

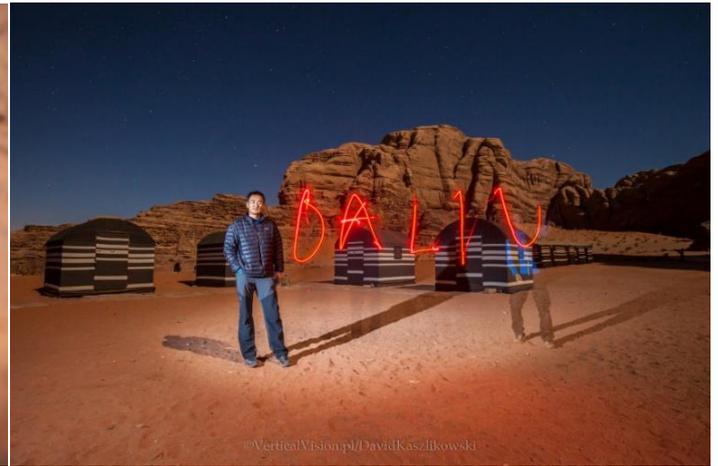
DALIU 劉勇

Climbing Adventure in Jordan –2017

A Chinese team did a small adventure in Wadi Rum valley, Jordan



“Jordan trip is one of the greatest adventures in our lifetime”, team leader Daliu said.



The adventure there is “a trek that takes on ancient trails through hidden canyons to the summits of several of the biggest formations in Jordan”



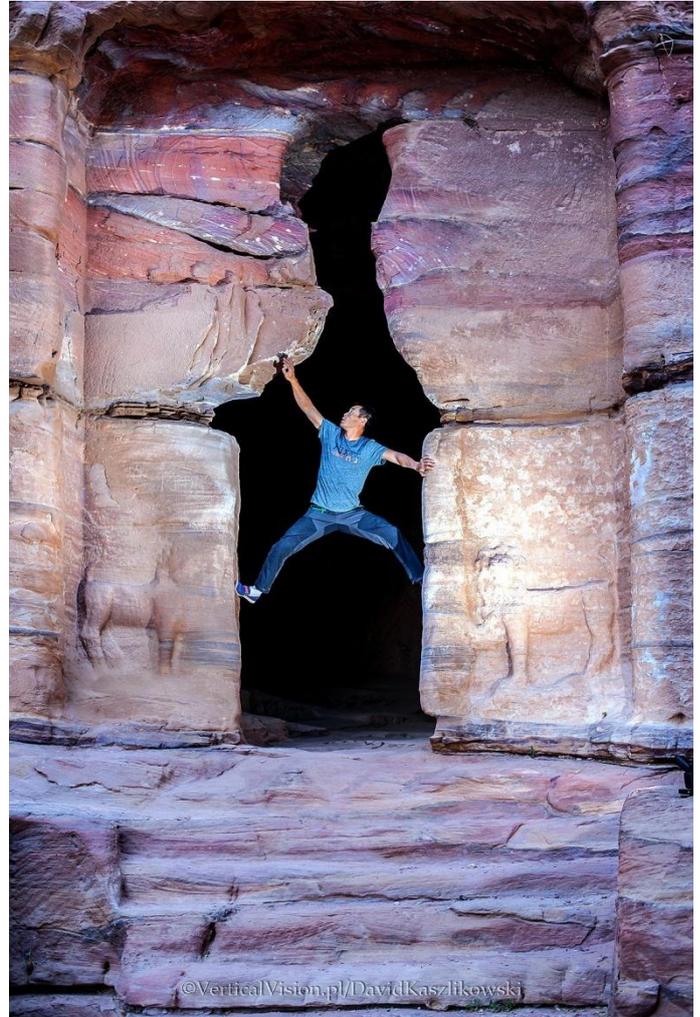
Wadi Rum is a Mars like desert valleys, huge mountains and picturesque canyons. Visit to Wadi Rum is like journey to another planet. Its Arabic name translates as: valley of the moon. Vast scenery of Wadi Rum desert and its fairy-tale mountains is an adventurer perfect playground. Its red dunes and “plasticine” like sandstone will leave you in awe.



Wadi Rum was added as UNESCO World Heritage site for its natural and cultural significance in 2011. It is also film-makers favorite background appearing in movies such as Ridley Scott’s “The Martian” (with M. Damon), “Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen” or “Lawrence of Arabia”-praised as one of the best adventure films ever.

This two weeks’ adventure was lead by Daliu and David Kaszlikowski (a Polish climber who has climbed in Wadi Rum for several times). Wadi Rum is one of the top adventure destinations among hikers and climbers. During our staying, the team climbed four new rock routes, also crossed labyrinths of canyons, climbed up some relatively exposed trails, hiked up huge red dunes and massive rock arches.

Sitting in the middle of the desert, quietly watching sunset, it is easy to believe this timeless landscape is still untouched by humans. In fact, it has been inhabited by many cultures since prehistoric times. There are over 30 documented archeological sites holding spectacular treasures from as early as 4000 years ago. There are ancient inscriptions and petrography, steps carved by nabatean hunters, there is even ancient Bedouin map made hundred years ago as indication for thirsty camel caravans.



We flew all the way from China to Amman (capital city of Jordan) on 3rd of November, 2017. My long time climbing partner David Kaszlikowski waited for us at airport. He already arrived to Jordan a few days earlier than us.

Travelling to Wadi Rum is not a long road trip. As soon as we get to the only Bedouin village, we took a jeep to the deep of desert and find a Bedouin tent camp as our first night spot in the valley.

Khazali canyon with numerous rock engravings and inscriptions made 2000 years ago. We developed two new rock climbing routes for a good warm up day.

Then David and I guided team hiked deep into picturesque canyon crossing huge Um Ishrin massif. Then, we emerged in a different valley. We hiked up famous Red Dunes next day, in the early afternoon we entered remote Barrah canyon deep in the desert. After lunch and some climbing on the walls of the canyon (optional), we entered narrow siq (canyon) to cross the mountain to the adjacent valley. We enjoyed the sunset in our desert camp.

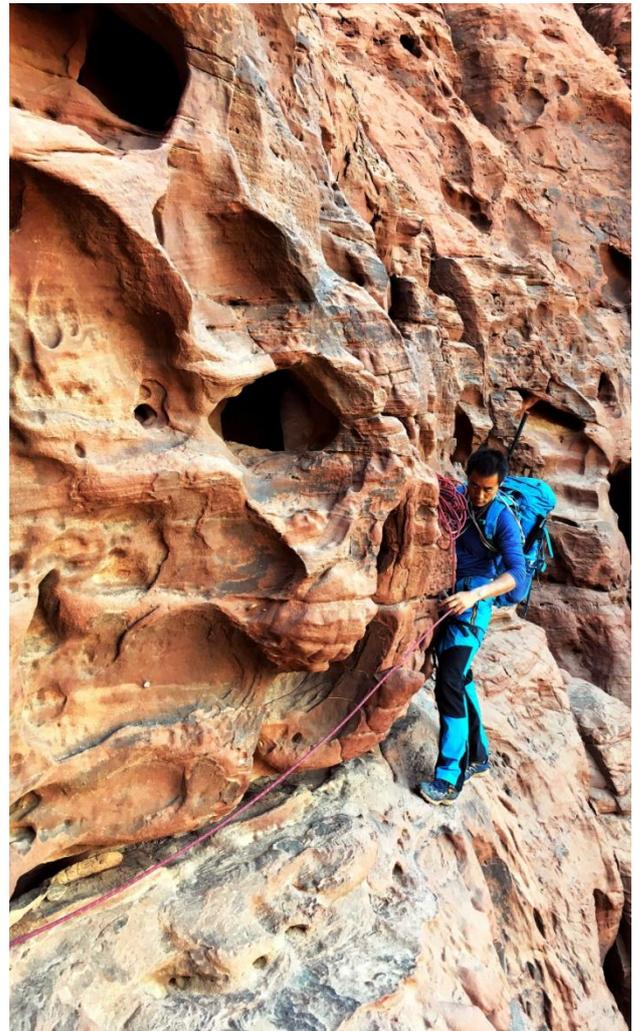
Next day we hiked toward the mountain with the biggest rock arch in the protected area. Burdah arch is situated 300m above the valley, and we hiked up to the arch along picturesque trail. Late afternoon, we finally arrived at our exciting rock camps.

After few days climbing and hiking, we took a day off. We had a relax day in Aquaba city which is on the shore of Red Sea before the coming big mountain adventure. Then we got back to Wadi Rum valley, stayed overnight in Bedouin house. We packed our bags for next big days' adventure.



Jebel Rum is a complex mountain massif, and the second tallest peak in Jordan.

It has huge mountain range with exposed trails. Scrambling difficult rock face, after a whole day climbing with heavy bags (everyone has to carry water, food and climbing gear), we reached the top at 15:00 of 12th, 2017. We spent an hour to enjoy the great views on the desert and the mountains.





After 12 pitches rope abseils, we find a wild bivy site on the east side of Jebel Rum. It was cold in the night since we only brought our sleeping bag instead of tents. The temperature dropped to -10°C in the midnight, but sleeping under the stars and moon was very special experience for all of us.

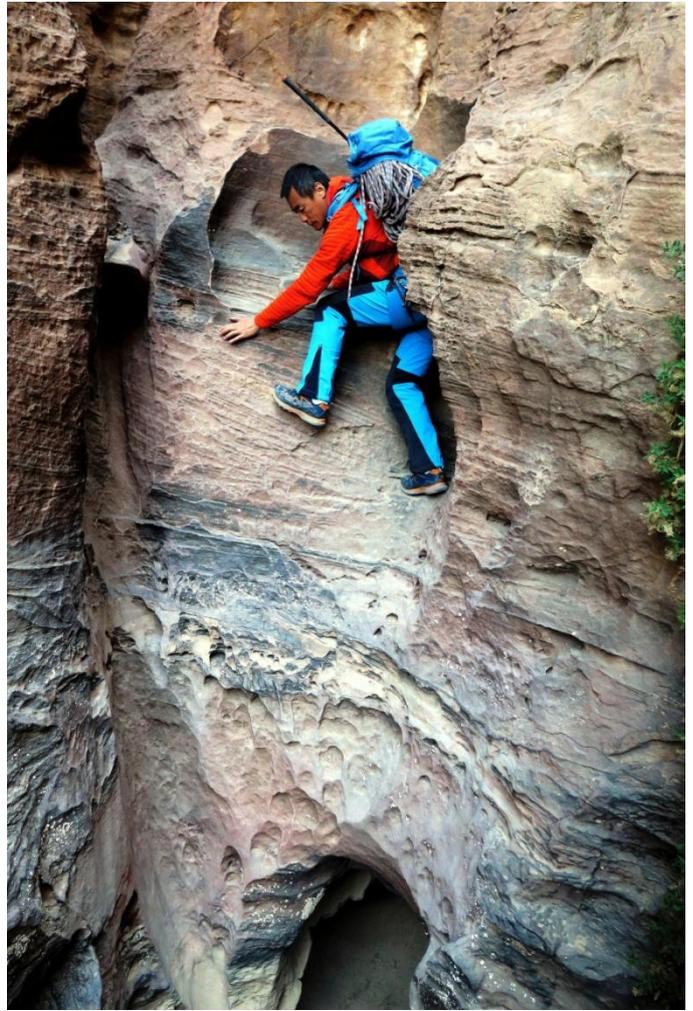
After the breakfast in our wild camp, we continued to traverse and very soon approached huge siq (canyon) cutting the mountain in half. We rappelled into the depth of the siq with another 10 abseils, then continued on foot in a picturesque and some very narrow rock corridors. We finally got back to the valley before dark.

We are probably the first Chinese team summated Jebel Rum.

For the rest of our trip, we visited famous “Petra”- the ancient capital city of ancient Nabateans. It’s the biggest treasure of Jordan which is a city carved in red stone before 300 B.C. described by UNESCO as “one of the most precious properties of man’s cultural heritage.

We enjoyed our last relax day in Dead Sea, The team was satisfied with the successful Jordan adventure.







Mugu Expedition

Ingo Röger (DAV), Germany, October 2017



Picture 01

Nepal is the country with the most eight-thousanders and the place where trekking was born - no wonder normal routes on the high mountains and popular treks are pretty packed during the seasons.

But still you can find great solitude in remote regions of this little state amidst the mighty Himalaya. Even during the main season adventurers will probably never meet other tourists in the sparsely populated districts of Humla and Mugu in the far northwest of Nepal. A few years ago I curiously studied hiking maps and GoogleEarth. One spot provoked my curiosity. I saw two major rivers with their springs close to the Tibetan border: Mugu Karnali with its tributary Takya Khola and the Loti Karnali river and its tributaries Take Khola and Chawarsing Khola west of it. Both valleys are separated by a roughly 5000 meters high mountain pass, which seemed walkable, at least on the map.

Close to the headwaters of those rivers a mountain range is towering into the Nepalese and Tibetan sky, which is charted Namja Lagula Danda on the trekking maps NP109/NP110 of Himalaya Maphouse. To the east it is confined by the Namja La Pass (4986 m), where some local trade between Nepal and Tibet takes place.

The exposed location of this massif seemed to be a good spot for an outstanding panorama from its top across the Tibetan plateau and a sea of nameless peaks on Nepalese side, even though this mountain range is less than 5900 meters high. Changla and Gorakh Himal to the northwest and Kanti Himal to the southeast should be clearly visible from there. Following the slopes and glaciers from southwest, its highest peak looked fairly climbable. The idea of an explorative trekking and climbing trip to the valleys of Mugu Karnali and Take Khola was born.

At the Bergsichten Festival in Dresden I met the experienced expedition climber Chris Nettekoven of Bonn. Just like me he is keen on mountaineering off the beaten tracks and he's been searching for virgin peaks all the time. We decided to organize an expedition together once having found a promising goal. In 2016 I discovered the travel blog of Roger Nix by chance (<http://trekwithroger.blogspot.de/2016/01/mid-west-nepal-november-2015.html>). On his trek he followed nearly the same route that I was focused on. Now it was clear that it was possible to take this route. Rogers pictures of those remote valleys and mountains looked very inviting and woke up my travel bug. I preached to a converted when I suggested Chris to organize this trip together. Chris accurately researched the climbing history of this region: only few climbs and attempts were documented, mostly in the mountain ranges of Kanti and Gorakh Himal, to say nothing of the nameless peaks of Changla Himal and the Namja Lagula Danda range. In addition to Namja Lagula main peak he found more rewarding climbing possibilities in Changla and Gorakh Himal. Harry Kirschenhofer, Franz Friebel, Nils Beste and Bernhard „Bernde“ Emmerich completed the expedition team. At the beginning of October 2017 we started from Kathmandu via Nepalgunj and Jumla to Gamghadi, where our five day trek along the Mugu Karnali river started.

Right from the start we got in touch with the endearing local people. The settlements of Mangri and Mugu were the most beautiful villages along the way. The roaring river beside us never died away.

Right after the village of Mugu a steep valley on the left side offered a surprising view to the wild summits of Khela Danda Range (5467 m, picture 02), where a huge rock arch could be admired. Bernde und Nils scouted the access to the base of the east face, where they looked for a climbable and rewarding line.

Half a day hiking beyond Mugu, which is the last settlement in the valley, we left the trade route to Tibet on narrow paths to the northwest, following the lonely valley of Takya Khola. Highlight of the day: the first glimpse of the glaciated Namja Lagula Danda main massif high above the valley. On 8th of October we reached the basecamp (4650 m, picture 01) on time. A perfect place for the next five days: boulder-filled meadows close to the waterside of a young creek. We waved good-bye to the mule drivers who left us the next morning.

It took us three days to find the safest route to a high camp (5150 m, picture 03) and further on to the edge of the glacier (~ 5400 m, picture 04). Mostly due to Franz's scouting tours we found a good way there. We had to scramble a coarse rock scree up most of the time. Surprisingly we found a comfortable terrace like spot, well protected

from rockfall but short of water. We searched a while before we discovered a small runnel under big boulders (picture 05) 70 meters below the camp. All six members arrived at the high camp in the afternoon of October 12th. Next morning Harry felt sick and stayed in the tent, while the other five members started to the summit at about 6 o'clock. Having enjoyed many sunny days in a row up until now, that day the sky was overcast and a strong wind was blowing from south most of the time. We could see some snowfall in the distance and most of the mountains around us were covered in clouds above 6000 meters. We scrambled up a slope of fragile boulders and crossed a shorter ridge before we reached the glacier. We had to cross only a few crevasses at the beginning. Then the ascent was quite easy and the snow conditions were nearly perfect. Below the west summit we followed a wide glacier valley to the little col between south and central summit. We followed a broad crest to the north a bit and reached the central summit soon (picture 06). GPS devices measured an altitude of 5845 meters. An quite exposed snow ridge lead northwards to the slightly higher main summit (5860 m, picture 07). Nils climbed this short ridge solo to the highest point of Namja Lagula Danda confidently, while the four of us were resting and taking pictures of Nils on the top.

We were rewarded with a splendid panoramic view from the summit across the Tibetan plateau. We saw unapproachable peaks along the Himalaya main ridge. Curiously we looked out for the summits of Changla Himal about 20 kilometers west of us, where we had planned further climbs. We decided to name our mountain Sunkala Topi. The meaning of this Nepali name is „Golden Crown“ because of its color and shape in the evening light.

On October 14th we crossed the nameless pass and entered the upper Chawarsing Khola (~ 4995 m). While it was an easy hike for us, our porters had a tough day, since the mules left a few days ago. We built up the camp on the shore of a scenic mountain lake (4860 m). Here we spent the coldest night of the whole trip. The westernmost summit of Namja Lagula Danda range is standing north of this lake. Nils was starting to a solo climb next morning, while we were going 10 kilometers further down the valley to the green meadows of Takekharka (4109 m)

In the meantime Nils scrambled up to a prominent col and got to the north side of the mountain, where he climbed a snow face (50°) and the west ridge on his way to the top. (5767 m, picture 08). Happy and a little bit exhausted he reached our camp the same day.

During this descent we enjoyed the mountains skyline on both sides of the trek. A slim rock needle was standing in the lower Paththarchhabe Khola (5459 m, picture 09). Left of us was the Bhuti Halna Lek (5814 m, picture 10) to be seen. Seemingly it offers easy access from the south and a much more challenging ice and rock climb following the northwest ridge. Far in the distance, high above Paththarchhabe Khola a Six-thousander in the Changla Himal was looming up into the cloudless sky. This mountain was on our wish list for the remaining time here. Takekharka is situated on the

confluence of Chawarsing und Kangla Khola. To the west, the camp was guarded by a dominant mountain (5515 m, picture 11).

Takekharka is a good place for recovery. Here we stayed for three days. Only Nils and Franz started the next day to their long ascent to the mountain mentioned above. On the first day they hiked up 15 km to a camp shortly below Kang La pass (5358 m). A local man and his two mules helped them to carry the luggage. On October 17th they climbed the mountain, which they later named Pratibandhit Lek (6130 m, picture 12). On summit day they climbed a vertical distance of 1500 meters up and down. This elegant route followed the narrow west ridge, which is up to 55° steep. It's a magic line indeed (picture 13).

In the meantime Bernde observed some smaller rock walls near the camp. On the 16th he and Ingo climbed an excellent new route called „Rockbow Warrior“ (picture 15) on a small sector 4400 meters above sea level, Bernde also tried a hard project on an overhanging edge direct above the rushing water (picture 14).

Then we continued the trekking down the unsettled Take Khola for two days. We passed first coniferous forests and deciduous forests later on. Here we met an US-American expedition on their way to a remote mountain in the Gorakh Himal. The valley changed more and more into a narrow gorge, and surprisingly the summit of Bandar Lek (6034 m, picture 16), which was first climbed one year ago by the single mountaineer Jack Bynum, was glowing high above our heads in the late afternoon sun. 13 days after passing our last settlement we arrived in the tiny village of Nepka (2485 m).

There we enjoyed the hospitality of the villagers for more than 24 hours. We were invited to a local festival and bought a goat, which, prepared as a meal, presented a gorgeous feast for all crew and expedition members.

The traverse across the secluded Chhettuma Lek (4663 m) from Loti Karnali to the Lurupya Khola was almost the last obstacle on our way. Here we felt mountain solitude and enjoyed unique views across green mountain ranges to the south. Before crossing the pass we camped on the shore of a mystic lake (picture 17). Route finding across the pass was quite difficult. In a moment of inattention Ingo fell down and injured his right foot. Slowly and carefully he had to climb down the next 1000 meters in pain. Getting to the bottom of Lurupya Khola another challenge was waiting for the exhausted adventurers. We had to cross the wild river using an instable trunk of a tree as a natural bridge.

After a final two days trek under a deep blue sky we reached Simikot, the capital of the district of Humla, where our adventure ended. Two days later we flew back to Kathmandu with a stopover in Nepalgunj. In Kathmandu we crowned this journey, celebrating our success and visiting the World Heritage sites of Thamel, Baktapur and Changu Narajan. (all pictures by author, except picture 13).



Picture 02



Picture 03



Picture 04



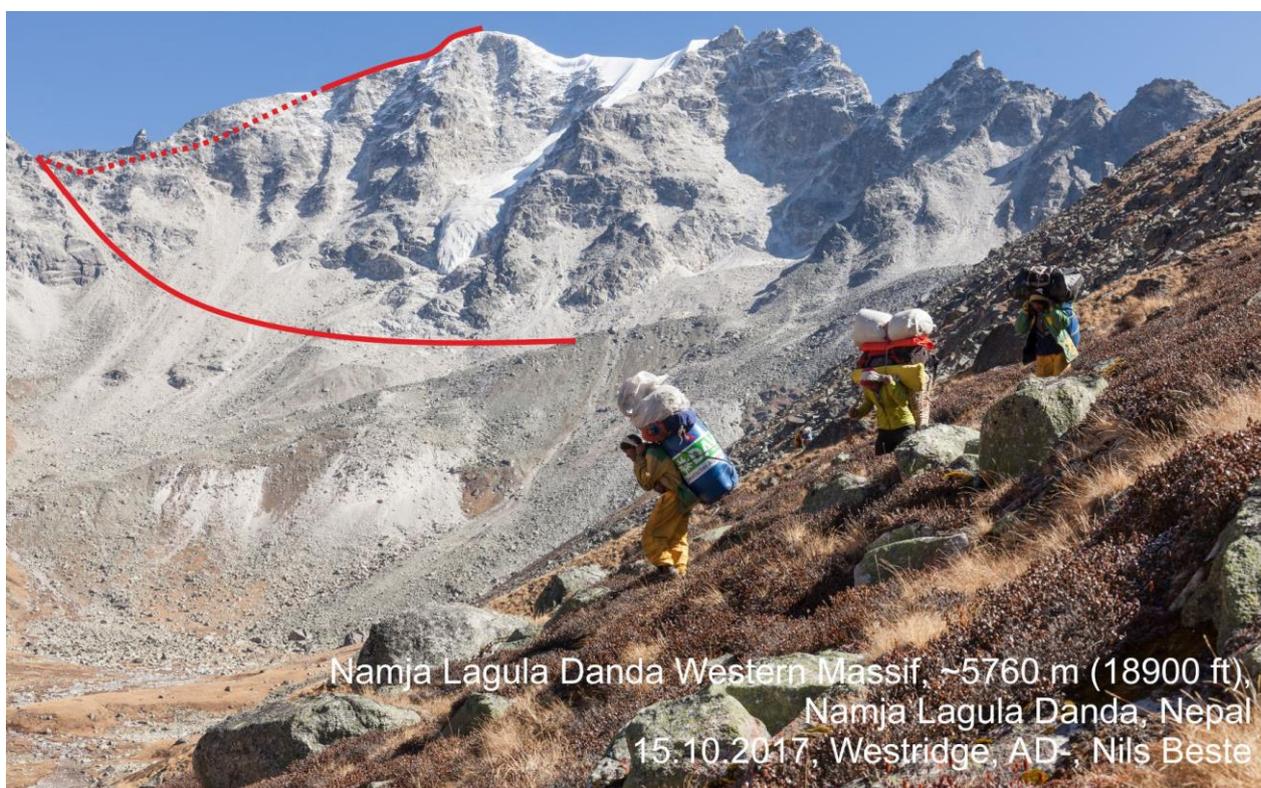
Picture 05



Picture 06



Picture 07



Picture 08



Picture 09



Picture 10



Picture 11

Pratibandhit Lek, 6130 m (20112 ft), Kangla Himal, Nepal
17.10.2017, West Ridge, AD, Nils Beste, Franz Friebe



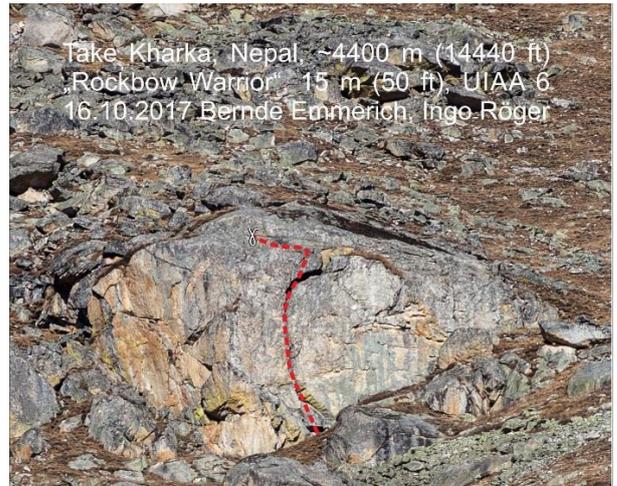
Picture 12



Picture 13 (photo: Nils Beste)



Picture 14



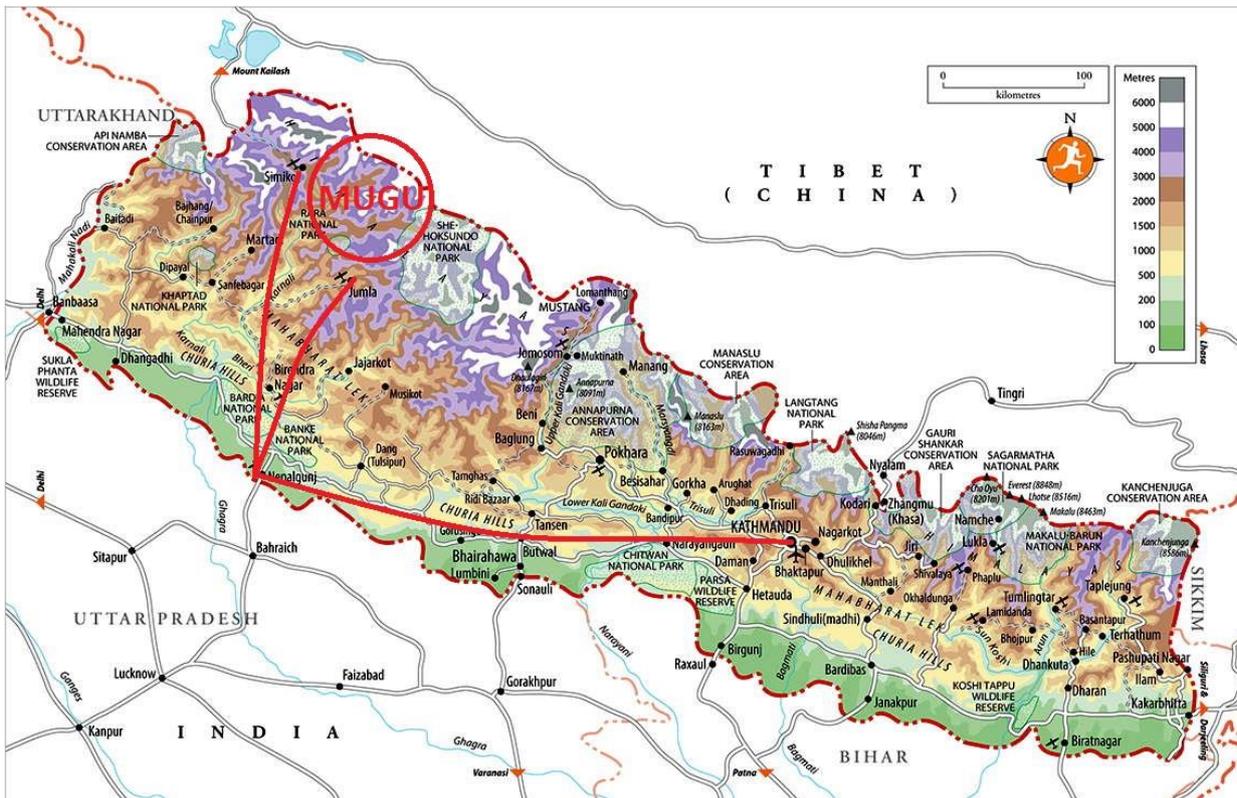
Picture 15



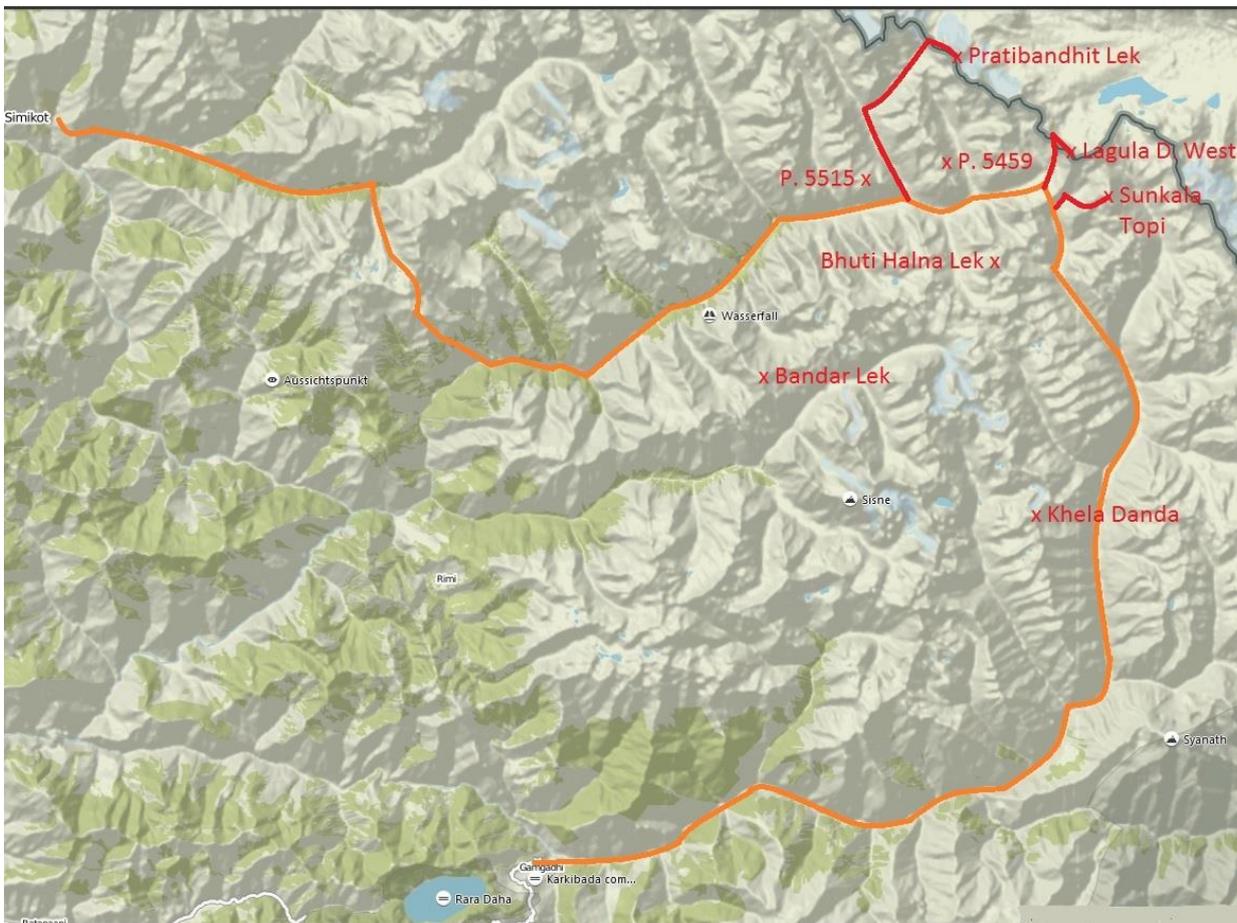
Picture 16



Picture 17



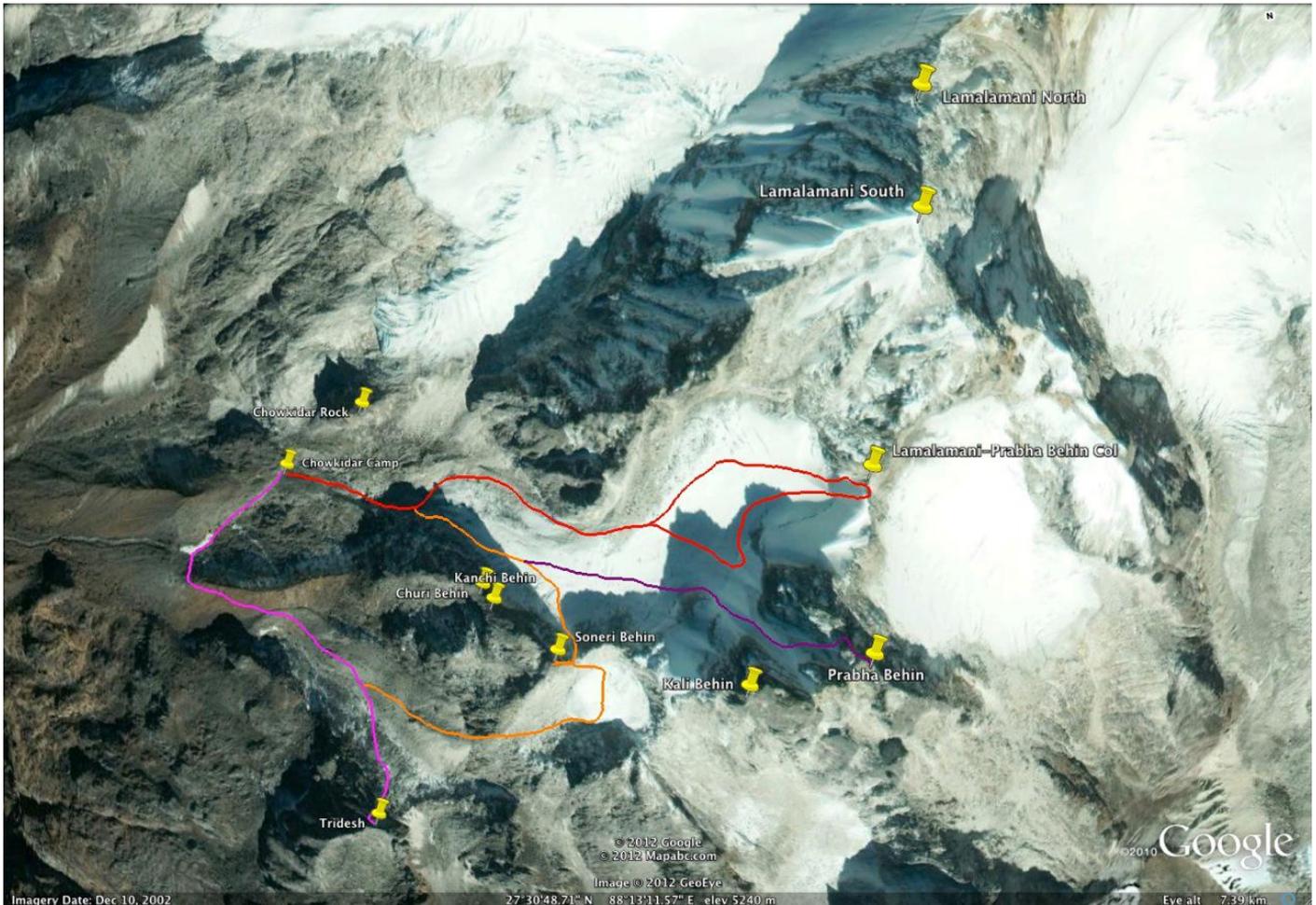
Nepal General Map



Mugu/Humla Detail Map

New Routes and a mystery in Thangsing Valley, West Sikkim

Between 16 Oct and 3 Nov 2011 David Kinsella (AUS), Arun Mahajan (IND/USA) and Roger Payne (UK/CH) explored mountains on the east side of the Thangsing Valley in West Sikkim, and climbed three summits as alpine-style day routes. This report mentions other climbs on nearby peaks, which have improved an understanding of the earliest ascents dating back to 1883.

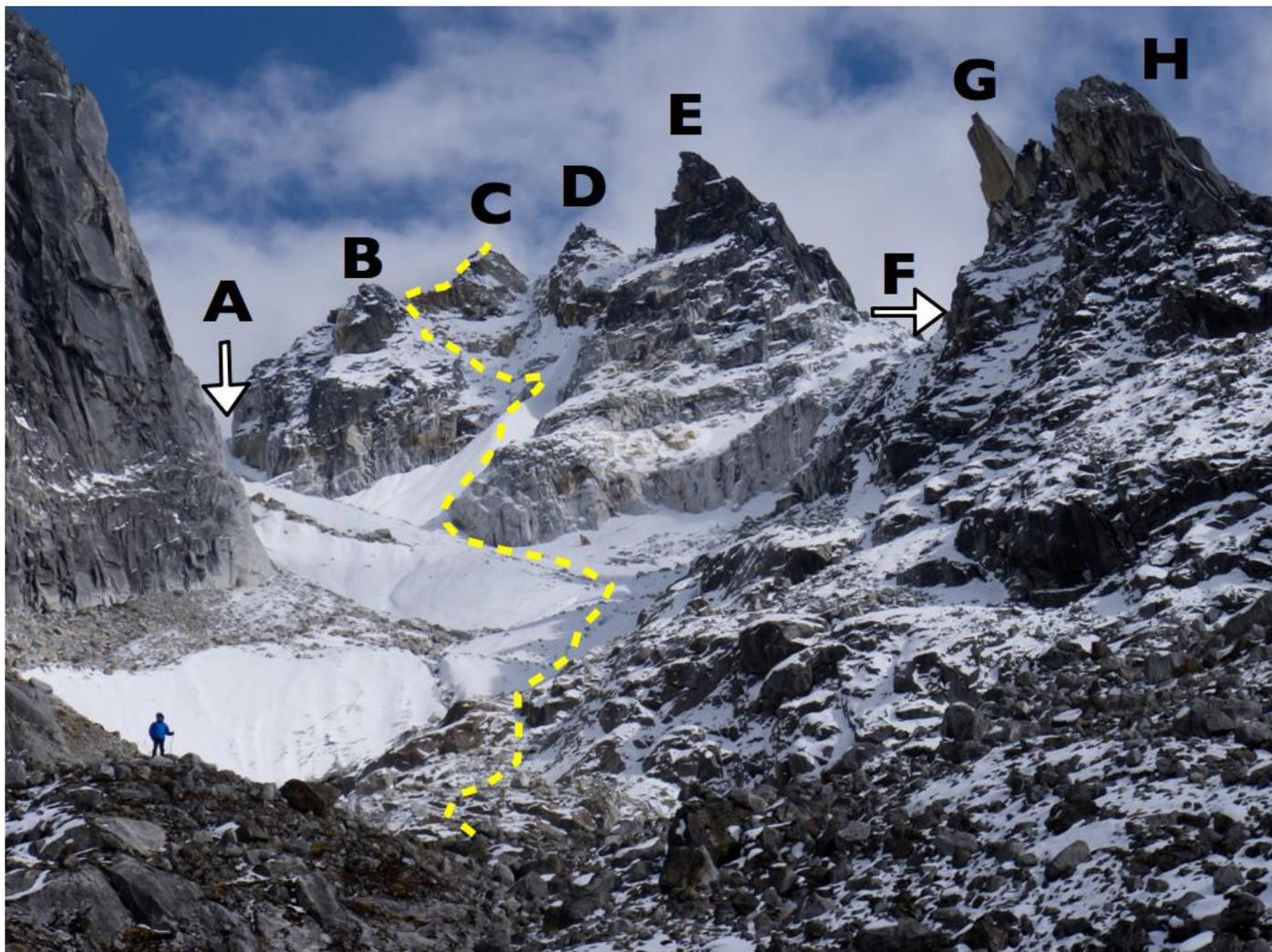


The Thangsing Valley is the route of the popular trek to Gocha La, which enjoys magnificent views of Kanchenjunga. The area explored in 2011 is just to the south of Lamalamani (c.5650m), and above the Arralang Valley.

Julie-Ann Clyma and I had made an initial reconnaissance of this area on a trekking trip in Oct 2004, then returned in March 2005 to make the first ascent of Lamalamani (with Kunzang Bhutia and Saga Rai of the Sikkim Amateur Mountaineering Association - SAMA) and the first alpine-style ascent of Tinchenkang (6010m), which we understood to be the third ascent of that mountain.

Bahini Group

We called the group of peaks explored in 2011 the Bahini Group, and named individual summits to reflect the character of each peak. These peaks are not shown on the 1:150,000 Sikkim Himalaya map (published by the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research 2006) and as far as we could ascertain, none of them had names or had been previously climbed. We hope the nomenclature we have used (see below) is acceptable locally, regionally and to any interested organizations.

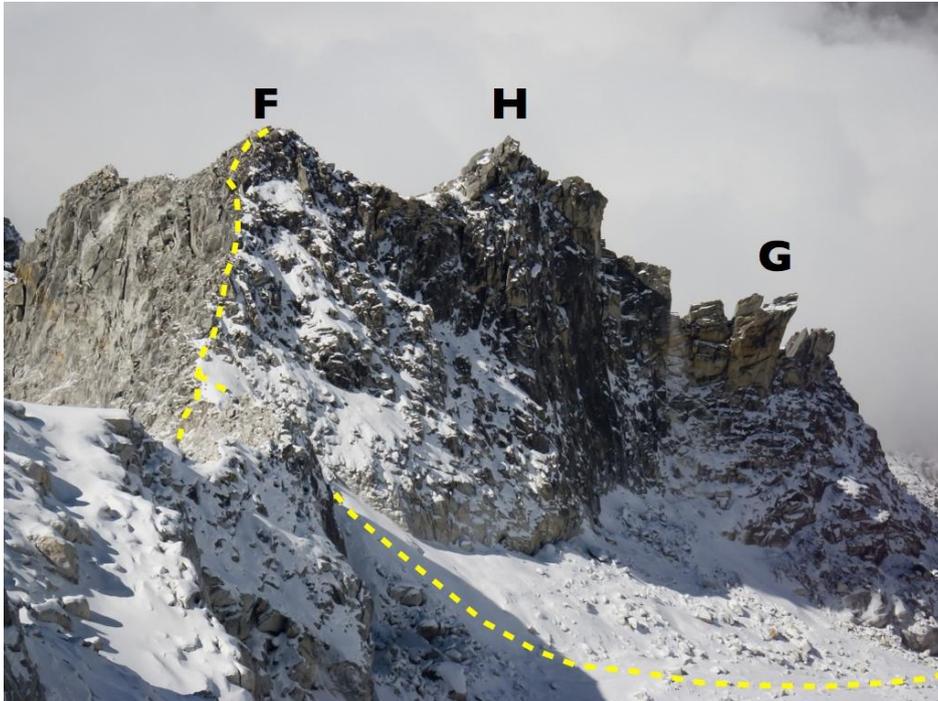


Bahini Group from Chowkidar Camp

(A Col, B unnamed, C Prabha Behin, D unnamed, E Kali Behin, F Soneri Behin, G Churi, H Kanchi Behin)

With our base camp at Thangsing, we established a comfortable advanced camp at around 4800m below a prominent rock tower we called Chowkidar.

On 23 Oct we made an acclimatization reconnaissance to the col between Lamalamani and Prabha Behin (an area I first explored in 2005, but did not see much then because of cloudy conditions).



View from Pragma Behin (F Soneri, H Kanchi Behin and G Churi)

Tridesh (c.5100m) was our first peak, which is just west of the Bahini Group, and was climbed on 27 Oct by Kinsella, Mahajan, and Payne. Initially we descended from our camp to reach the peak, which we climbed via its northeast flank on snowed up rock (II-III, PD+). From the summit we could see that the east and south side of the mountain had extensive rock faces, and we had good views of the lakes below at Lam Pokri.



Tridesh



Tradesh – Arun Mahajan enjoying the crest of the summit ridge, Kali Behin in the background

Soneri Behin (c.5250m) was our second peak, which was climbed on 28 Oct by Kinsella, Mahajan, and Payne (also PD+). We initially retraced our route of the previous day, then headed up to a hanging valley with a very small glacier which we ascended to reach the east ridge via some very unstable rock. The ridge itself was more stable with enjoyable rock steps (II). From the summit we retraced our route down the ridge, then descended the snow couloir (II) on the north side to make a circular route back to Chowkidar camp. The northwest ridge of Soneri Behin includes another lower summit we called Kanchi Behin, and some remarkable rock towers we called Churi.

Prabha Behin (c.5500m) was the third peak and was climbed on 29 Oct by Mahajan and Payne. It is the highest in the group, and is probably the summit on the Swiss map marked as 5480m (but felt somewhat higher). The ascent was via a snow/ice crest (III) in the broad northwest couloir, with a traverse at its top to the left to reach the crest of the north ridge. The crest of the ridge is mixed and exposed with some technical rock climbing (IV, AD+/D-). The summit block is small and required an athletic leap to reach (and which turned out to be unnecessary as an easy ramp comes up from the south side). The connecting ridge to the lower summits to the west looked loose initially, but the lower summits look attractive, in particular Kali Behin, which seen from the west is an impressive black tower.



Brabha Behin – Alun Mahajan on the snow/ice crest during the first ascent. Koktang, Rathong and Kabru peaks in the background.



Brabha Behin – Arun Mahajan on the crux rock moves during the first ascent

Lamalamani and Jopuno

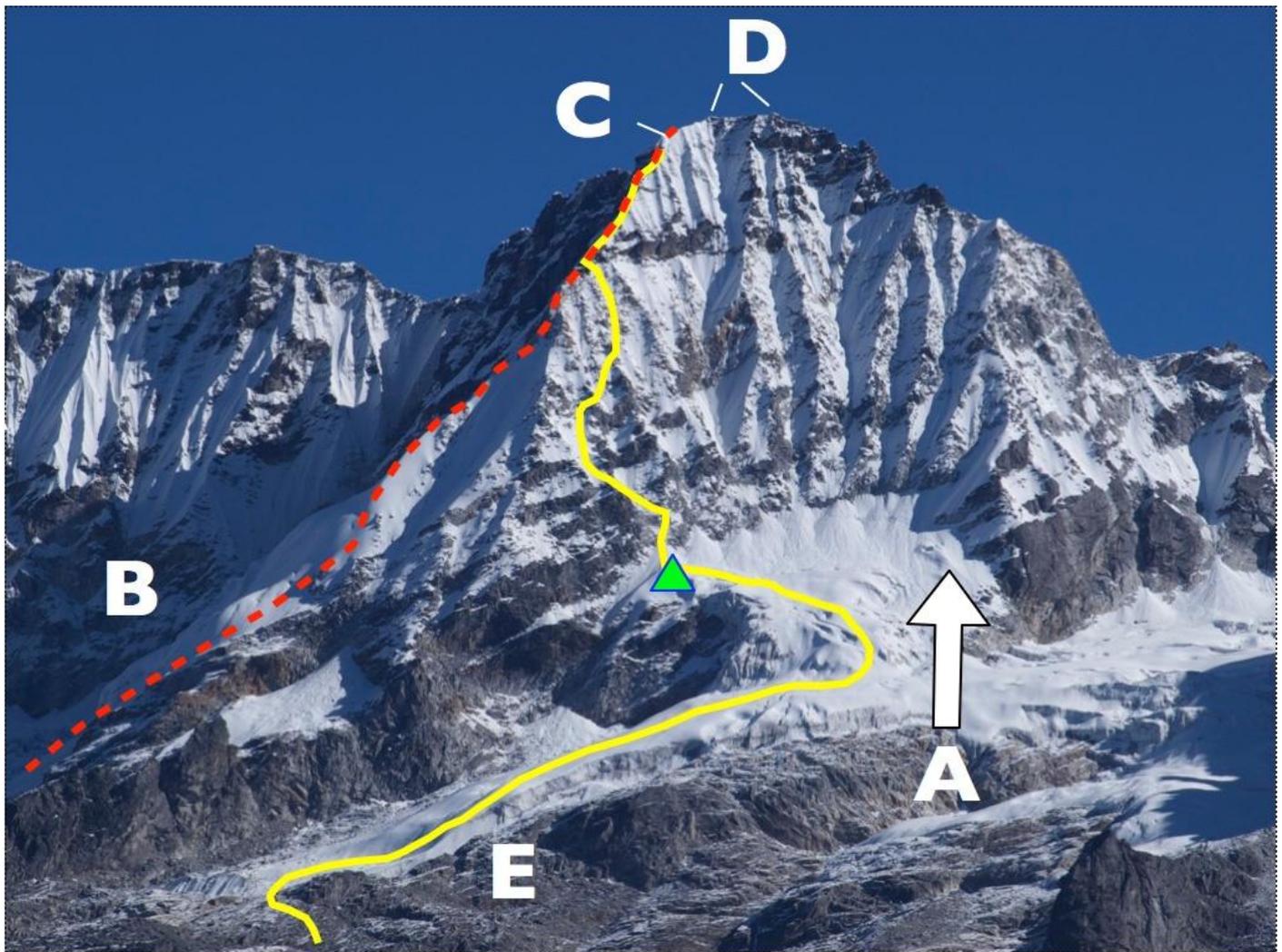
Just north of the Bahini Group, in spring 2010 a UK/USA team led by Geoff Cohen climbed a new route on the North summit of Lamalamani (Cohen came to the conclusion, as we did in 2005, that the unclimbed South summit is higher). Cohen's team also visited the cols on both the south and north sides of Lamalamani, and made an ascent of the prominent rock summit in the north col. The team also planned a new route on Jopuno (5936m), but instead repeated the elegant and technical West Ridge to the top of the granite (which was first climbed in challenging weather in March 2008 by an American team led by Jason Halladay).



Lamalamani – north summit seen from Jopuno. The righthand skyline was taken during the first ascent in 2005. The face on the left was attempted by Payne and James Astill in 2009.

Also on Jopuno, Julie-Ann Clyma, Hugh Sheehan and I climbed a new route on the Southwest face on 7 Nov 2009, which provided very enjoyable mixed climbing at around D. We reached the crest of the West Ridge at the top of the golden granite and followed the ridge on loose black rock and snow crests. We climbed towards a high point, which from photos of the 2008 ascent I had understood to be the summit. However, on getting close it seemed that the highest point was much further on. It was too late to continue along the

ridge, so we reversed our route along the ridge with darkness arriving just as we started a sequence of abseils down the face.



Jopuno (A direction of 2001 ascent, B presumed line of 2008 route, C false summit, D likely highest point of Jopuno, E line of 2009 ascent)

In 2001 Deepak Kumar Chettri, Kunzang Bhutia, and Sagar Raj climbed on the right side of the southwest face and along the south ridge of Jopuno (which was a very notable effort undertaken with minimal equipment). Having checked with them, it seems they reached a summit on the south ridge that may not be the highest point of Jopuno.

WW Graham in 1883

The first claimed ascent of Jopuno was by WW Graham who described his climb in 1883 as “incomparably the hardest ascent we had in the Himalaya, owing to the great steepness of the glacier work” (Alpine Journal, vol xii August 1884 pp 25-52). Even though Graham seems to have been a strong climber and explorer, at the time of Graham’s reports some questioned the accuracy of his claims (most notably Alexander Kellas, who was a pioneer of climbing in Sikkim). Whatever Graham climbed in 1883, from my

knowledge of Jopuno, I think he must have been on another peak (which perhaps eventually it may be possible to identify). Hence, as for Jopuno, until someone makes a traverse of the summit ridge, or reaches the summit on a clear day to verify the highest point, the ascent by Halladay and Josh Smith in 2008 could be the first time the highest point of the mountain had been reached.

Meanwhile, what is certain, is that there are many peaks and summits in Sikkim that can be explored and climbed in alpine style, and that access can be arranged through the tourism organizations and Sikkim State authorities in Gangtok. In eight trips since 2004 to peaks in West and North Sikkim, I have enjoyed valuable assistance and great help from friends in SAMA, and Barap Bhutia and the staff of Sikkim Holidays in Gangtok. Also, the Travel Agents Association of Sikkim (TAAS) has undertaken impressive work to increase capacity and skills of service providers, and recently initiated actions to develop a structure for mountain rescue working with SAMA and the State authorities. So, you can approach organizations in Sikkim with confidence, and know that they can make the necessary arrangements for exploratory treks and expeditions.

Nomenclature for Bahini Group:

Bahini Sisters, Behin Sister, Chowkidar, Sentry/protector, Churi Knife, Kali Black, Kanchi Small, Prabha Radiance/shine/glow, Soneri Golden, Tridesh Three lands

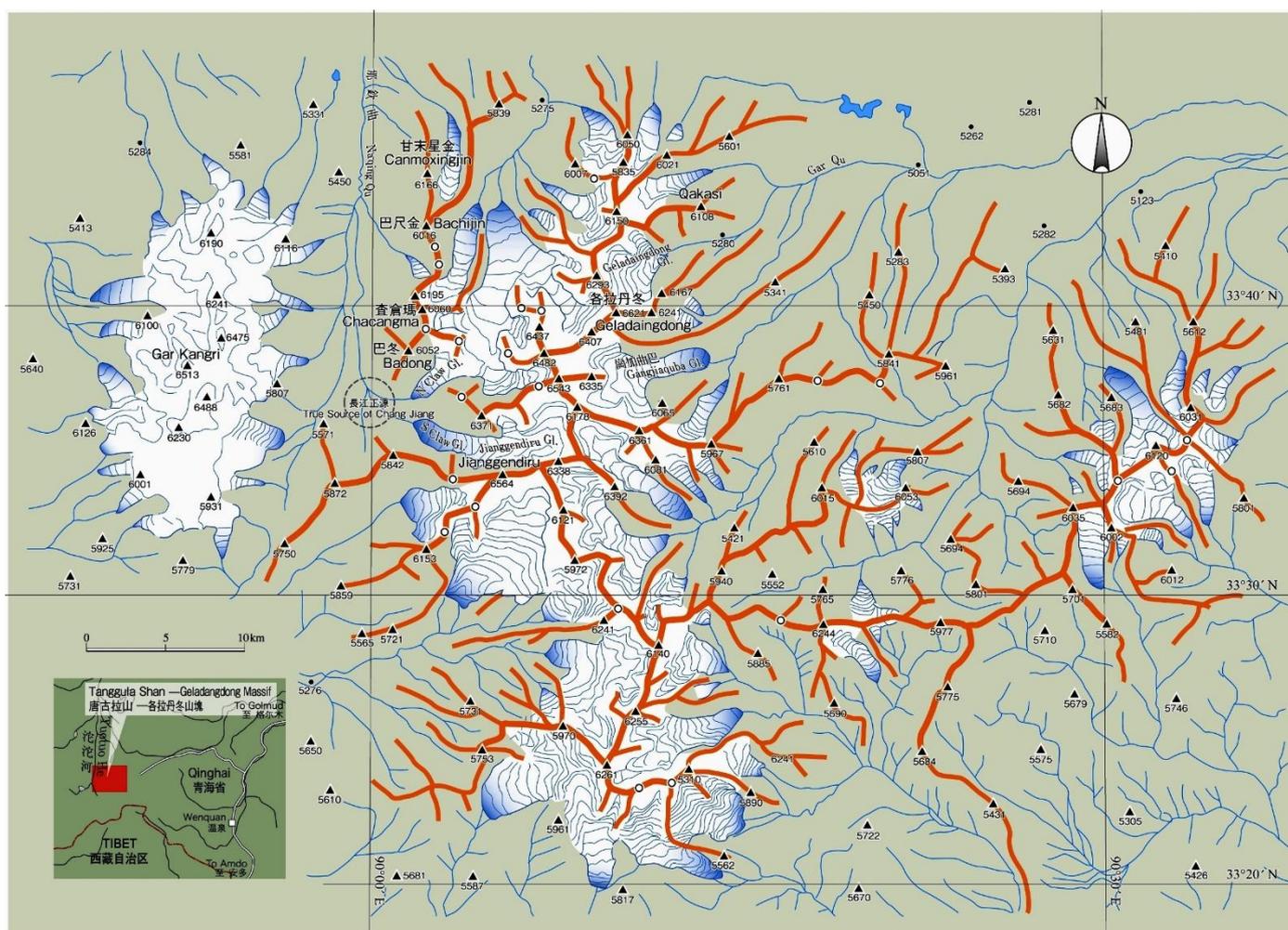


Prabha Behin – Arun Mahajan on the snow/ice crest during the first ascent

Two First Ascents in Geladaindong Massif of Tanggla Shan — in the headwaters of the true source of the Yangtze River —

The snowy massif of Geladaindong of the Tanggla Shan is 50km long north to south and 20km wide west to east, covering a circumference of 670 square kilometers with ice and snow engulfed by over 40 glaciers. Thawing glaciers combine to form many rivulets which converge into large expanse of swamps with lakes and foster the source of the Yangtze River (Chang Jiang).

Lying in the Amdo County of Qinghai Province which is in the middle section of Tanggla Shan, the 6621m Geladaindong is located at 90° E and 33.5° N and circled by over 20 high peaks exceeding 6000m. Being the fringe of the ancient Mediterranean (Sea) in Tertiary Period, it began to rise sharply later on and was not shaped as what looks now until the end of the Quaternary Period (some 15,000 years ago).



A French early explorer and traveler, Gabriel Bonvalot, described the mountains in the source of the Yangtze River (Chang Jiang) on his narratives of the journey (1889 – 1890) to have traversed deep Central Asia north to south – *De Paris au Tonking a Travers le Tibet inconnu, 1891* (*Across Thibet, 1892*, English translation).

“January 14,—We encamp at the foot of the pass which we shall have to scale in order to cross an enormous chain of mountains, which we name after that distinguished Frenchman Dupleix (original French edition wrote nous donnons un des plus beaux noms de France : nous l’appelons chaîne Dupleix), -----We are at a greater altitude than ever, some of the peaks beside our camp being at least 20,000 feet high.”

“January 15,—We cross a pass at about 16,500 feet, following a gentle slope, and to the west see the glaciers extending down to a valley, which we shall follow, marching over ice. In the mist we catch a glimpse of snowy peaks, which we calculate to be at least 26,000 feet high, and throughout the whole of this region there is a multiplicity of small lakes and pools. The hills, the soil of which is very friable, bear traces of melting of the snows and of the inundations which follow, and there is abundance of ice.”

“January 16,—As we march over the frozen river, deep and broad, and its surface so slippery that our men can hardly keep their feet, we cannot help thinking that the Dupleix Mountains must be the origin of a great river, or at all events, one of its principal sources. -----It is, of course, impossible to say positively, but my belief is that we are at the sources of the Yang-tse-Kiang.”

The Dupleix Mountains are Geladaindong massif. As his diary suggests, Gabriel Bonvalot had already found Geladaindong massif more than 100 years ago and recognized the source of the Yangtze River. However the mountains region remained veiled for a century, and to enter the least-known mountains and river sources, we had to wait the open-door policy of new China launched by Deng Shaopin in late 1970s. A new forerunner which first resumed an exploration of unfrequented Geladaindong massif in the true source of the Yangtze River and an attempt on climbing the major peaks including the highest summit Geladaindong 6621m was a Japanese party. They began negotiation with the China Mountaineering Association in 1982 to obtain a permit to make an access to and reconnoiter the region, and succeeded in the first ascent of Geladaindong, the highest peak in the massif, in 1985. After 22 years later, an unnamed 6543m, a sister peak of Geladaindong in 2007 was first scaled by another Japanese party in 2007.

I. Geladaindong 6621m in 1985

The society of Mountaineering Research on Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and the Kyoto University Exploration Club challenged the Geladaindong massif in 1985. Their objectives were to climb three major peaks of the Geladaindong massif: Geladaindong 6621m, Jianggendiru 6564m and Gaqiadiru 6513m of the Tanggla Shan, to explore the true source of the Yangtze River and to conduct Japan-China joint geologic research.

Japanese members:

Leader: Prof. Yukio Matsumoto (56), 2 deputy-leaders: Prof. Tamio Nishida (42) and Prof. Masatake Matsubara (43), 12 members (22 – 43) and 5 media reporters (27 – 47)

Chinese members:

3 members from Geologic Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, 2 liaison officers, 2 interpreters, 3 cooks and 11 drivers

Tangla too) from Golmud driving through the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. They stayed there three days for necessary preparation. On August 5, all the members resumed their caravan to march up toward the destination. At Yangxiping they left the Qinghai-Tibet Highway and entered a mountain track to the west. On the way Nissan patrols were stuck in a marshy ground. Passing a high pass they reached a river bank of the Changkung Qu, where Geladaindong, which means a mountain soaring sharply to the sky, came into sight. The vehicles again stopped in a mid stream of the Changkung Qu, but they could manage narrow escape pulling them out from water and camped nearby.

On August 6, after crossing several small streams, they set up base camp at 5,280m in a river bank of the Gar Qu. They saw many blue poppies and edelweiss there. After serious discussion, they decided to choose the northwest ridge as a climbing route to the summit from a glacier in the headwaters of the Gar Qu.

Climbing



On August 9, ABC (provisional BC) was set up at a terminus of the Geladaindong Glacier (temporary name) about 5km above the BC and necessary gears and supplies were deposited there. On August 11, they ascended side moraine on the right bank of the glacier and then entered the glacier. C1 was camped at 5,680m on the eastern side moraine on the glacier right side beneath the east ridge.

On August 12, K. Kurachi and two other members ascended an ice plateau with many crevasses on the upper glacier traversing upwards from east to west and chose a place for C2 at 6,100m just below a col between Geladaindong and a nameless peak of 6293m on the northwest ridge. C3 was set up on August 13. The following day was bad weather and no route paving and load ferrying were made, but 10 members came to C2, 7 members at C1 and all other remaining members stayed at BC.

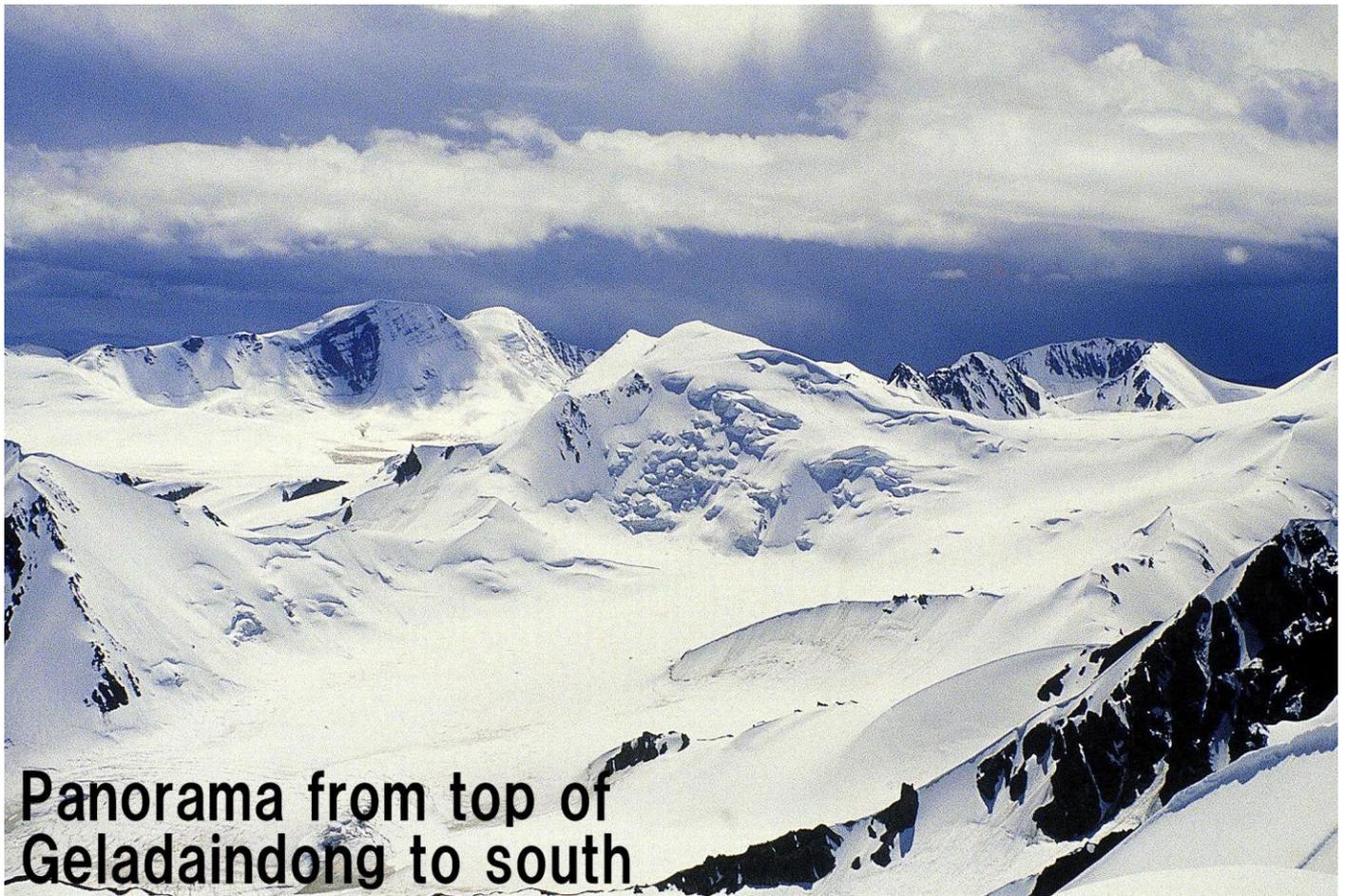
On October 15, Kurachi and three other members departed from C2 for assaulting the summit at 9:30am after fog faded out. They followed the northwest ridge, which had an enormous cornice on the left having sheer drop straightly to the Geladaindong Glacier. On the right side of the ridge also a steep slope descended down to the other glacier. They placed fix ropes of 580m from 6,170m to 6,520m. They faced three rock spurs standing en route. The fixed ropes were placed to the end of the third one which had an average angle of 45 degree. During rope fixing work for the third rock spur the weather began deteriorating, and when they overcame the spur and reached a snow plateau, it became snow storm. They waited

two hours expecting fog being faded out, but a condition of whiteout did not change and no sigh of improvement was seen. They bivouacked in a snow cave hoping a good weather on the following day. On August 16, as whiteout continued, they descended to C2. On August 18, two members made the second ascent of 6,293m peak north of the main summit which had been first climbed by other six members on August 15.

On August 19, six members headed by Kurachi left C2 at 7:20am and followed paved pitches to trace the three rock spurs digging out fixed ropes buried in fresh snow. At 1:30pm they reached snow plateau leading to the summit. The plateau continued to the summit about 100m higher. All the six members stood atop Geladaindong at 3:06pm. The north side of the summit had a sheer drop down to the Geladaindong Glacier and the summit ridge formed a sharp knife edge. A view from the summit was excellent. The south Claw Glacier which was said to be the true source of the Yangtze River was viewed, and farther undrodden snowy mountains from Jianggendiru 6564m to Gaqiadiru 6513m were in sight. C1 and C2 were looked down. They returned to C2 safely at 7:40pm. All the gears were carried back and all the members gathered to the BC on August 21.

The six members who summited Geladaindong were Kaoru Takao, Hajime Kawashita, Kiyoshi Kurachi, Yasuyoshi Shimoda, Masahiro Kobayashi and Akira Hirose.





A brief supplementary report of Lindsay Griffin on a climbing chronicle of the Geladaindong (September 22, 2009)

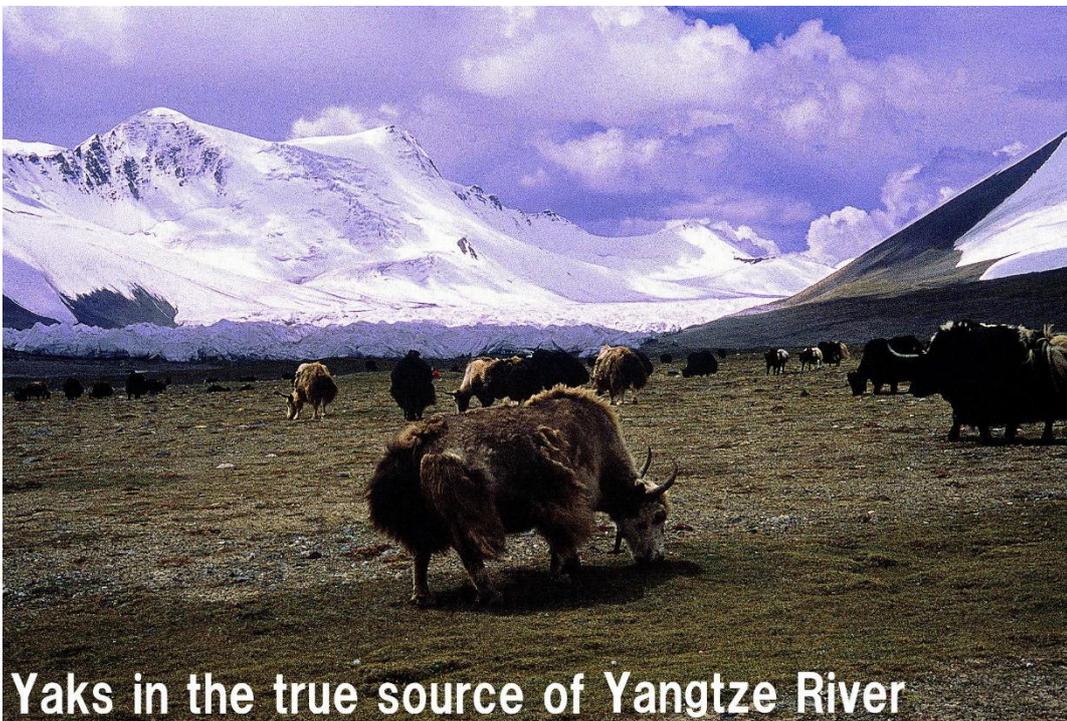


After the successful Japanese ascent of the North West Ridge in 1985, there is no confirmed report of an ascent of Geladaindong until 1994, when the North West Ridge was repeated by an expedition from the Beijing University Mountaineering Club. This was billed as the first Chinese ascent of the mountain, but the names of the summiteers have not been identified.

The peak was visited again

in 1997 by a small American party; Dan Luchtel and William Rom, guided by Mark Newcomb. These three approached the mountain from the same direction as the previous two expeditions and found evidence of the 1994 visit both at base camp and higher on the mountain. On the 5th September, while the other two climbers were resting, Newcomb carried equipment to the proposed site of Camp 1 and then continued to the foot of the North East Face at 5,800m. He then soloed a line directly up the snow/ice face above and into a couloir at ca. 6,300m. The steepest part of the couloir and the crux of the climb was a short section of 55-60° ice. He exited more or less onto the sharp summit and down-climbed the North West Ridge. On the 7th September, all three climbers spent the night at the ca. 6,100m col at the start of the North West Ridge and the following day reached the summit for the fourth overall ascent of the mountain. The Americans reported the ridge to be technically straightforward, so it seems likely to have been climbed subsequently by Chinese mountaineers.

Quest for the source of the Yangtze River



Yaks in the true source of Yangtze River

On August 26, a party searching for the true source of the Yangtze River departed from the BC northwards. The caravan marched to Toutouhe detouring the northern side of Geladaindong massif. The weather of this year was worse than that of the normal year and winter came earlier. The marshy land contained much water and their vehicles were

stuck very often during the caravan. One day driving distance was only 20km in an average. In spite of such bad conditions, they managed to set up the 2nd BC nearby a stream just before reaching Toutouhe.

On August 30, they arrived at Toutouhe. The Yangtze River was large even in its source. The wide river flowed slow-movingly in several streams, and the river side had wide grassland. The river was called Naqin Qu being named after the grassland. In late afternoon of August 31, they reached a terminus of the South Claw Glacier which was the headwaters of the true source of the Yangtze River. Nomads' paos scattered here and there, and sheep and yaks were grazing at 4,560m in the vicinity. On September 1, they explored both the North and South Claw Glaciers (Jianggendiru Gl.) and completed their field survey of the expedition.

On September 15, they arrived at Lhasa after traversing the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau north to south via Yangxiping, Naqu and Yangbacheng. On the return way, a party in charge of geology conducted Japan-China joint geologic research at Yangxiping for a couple of days from September 9.

II. Unnamed 6543m peak in 2007



Ascending to unnamed 6543m peak

A local party from Tottori Prefecture in Japan succeeded in the first ascent of an unnamed 6543m peak, one of the major peaks in Geladaindong massif. The 6543m peak is 5.4km southwest of Geladaindong in the headwaters of the Gangjiaquba Glacier. The team's name is the China Qinghai-Tibet Friendship Mountaineering Expedition. They stood on the summit on October 2.

Japanese members:

Leader: Yoshiharu Murakami (65), Deputy-leader: Eishi Sato (65) Climbing leader: Osamu Kato (59) and 2 members of Tamiyoshi Hashimoto (50) and Mizuho Sato (65)

Chinese members:

喬海生 (Qiao Haisheng), 1 guide, 1 liaison officer and 3 drivers

Itinerary

September 22: Xining – 3817m – Chaka 3090m

“ 23: Chaka – Golmud 2800m

“ 24: Golmud – Kunlun Pass 4767m – Golmud (Acclimatization)

“ 25: Golmud – 5015m – Toutouhe 4530m (Acclimatization)

“ 26: Toutouhe – Tangglha Pass 5231m – Toutouhe (acclimatization)

“ 27: Toutouhe – BC 5300m (setting up BC)

“ 28: BC – C1 5400m – BC (route paving and ferrying loads)

“ 29: Staying at BC due to bad weather

“ 30: BC – C2 – route finding – C2 5700m (route paving and ferrying loads)

October 2 : C2 – Summit 6568m – C1 (reached the summit)

“ 3 : C2 – BC – Toutouhe

“ 4 : Toutouhe – Golmud

“ 7 : Returning to Xining

Climbing

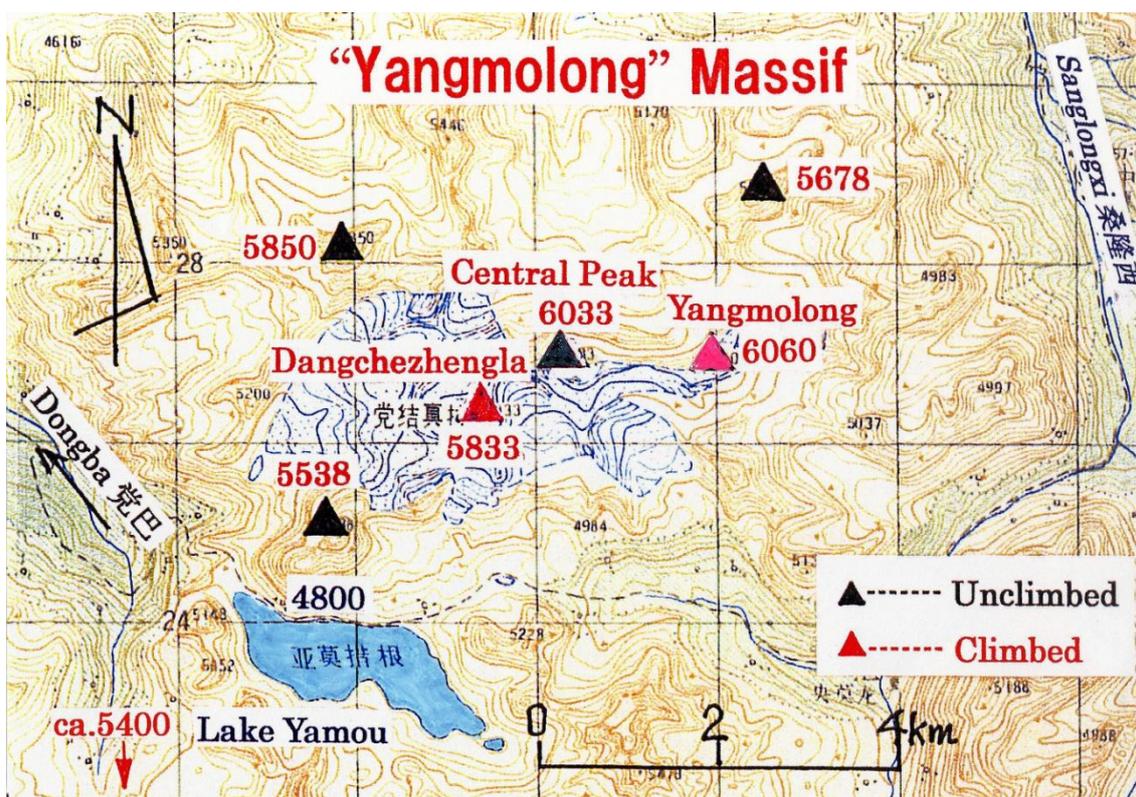
They took their climbing route on the Gangjiaquba Glacier with no crevasses south of the main peak of Geladaindong 6621m. On October 2 Osamu Kato, Yoshiharu Murakami and Tamiyoshi Hashimoto began ascending from C2 at 7:00am while it was still dark. Strong winds were prevailing above the C2. At 6100m Murakami gave up climbing and the other two ascended to a col at 6200m. There was wide and gentle slope of snow plateau in the western side of the col that shared watershed and headwaters of the source of the Yangtze River. Because of strong winds on the northwest ridge, they entered the south ridge side to the right but Hashimoto was exhausted and resigned further progress. Then Kato soloed and reached the top at 3:25pm. They returned to C2 at 6:50pm and further descended to C1 at 8:30pm. On the following day, they gathered at the BC. (see a climbing route drawn on the Russian map attached.)

TIM BOELTER

First Ascent of Yangmolong 2011 Shalulishan Range in West Sichuan Highlands

At approximately 3:30 pm on October 20, 2011 Jon Otto, Liu Yong, Su Rongqin, and Tim Boelter reached the 6066 meter summit of Yangmolong! After three years and three attempts from different approaches, we finally reached the summit of this mountain. The weather on summit day was superb. The climbing included mixed snow, ice and rock between 50 and 70 degrees.





From the moment I arrived in China my luck and perhaps the luck of the expedition was to turn for the worse temporarily. I spent the first four days in the China West Hospital in Chengdu because of an intestinal blockage. For three days I was not allowed to eat, the only nutrition came from an IV drip. By the end of the expedition I lost a total of 5 kilos in body weight.

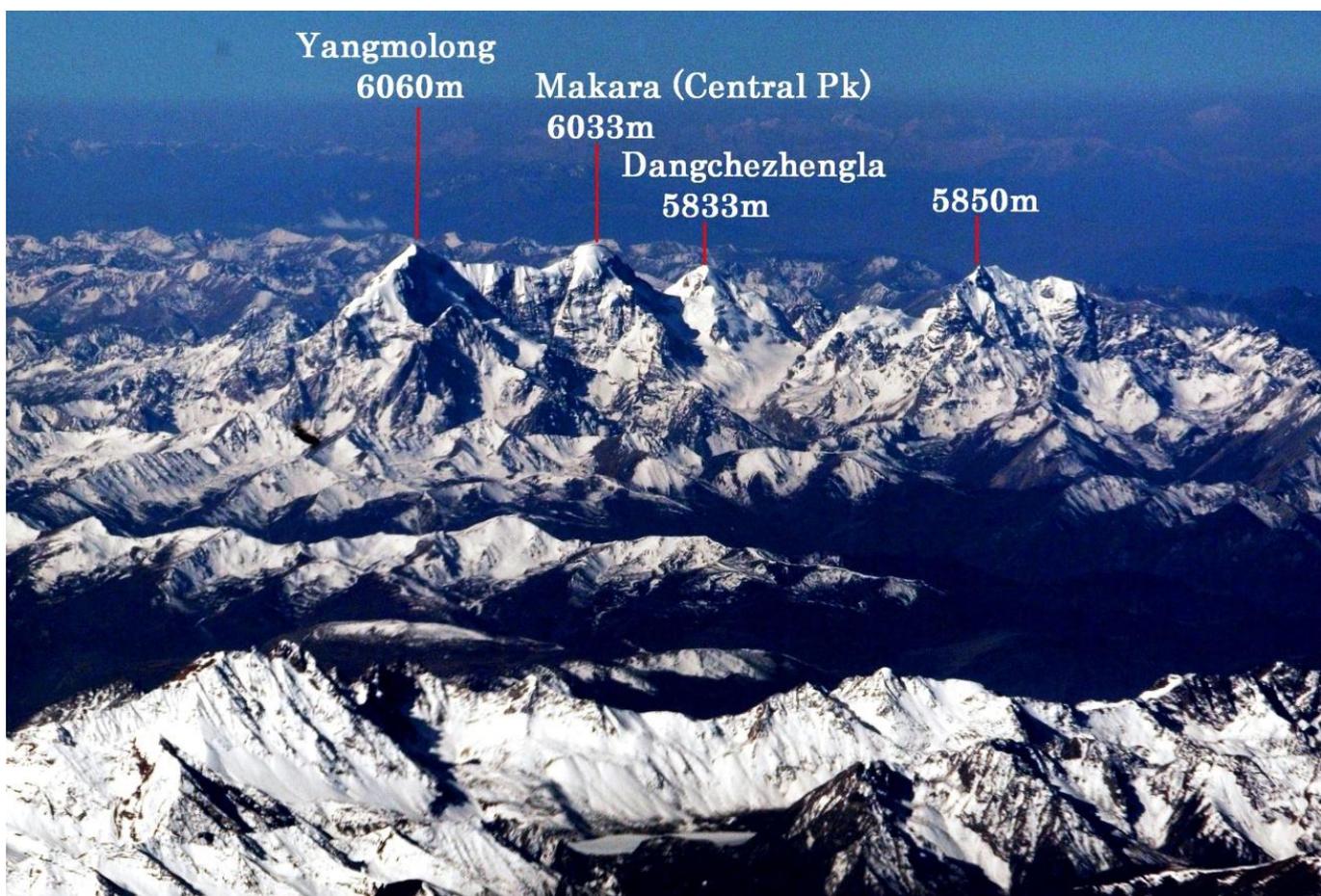
The expeditions was delayed by a week, we didn't depart for the mountain until October 10th. The two day drive turned into a four day ordeal. The delays started when were stuck for three hours in a traffic jam before the tunnel to Kangding.

When the police finally instilled some order into the chaos we were able to continue, but it was very late at night now and by the time we got near Kangding the road was closed because of the massive construction project on the new dam and highway.

We had to backtrack to Luding and spend the night there. The next day we continued through Kangding and up the pass to the city of Xinduqiao. Just outside of Xinguqiao our vehicle lost its clutch while caught in another traffic jam on a rough mountain road. While we were trying to move the vehicle off the road a large heavily laden dump truck

lost control coming down hill and crashed into three vehicles including ours. We were able to fix vehicle enough to continue but had to spend the night in Xinduqiao. The next day we made it to Litang, but the entire highway (G318) was under construction as the road had been severely deteriorating over the past four years due to landslides, floods and poor workmanship.

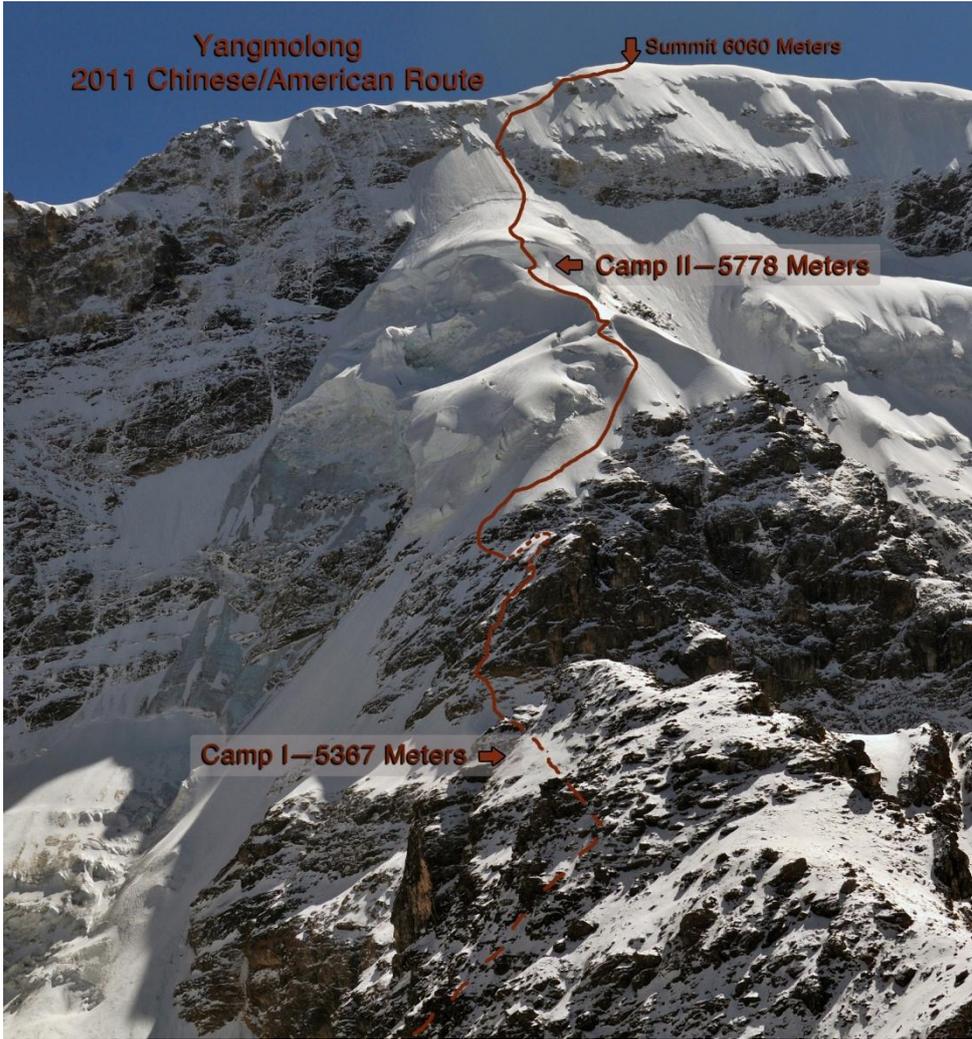
This construction delayed us further. After one night in Litang we continued the drive to the trailhead at the lower monastery (village of Gongba) in the eastern valley and hiked up to the upper monastery (Zere) where we spent our first night in the mountains.



North face of Yangmolong massif

An aerial view en route from Chengdu (成都) to Nyainchi (林芝)

Our luck turned for the better from this point on. Here is a quick rundown of the trek and climb:



East ridge of Yangmolong Photo: Tim boelter

Day One: Hike from upper (Zere) monastery to an elevation of approximately 4950 meters, just below the 5100 meter pass that we descended in 2010. This is a very long pass located to the north of Yangmolong and joins the eastern valley with the northern valley.

Day Two: Hike up and over the 5100 meter pass and down to basecamp at 4880 meters. Snowed all day.

Day Three: Rest day at basecamp. Spent a few hours ice climbing on the vertical glacial ice near camp.

Day Four: Hiked and climbed up the north ridge (prowl) of Yangmolong to obtain our high point the year before at 5400 meters and climbed about 35 meters higher into the first section of rock. Fixed a line and descended to make camp C1 at 5367 meters just below rock section.

Day Five: Climbed up rock (lower section) before coming to a drop off bridged by a narrow knife edge that separates the lower rock section from the short upper rock section before the glacier. We could not see this notch from our perspective at basecamp, but in one of the photos taken by the British from the eastern side you can see this separation of the ridge. I've attached their photo.

We continued to climb to our high camp on the upper ridge and glacier to C2 at 5778 meters. We reached C2 in the dark and situated it in a crevasse.

Day Six: We departed C2 for the summit at approximately 10:30 am. The climb was up 50 to 70 degree snow and ice slopes. We used running belays the whole time and reached the summit at approximately 3:30 pm. After spending nearly an hour on the summit we descended back to C2 for the night.

Day Seven: Descended back to basecamp for the night.

Day Eight: Packed up everything and descended up and over the 5100 meter pass and all the way out to Gongba and then drove to Batang for the night.



Daliu, Jon and Tim on summit



Daliu and Asu on the lower ice pyramid



South face of Yangmolong in June Photo: Tom Nakamura



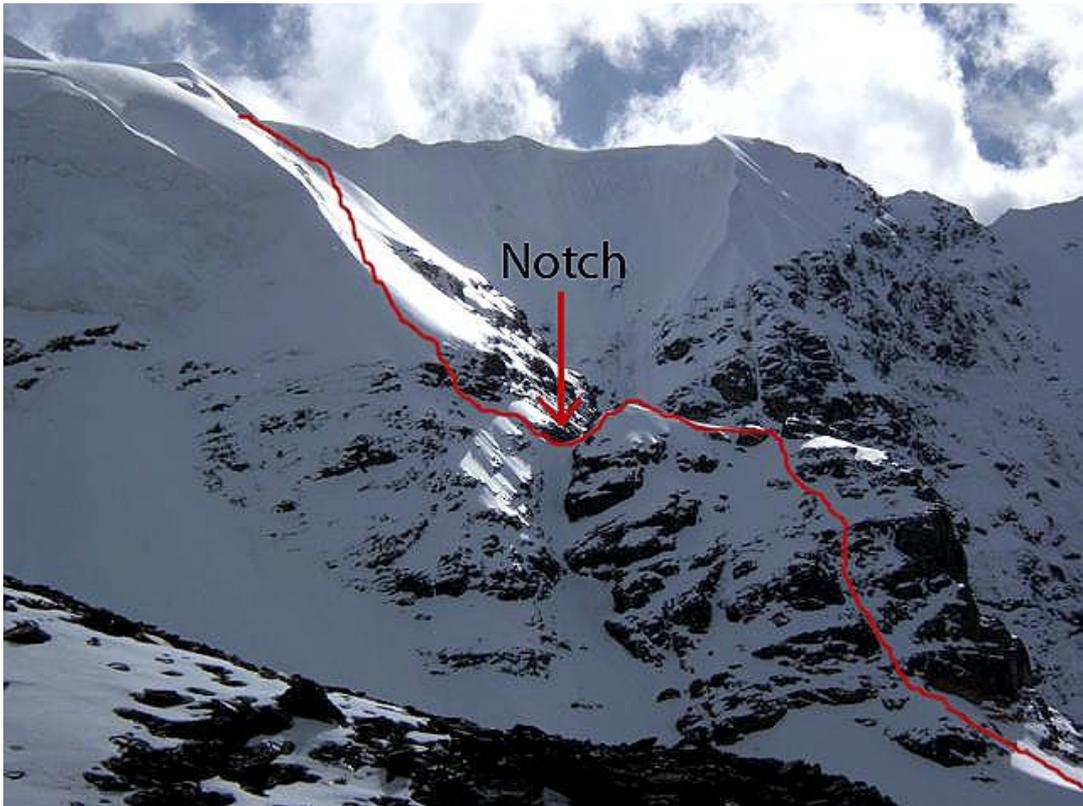
NNE face of Yangmolong Photo: Dave Wynne-Jones (Alpine Club, UK)



Yangmolong summit ridge



Daliu sillouted, right-Makara/Central Pk Photo: Tim Boelter



Yangmolong first ascent – notch on ridge Photo: Tim Boelter



Lake Yamou on south side (1) Photo: Tim Boelter



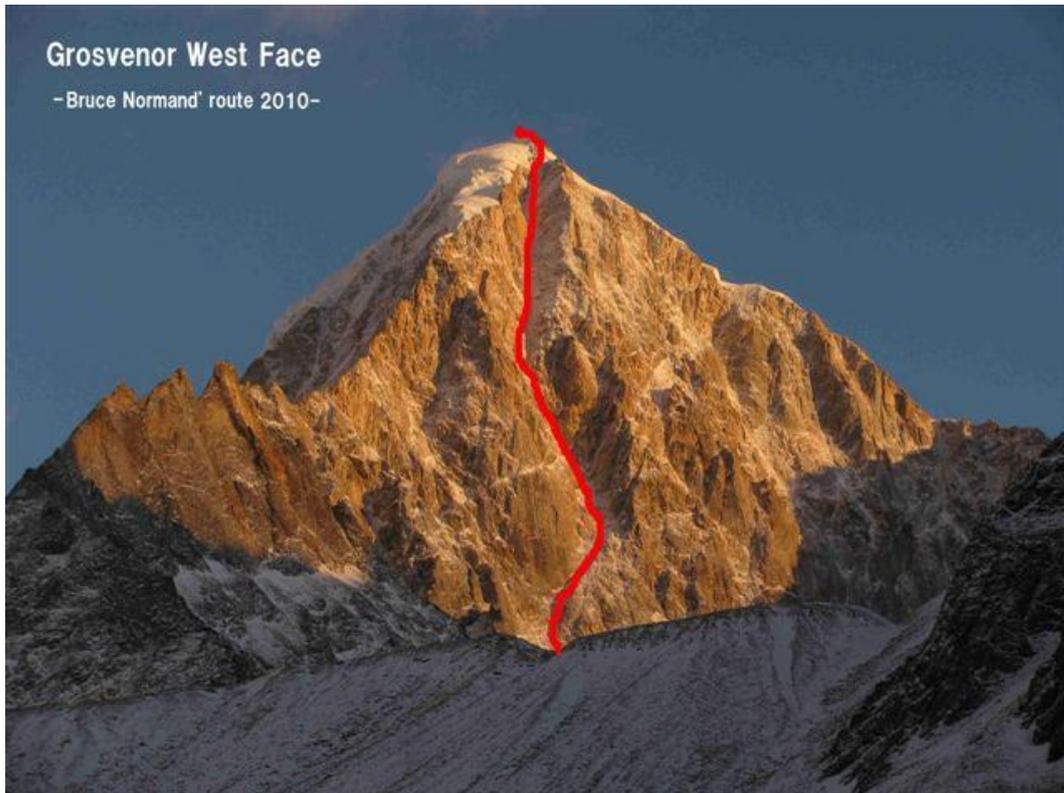
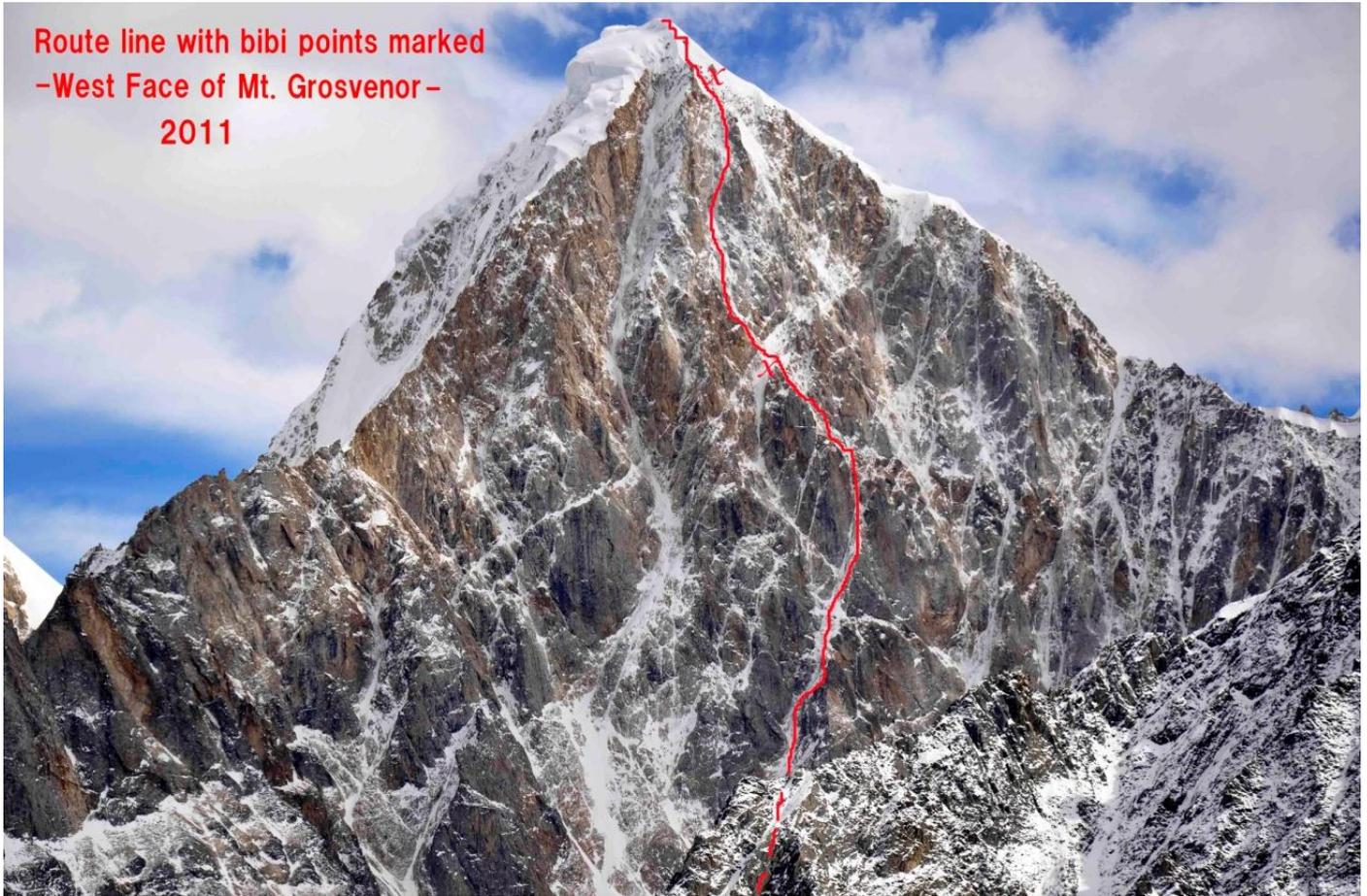
Lake Yamou, south of Yangmolong, early June Photo: Tom Nakamura



Peak 5850m Photo: Dave Wynne-Jones (Alpine Club, UK)

JEFF SHAPIRO

Grosvenor New Route 2011 – Third Ascent



It was spring 2004 and I remember feeling like a kid during winter's first snow as I thumbed through the latest issue of *Alpinist* (issue 6). Within those pages was the route description and history of Thalay Sagar, to me, one of the most strikingly beautiful alpine goddesses of all time.

I was so eager to learn more and use the fine photography to fuel my dreams that I hardly looked at the other articles within the issue. When I finally did get my nose out of the Thalay section, I was absolutely startled by a photo taken by the Himalayan veteran, Roger Payne. He and his partner, Julie-Ann Clyma had just completed the first ascent of an iconic looking peak in an area that had a familiarity to it, although I couldn't remember where I had heard it spoken.

The photo was of Mt Grosvenor 6376m in Western China's Sichuan Province. It's west and north west aspects in particular, lived up to what I would describe to be an ice climbers dream. A huge, triangular face of dark and imposing rock broken by fine ribbons of ice like scant lace curtains hanging over a granite pyramid. I was instantly in love.

Later that year, while climbing with Gray Thompson, we discussed our desire to go on an expedition. He mentioned his 1st ascent of Lamoshe and his fondness for the friends he and his wife Eloise had made during their '93 expedition to China. His mention of the Sichuan and the Daxue Shan sparked my memory of a beautiful photo in the back of Issue 6.

Upon arriving home, I confirmed that he had indeed been, and still had good contacts within the area where the mighty Mt. Grosvenor split the sky. My imagination kicked into overtime and a plan started to develop, ignited by a fire roaring with motivation. After a brief query, Gray and Eloise expressed interest to go back to the Daxue Shan, solidifying the desire to visit this intriguing area.

So, one of my best friends and most prolific climbing partners, Chris Gibisch and I met with Gray to discuss the climbing possibilities and began researching the history of activity within the area. Gravitating toward the NW aspect of Mt. Grosvenor and, the then unclimbed SE face of Mt Edgar 6618m, we made plans and organized the necessary logistics, made easier by Gray's contacts. Unfortunately, the trip failed to materialize because of the numerous and common fragilities of such adventures.

Although that trip didn't work out, the stage was set and there was little doubt in my mind that some day, I would have to visit this mountain.

Last Spring, Chris and I were brainstorming once again about a possible autumn adventure. A full season of racing hang gliders around the world had me hungry for climbing. Inspired by Kyle Dempster and Bruce Normand's success in the range, our motivation for the Daxue range again became focused. Kyle is a generous dude and provided serious stoke in the form of photos and encouragement. I've always considered asking other alpinists for info and/or photos of unclimbed routes to be kind of like asking if I could take their sisters to bed but Kyle was nothing but positive energy. His photos coupled with Gray's intro to his friends, the famed Zheng brothers, Jiyue and Shoahong from Sichuan Earth Expeditions, made it easy. We acquired

our permits and arranged for some four legged help to get into the mountains. Our trip was set and all that was left was to step toward the unknown, a rare and highly coveted opportunity in today's world.

October 14th, found Chris and I leaving the Buddhist community of Laouyling, taking the next three days to trek into base camp with a train of horses, adventurous intentions and wide eyes. Although initial snowfall caused concern, when we reached camp, the weather had improved and, fortunately, conditions looked favorable. Taking advantage of the stable weather, we did our best to acclimatize while scouting the West face and established a high camp at 5,100-meters.

Mt Grosvenor (aka Ri Wu Qie) is composed of technical faces and ridgelines making no obvious "easy way up". The West face, to us, appeared the most technical and impressive. It's 1300 meters towers over base camp and was indeed littered with ice ribbons breaking through its steep rock. The North face, slightly shorter than the West, has potential for routes, but unfortunately is topped by large, threatening and active seracs. Grosvenor's east aspect was used as the descent route for the only two previous ascents but in our estimation, contains potential for shorter and more moderate alpine lines. Finally, steep glaciated slopes and ridgelines descending toward Gongga Shan (7556m) represent the Southern aspect of the mountain.



On October 24th, despite conflicting weather forecasts, we left base camp for our high camp. Chris and I woke the next morning to a star filled sky and solidified our decision to climb. Our route began moderate, simul-climbing pitches of névé and ice protected by rock gear, sparse but solid. We traded long pitches up

ever steepening ground until we found ourselves at a crux, a section we creatively deemed the “mixed section” while scanning the potential route from the ground.

A narrow strip of detached and rotten snice swept up between compact granite devoid of any cracks. This imposing strip reared up to vertical with several bulges, providing overhanging moves made awkward by the weight of our packs and the lack of being able to see our feet. Unfortunately, there was between 4-6” of air behind the sublimated snice making for delicate and aerated placements. No gear and extremely insecure climbing coupled with a first class pump at over 19,000’ was certainly the adventure we were here for. Overcoming that 80m section had us feeling a tangible sense of momentum.

Now, on a neve ramp leading to our proposed bivy site, the sun kissed the horizon as we made haste for what we hoped would be a reasonable ledge. To our disappointment upon arriving, the “bivy site” was less than ideal. With no other options, we placed a picket, chopped some seats, and pulled our bags over us, leaving our boots and belay parkas on.

First light revealed our next challenge; an 8 “ strip of ice in the back of a deep off width, transecting the rock band above. A few delicate placements and some dry tooling allowed access to the more moderate neve and mixed ground above. Soon though, we found ourselves under yet another section of vertical, rotten snice. Not as long as the crux from the previous day but fierce looking all the same. Chris did his best to not pull the pitch down on us and fortunately, was able to place a cam half way up the strip, behind a loose block frozen in place. I remember being proud of his effort and thankful for his skill.

Another long pull gave us a view of our final mystery; a couple rope lengths of steep gray ice visible from base camp. We knew this would lead us to the exit from the West face, allowing us to escape onto the summit ridge. I climbed towards the ice and our initial fears of this section being difficult were dispatched as we discovered it was likely no harder than WI4+ and the best quality water ice we had encountered yet. However, we were at approx. 20,000’ and we were wasted from the effort and lack of adequate acclimatization.

The ice, which would have been an easy solo at the local crag, felt steep and intimidating. Digging deep, we limped our way up the water ice, hopeful at the sight of the ridgeline above. One more huge pull got us to the ridge. Exhausted, thoughts of a bivi on a broad summit slope were crushed when it was discovered that we had topped out on a sharp knife-edge ridge, fluting onto the West face.

With the last rays of light, Chris led up the crest of the fluting, anxious to find a suitable bivy. Near the end of the rope, all that he was able to come up with was a good anchor and some hard ice at the base of a large overhanging boulder close to the summit. He brought me up and we started chopping ice buckets. Again, while the wind cranked in from the Tibetan Plateau, only humor and shit talk helped to keep us warm over the long hours. It was like sitting in icy movie seats while watching a scene from our dreams over the last several years. The suffering was well worth it.

Arctic temps greeted us on the morning of the 27th finding us reluctant to leave our bags. Morning light was reaching the summit and we knew warmth awaited us. A distant and fast moving storm increased our motivation so, half frozen, we began climbing together. After some of the most exhausting “easy” climbing I’ve ever done, we stood together on the summit plateau. Winds were light, the sky was blue, and the views were amazing.

After enjoying the perspective and brewing up some much needed water, we traversed the highest point and worked our way down the ever-steepening NE ridge until it became too rocky and complex for steady progress, prompting us to escape down the E face. Just as I threw a leg over the small cornice onto the East face, the fast approaching storm overtook the mountain.

Our timing was lucky as we descended in the lee, making 12 rappels, mostly from abolakovs, to where we could easily down climb the remaining 1000’ to the glacial basin between Mt Grosvenor, Jiazi and Edgar. By the time we set up the tent for the first time on route, the wind was blowing so hard that we had serious doubts it would maintain its integrity through the night. Regardless, laying down after 3 days on the move felt like luxury.

The following day was spent rappelling the 800’ col between Jiazi and Grosvenor, followed by a long slog through small icefalls and snow-covered moraine. Finally, around 5pm we began to celebrate as we walked across the grassy meadows toward base camp, friends and hot food.

I wrote something once that seemed to fit with the mood the next day while looking back up at the west face of Mt Grosvenor. Remembering our time on the face was like waking up from a fantastic dream, wishing I could remember the details.

Climbing is an expression of art, beauty, determination, and pure action. You can't fake it. When on the "sharp end", you either do it or don't. The simplicity is brilliant. Failure is a positive experience as lessons are earned. Climbing allows us to be able to self explore, defining and redefining our capabilities while surrounded by unparalleled beauty.

Like Joseph Campbell's "A Hero's Journey", climbing in the mountains can be a vision quest where one never knows what lays around the next corner, but might just find that he/she is indeed ready for it. The fun is in the discovery and the exploration of our fear, doubt and definition of what's possible made even sweeter by the fact that we share these life and attitude changing moments with like-minded partners.

Our route, “Black Wolves and Blue Popies” (M5+ WI4+ AI6 ca 1300m) was done in Alpine style with leave no trace ethics. Leaving a total of 3 pins at rappel stations close to the bottom of the East face was both unavoidable, and the only gear left during our ascent. It’s our hope that the faces of the Daxue Shan be respected by the continued absence of bolts and other unnecessary fixed gear.



Mid route



Chris climbing steep ice near the top of the West face



Chris at the start of "Black Wolves and Blue Poppies" W Face



-on the summit-
Chris (right) & Jeff

