difficult to write because of being paralyzed on one side. Subsequently in April the following sorrowful letter arrived from her wife.

*Dear Mr. Nakamura, 10 April 2004*

*I am sad to inform you that my husband Bill (William M. Bueler) died on 6 April of the brain tumor of which he had informed you. But we received your card with its information and beautiful mountain picture in fine for me to read it to him and for him to be pleasure that you had received and would be able to use his information. Thank you for your correspondence with Bill. His travels to the Sino Tibetan borderlands were the great adventures of his last ten years and he enjoyed those adventures to the full. He felt that you were a kindred spirit.*

*Gratefully,*

*Lois Bueler (Mrs. William M. Bueler)*

Since then, Balagezong has long been being stayed in my mind for exploring someday in future. But time has lapsed for more than a decade. A Japanese photographer visited three times Balagezong during 2000–2010. After William Bueler, Damien Gildea, an expert of the Antarctic mountaineering paid attention and later Dr. Liu Yong, the Sichuan University entered twice the mountain, but he did no climbing. In May, 2016, a chance came to Nakamura.

## **Accelerative Tourism Development**

Mountain scenic places are in a hive of industry in Yunnan and Sichuan. Tourism development is progressing in a tremendous speed. New roads with bridges and tunnels are under construction through mountains and valleys wherever we go in the frontier. Driving distance is becoming shorter. Traditional industry such as agricultures is being replaced with tourism industry. In fact many tourists are rushing from an every corner of China. The Dagu Glacier Scenic Park has a rope way to 4800m lookout point. It is only one day drive north from Chengdu is busy in autumn leaves season.

You may get to Degen (Atuntze, a field of early explorations, famous for Meili Snow Mountains) in 3.5 hours pleasant drive from Shangri-L (Zhongdian). It previously took a full day. However I have been inattentive for my studies on Balagezong and not known of such rapid change of Shangri-La. 4 stars and 5 stars hotels entertain visitors at Shuishuang 2320m, a base for sightseeing. 13 years ago it took 8 days on foot for Bueler to trek to Balagezong for reconnaissance. Now less than two hours drive carries us from Shangri-La airport to hotels in Shuishuang (Balagezong is an important project which is a policy of the Shanggri-L County with overriding priority. The County has already invested 800 million RMB.

## **Main attractions are as follows**

1. Holy Mountain Balagezong 5545m is called “Gezongsongben” in Tibetan turned from three beautiful princesses in legend. These peaks, Natural Stupa (Shangbala Stupa) ca 5000m and other prominently soaring strange rock peaks (4700-5000m), alluring alpine meadows, and mysterious high mountain lakes are impressive and attractive. All peaks are untrodden and remain unclimbed. Contrast with fascinating peaks enchants visitors.

2. At a meeting point of Sichuan, Yunnan and Tibet, Balagezong is fascinating for brilliant Shangri-la Grand Canyon. The magnificent canyon captivates tourists as 2.5km artificially-made hanging path ensures safe walking and they enjoy river rafting in return. In the typical “U Shape canyon, the cliff with 200-1000m drop is exciting.
3. Bala at 3200m is a typical Tibetan hamlet. “Bala” means “A Tibetan village which came from Batang, Sichuan”. Some 300 years ago a Khamba family sought for a paradise, an ideal homeland with no warfare and misery, and finally settled down here after overcoming hardship to migrate to unknown place. Tibetan style wooden houses are layer-built along the mountain side.

### **Controls and Regulations being tightened – Paradox of Development**

As tourism development progresses, controls over the Tibetans have been becoming tighter and tighter. When you travel through eastern Tibet, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan, you would often come across a board “New Village” in roadside. Tibetans and other minorities living in remote areas are being forced to move to the houses newly built near by a main road, so that the local government may easily control villagers.

Old villages and trails are abandoned and thus less populated in the remote areas.

#### **Stronger control over Tibetan**

My Tibetan guide, Gerong, who lives in Deqen, has complained that he could not go out to foreign countries. Even though he became a member of the Communist Party, the County government does not allow him to renew his passport since he visited Dharamshala last year. Awang, a Tibetan guide of Lhasa, is also not allowed to have a new passport after he returned from Nepal and India two years ago.

The Xi Jinpin administration is strengthening control and watching of Tibetans. In Sichuan, for example, Tibetans in Danba County, one day drive to northwest from Chengdu, are required to have a permit of the local government for going to Lhasa, whilst Han Chinese may freely travel to Lhasa.

#### **Controls over foreigners**

Restrictions over foreigners to enter eastern Tibet are getting tighter and further strengthened. Before two – three years ago, foreigners were able to enter eastern Tibet by roads both from Yunnan and Sichuan. Now it is impossible. Foreigners cannot travel

from Deqen (Yunnan) to Yanjing/Markam (Tibetan Autonomous Region=TAR) crossing provincial border by road. They are unable to cross the Jinsha Jiang (Upper Yangtze), provincial border of Tibet-Sichuan Highway, from Batang (Sichuan) to Markam (TAR). Foreigners are off-limit to Qamdo Prefecture, formerly a forbidden city. Tsawarong along upper Salween (Nujiang) northwest of Meili Snow Mountains is the same. Damyon, a mountain of Goddess is inaccessible.

My friend, Secretary of Sports Administration Center of TAR mentions that a procedure for foreigners to obtain a permit to enter un-open areas is becoming more complicated and time-wasting.

### **Journey in May – Rainy season starting**

Members are elderly Tom Nakamura (81) and Tsuyoshi Nagai (83) as usually. Period was from May14 to 29. Journey started from Chengdu. Direct (non-stop) flight Tokyo-Chengdu of All Nippon Airways is convenient. We flew from Chengdu to Shangri-La of Yunnan. We planned [Stage I] Yunnan-Balagezong and [Stage II] Sichuan-Dagu Glacier Scenic Park and reconnaissance of least-known 5500m massif in the vicinity. However, bad weather continued and there was no harvest to note in Sichuan. Therefore only [Stage I] Balagezong is reported here.

May 16: Rainy season has already started. Hoping a luck of [Man of Blue Sky] Tom Nakamura, we took off Chengdu at 07:30 and stood in Shangri-La airport 3230m at 08:30. Cloudy, 9°C. Old friends, Lu Weidong (Nakamura's agent in Kumning) and Gerong, Tibetan guide of Deqen welcomed us at the airport and soon began to drive to Balagezong.

New highway led us to the junction of Jinsha Jiang (upper Yangtze) and a tributary, Gang Qu, to Balagezong through tunnels and bridges along mountain sides to short-cut the old road. We arrived at Suishuang Grand Hotel 2320m, a base for sightseeing at 11:00. Distance from the junction to Shuishuang is 17km. From here private cars are not allowed to go farther for environmental protection. Shuttle buses are operated. In the afternoon we ran up to Bala village by zigzag road through canyon and then to a pass 4250m of Natural Stupa (Shangbala Stupa). To our disappointment, however, there was no visibility because of cloud, rain and fog. Distance from Shuishuang to Bala village is 17km and from Bala village to the pass of 4250m is 23km. We stayed at new

Tibetan style hotel in Bala village.



**Shangri-La Grand Canyon**

May 17: Rain, Bala village, 09:00, 8°C. No sign of improvement of weather. To make use of time efficiently we went to Deqen 3200m of Meili Snow Mountains. We crossed Baimang Shan Pass 4280m (snowing).

May 18: Rain, Deqen, 06:30, 6°C. Meili Snow Mountains were in the cloud. We returned from Deqen to Shuishuang and in the afternoon we went to Shangri-La Grand Canyon for sightseeing.

### **Future Climbing Paradise**

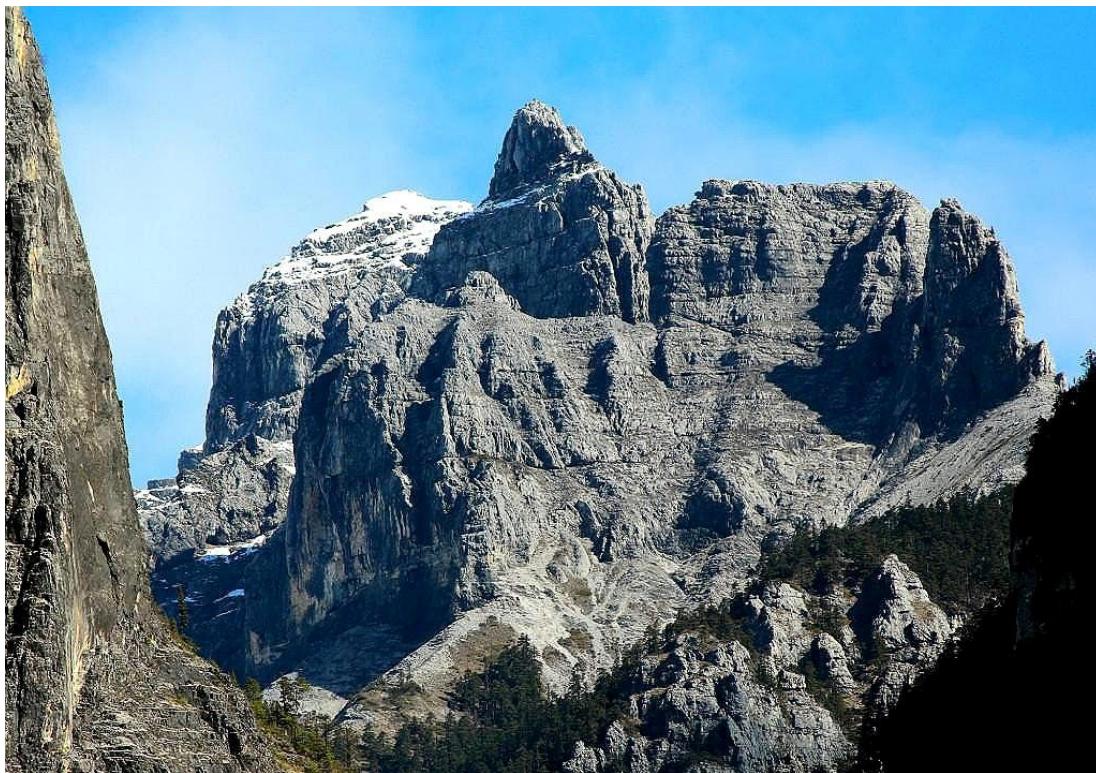
May 19: Cloudy-fine, Shuishuang, 07:00, 13°C. After one week, the long waited good weather returned. This was the only chance to have a look of the mountains. We chartered a shuttle bus and were in a hurry to the pass of Natural Stupa via Bala village where east face of Balagezong overwhelmingly towered beyond valley. As ascending zigzag path from Bala village to the pass of Natural Stupa east face of unique

rock peaks of 4700-5000m appeared in succession. Though these peaks were only a part of Balagezong massif, they were magnificent and fascinating. We were deeply touched. We were happy to have taken advantages of only three hours fine weather. We returned to Chengdu on May 22 via Lijiang of Yulong Snow Mountains.

### Pictures of Balagezong and 4700-5000m Rock Peaks



Unnamed 4700- 5000m rock peaks east face south of Natural Stupa



View from Bala village to north: left behind -Natural Stupa, front –rock peak ca 4800m



Natural Stupa (Shangbala Stupa) ca 5000m south face



Immediate east of Natural Stupa, prominent rock peak ca 5000m south face