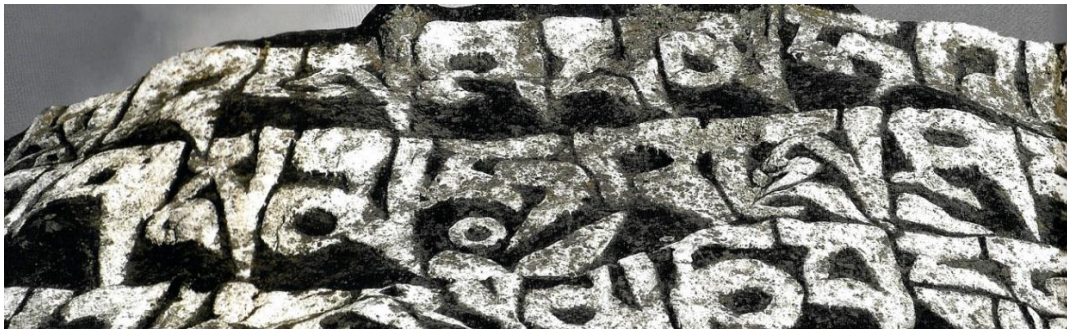


ASIAN ALPINE E-NEWS

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Gyala Peri 7294 m north face 1

Secrets on the Maps

Tamotsu (Tom) Nakamura

Today the map has no more secrets.

Environment science professor Mauri Pelto reports that Lhagu glacier retreated 1.2 km since 2001. Melting water from Tibetan Glacier feeds rivers that supply water to 1.3 billion people in Asia. In a 2015 statement, Dalai Lama spoke of the need for climate change action for “survival of humanity” and environmental protection on the Tibetan Plateau, for the sake of “the environmental health and sustainability of the entire world”.

Idle minds repeat that parrot phrase. But who knows all of Tibet, or its faraway frontier on western China. The Austrian-American explorer Joseph Rock wrote these words in a 1930 article for National Geographic, four years before I was born. Some would convince themselves that encounters with veiled mountains are an experience in the past, there are vast and complex topographies in the Greater Ranges that hold countless peaks. Many of these summits will remain enigmas for generations. I grew up in Tokyo, Japan, surrounded by increasingly tall buildings as the city rebuilt after the war. At Hitotsubashi university, I studied commerce and accounting. At age eighteen, however, my life began to change. I joined a mountaineering club and started climbing in the Japanese Alps. Although these well-travelled summits were less than 4000 m high, in summer, their steep rock faces flashed in the sun, in winter, their slopes transformed into a glittering realm of white drifts and bitter cold. Still, as I read about bigger ranges abroad, I became overwhelmed by thoughts of all the mighty peaks I'd never seen. In 1961, I went on an expedition to make first ascents in Bolivia and Peru, where I encountered wild snow fluting and chaotic glacial ice, crisp and surreal in the thin, Andean air. Afterward, I kept venturing overseas in search of other enticing mountains. I came across Joseph Rock's article in 1989 and began to wonder the about 'secrets' that remained on distant mountaintops. A year later, I visited Lijiang in Yunnan Province for the first time. There, I was deeply touched by the allure of the snowy peaks and



Kangri Garpo East-Lhagu glacier



Yaks on the road to Meila Shan pass 5018 m

by the aspects of traditional culture that the local Naxi people had managed to preserve. In the Yulong Naxi Autonomous County, the sacred Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (Yulong Xueshan in Chinese or Satseto in Naxi language) dazzled white and silver against the sky.

In a 2018 talk at the University of Sydney, Kyinzom Dhougue stated that "Tibetan nomads are the stewards of the lands" and "at the forefront of climate change". They face the impact of losing their

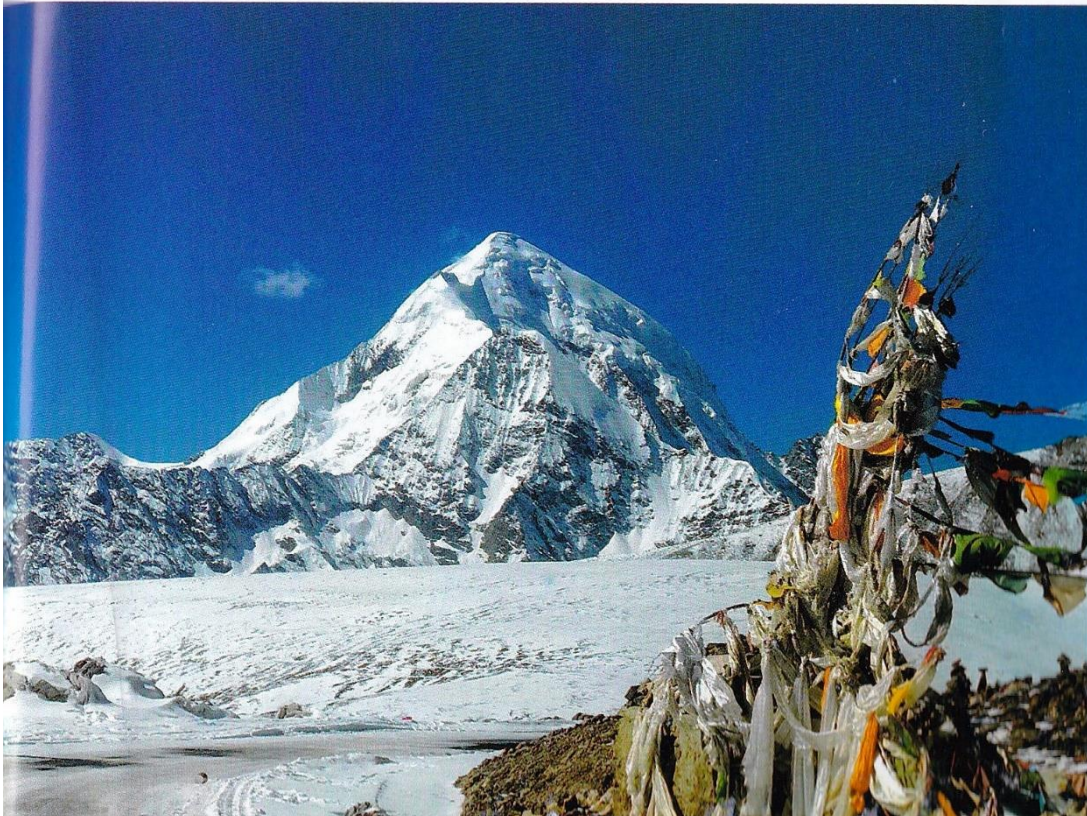
TAMOTSU (TOM) NAKAMURA

grasslands and traditional way of life amid the effect of industrial development, mining, hydropower projects, some government conservation initiatives, and climate change.

I still regret that I had no chance to climb in this massif. Only one team had made a recorded ascent of its highest point, 5596 m Shanzidou. In the American Alpine Journal Eric S. Perlman, who summited with Phil Peralta-Ramos in 1987, recalled struggling through thick bamboo forests and up "snow-splattered limestone headwalls", where axes broke through layers of ice too fragile for any protection. Clouds enveloped them near the top, and they never saw the view. To me, the peaks appeared like a galaxy, containing nebulous worlds of untouched stone and snow. I thought about all the intricate corners where no one had set foot—and then I realized that this was only one mysterious range among many.

This encounter was the beginning of my odysseys through less-frequented mountains of China and Tibet, journeys that would continue for thirty years. As I travelled beyond Yunnan and Sichuan and into eastern Tibet, I realized that Joseph Rock's words still

Qungmo Kangri 7048 m West Nyainqentanglha



SECRETS ON THE MAPS

resonated: there were, indeed, many 'secrets' on the maps—including innumerable unclimbed 6000 m peaks in the Gorge Country of Yunnan and in the regions of Kangri Garpo and Nyainqentanglha East.

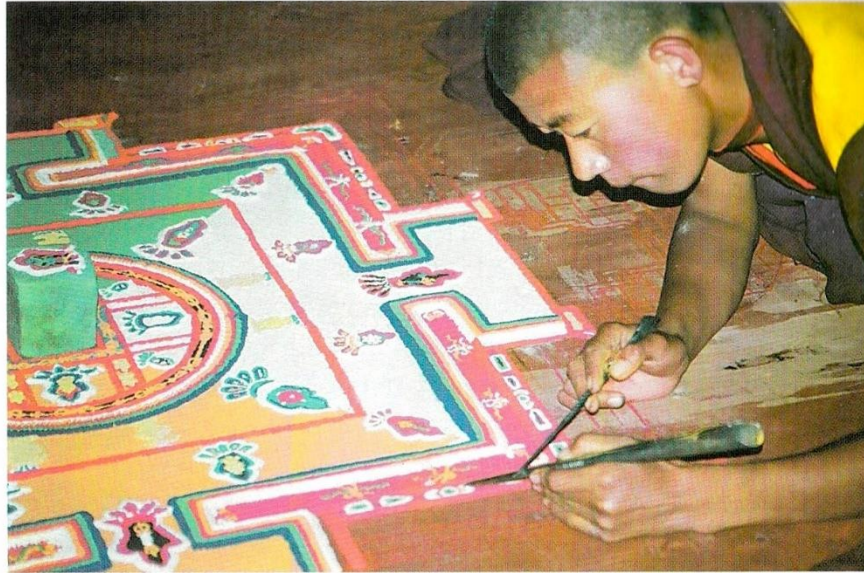
Many of these summits were then scarcely known to the international climbing community. Since photography was my hobby, I decided to take pictures of the mountains, so I could introduce them to alpinists around the world. In 2016, when I published my book, *East of the Himalaya*, I listed some fifty untrodden peaks along the border between China and Bhutan, twenty-five along the McMahon Line between Tibet and India, ten in Goikarla Rigyu and south of the Yarlung Tsangpo, two hundred in the Nyainqentanglha East region, forty in Kangri Garpo, twenty in the Gorge Country, ten in the West Sichuan highlands and forty in the Tanggula Shan.

"I have never had any sponsors or financiers. This has allowed me a free hand, but not always made it easy publish my work. My journeys of discovery through eastern Tibet have provided me with a second life after retirement. While I am way too old to climb all these untouched peaks...I see myself more as a source for other mountaineers. I provided information, maps, photos and knowledge

Tiba Kangri 6846 m SW face



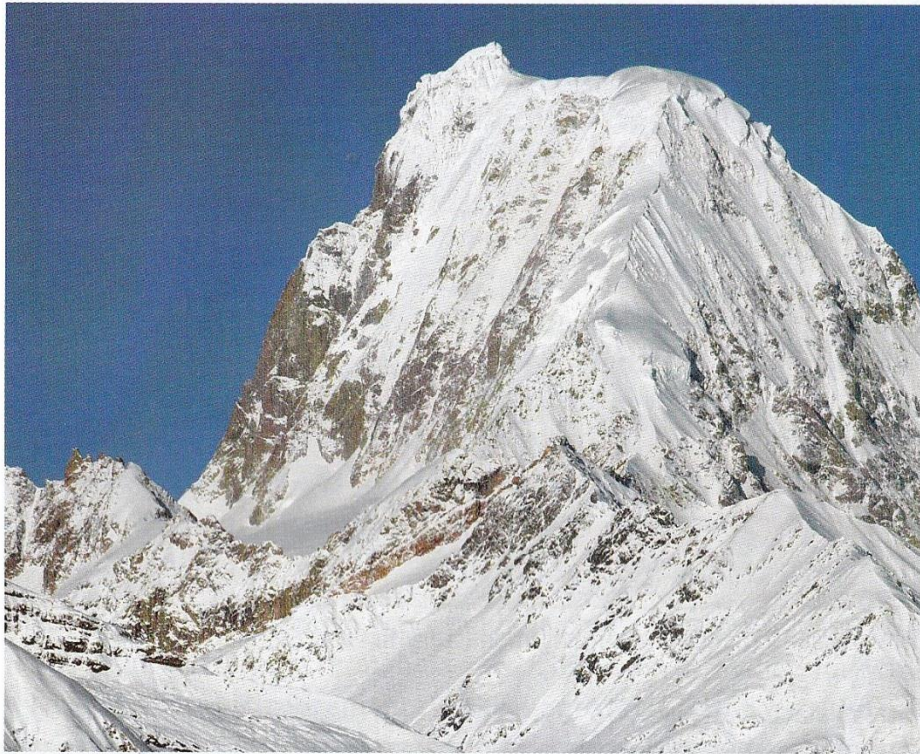
TAMOTSU (TOM) NAKAMURA



Drawing sand mandala at Litang monastery in west Sichuan

Potala Palace





Kangri Garpo-Gongyada 6423 m east face

freely to anyone interested in the region.” — my quote from Post Magazine.

In *East of the Himalaya*, I wrote: “Once off the beaten tracks, you will come across unfrequented stunning peaks and magnificent glaciers,” particularly in “the central part north of the upper Yi’ong Tsangpo in Nyainqentanglha East.” Nonetheless, many peaks in Tibet and nearby borderlands “are not opened to foreigners and not easy to approach because of geopolitical backgrounds.” Other summits are closed for spiritual reasons. “My experiences overseas during a quarter century drove me to introduce such fascinating peaks to the international mountaineering community.”

At the same time, these regions are transforming rapidly. In Tibet the change is taking place even faster than I’d imagined. New department stores and shopping malls crowd the holy city of Lhasa. Potala Palace is lit up. Many buildings have been torn down as the Chinese government modernizes the city. Throughout the countryside, the network of highways and railways grows ever more extensive. With the rise of Chinese tourism, hotels spring up in scenic towns. Old

frontier no longer exist—at least in the way that I'd imagined them as a young man.

In the autumn of 2019, I decided to return to the mountain range of Kangri Garpo, a place still hardly known outside of the region although tourism development is now about to begin. Here, the summits stretch about 280 km from northwest to southwest, starting east of 7782 m Namcha Barwa and the Great Tsangpo Bend, one of the most formidable canyons in the world, and extending to the mountain chain of Baxoila Lin and the western end of the Hengduan mountains. Some forty 6000 m peaks and many 5000 m mountains soar into the sky. Almost all these peaks are unclimbed.

Namcha Barwa 7782 m west face seen from Se-ti la 4500 m





Nyainqentanglha East 6000 m peaks

Gemsong 6525 m and Midoi glacier





12 Gyala Peri 7294 m north face 2

Yuhe Kangri 6327 m, eastern end of Kangri Garpo





Dema la 4900 m

By then, I was eighty-four years old. Professor Kazuo Kakihara, who would join me, had turned seventy-one. Our Tibetan guide Awang (Kedup Geltsen) was forty-one. Awang has been my most reliable expedition partner since 2009. He was a monk who learned English and who has begun operating a shop near the Potala Palace. *The best navigator I know, he is intimately familiar with all regions of Tibet.* Our Tibetan driver on this trip, Ge Nei, forty, also knew the road conditions thoroughly. We were fortunate to have their help.

Over the years, government control over foreign visitors has become stricter in the Tibet Autonomous Region. It took us three months to get permits, after applying to the Tourist Bureau, Public Security Bureau (PSB), Legal Department, Army and Border Police. Even so, we encountered many checkpoints on our journey. But a six km tunnel now leads under the most dangerous landslide of the Sichuan-Tibet Highway between Tongmai and Bomi, and we passed through quickly.

An unclimbed 6000 m peak of Nyainqentanglha East range shimmered above an old village on the banks of the Parlung Tsangpo and Yi'ong Tsangpo rivers, suggesting mysteries on the edge of the roads and towns. Through a mist of falling rain and snow, the autumn leaves shone in red and yellow hues. On 26th October, we arrived at Midoi,

now a popular destination for Chinese tourists. High above, the 6525 m Gemsong still awaited a first ascent. In white, the summit appeared sharp and delicate as a leaf above the glaciers. Our objective, however, was not to climb, but to have a look at the state of the ice. We continued on to Rawu, the last town where the PSB allowed us to lodge.

At daybreak, we hurried to the Lhagu glacier. "How much has this glacier been receding in ten years?" This question was a matter of serious concern to us. Indeed, the ice appeared to have shrunk and grown thinner, and a sense of sorrow weighed on us. When I compared my photos from 1999 and 2019, the borders of the Lhagu glacier had drawn back hundreds of metres. An environmental science professor, Mauri Peltó, later shared his observation that the glacier had retreated 1.2 km since 2001. Local Tibetan inhabitants had also noticed the transformation.

We live on the threshold of the hot planet,
The Conquest of nature so often anticipated
or celebrated over the previous two hundred
years appears to be highly ambivalent.

Peter H. Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man*

Rouni 6882 m (left) Lopchin 6805 m east face





Historical Shugden gumpa—reconstructed

On the road from Rawu to the Dema la 4900 m, I looked into a magnificent panorama in the heart of Kangri Garpo East. The Indian pundit Kishen Singh was the first foreigner to traverse the Kangri Garpo range, back in 1882, during a secret mapmaking mission, when the borders of Tibet were still closed to outside visitors. So much had shifted, since the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in the lives of residents: from the turmoil of invasions and political change to the impact of industrialization and modern climate crisis. Today, the snows and glaciers will glow in white and blue. But their boundaries seem like the glimmering margins of some transcendent world, one that is growing ever smaller and more precarious. Where I once stood entranced by the glories of unclimbed heights, now I worry more and more about the melting of the ice and uncertainties of the earth' future.

I am eighty-five years old, but I would like to continue my journeys to the borderlands for at least a few years more. In the time remaining to us all, there is still so much felt to see.

TAMOTSU (TOM) NAKAMURA

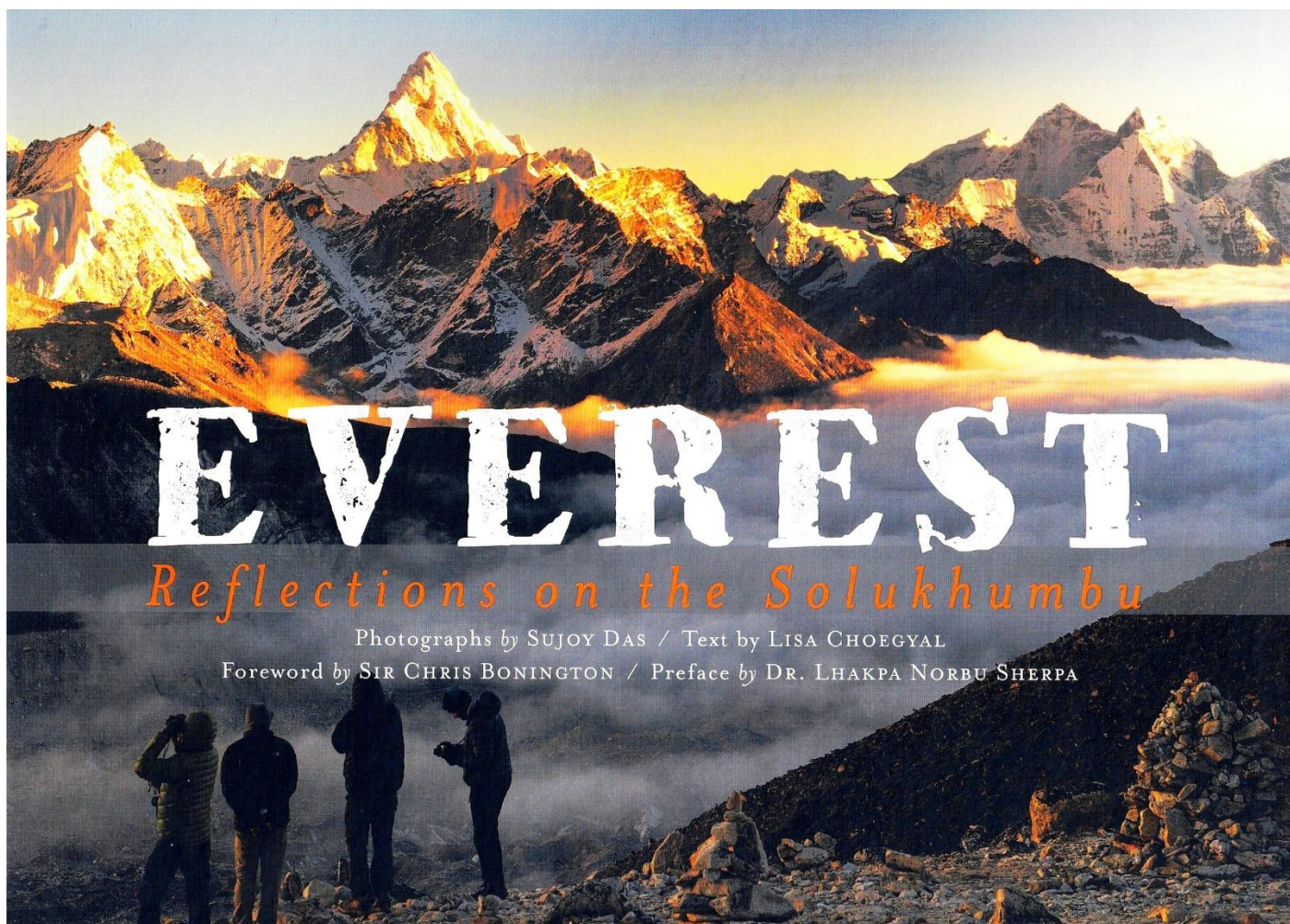
Summary

One of the world's greatest living explorers reminisces about his travels in Eastern Tibet.

About the Author

With the advent of GIS, satellite images and other advanced cartographic applications, it seems the world is growing smaller by the minute. But long-time Alpinist contributor Tamotsu Nakamura—though he began his explorations after the Golden Age of Mountaineering ended—begs to differ.

“Some convince themselves that veiled mountains in the greater ranges are an experience of the past,” Nakamura says. “But Tibet has an incredibly vast and complex topography that holds countless unclimbed summits, and beckons a lifetime’s search. The many peaks there will remain enigmas for generations.” Nakamura is now 86 years old (born in 1934) in Tokyo. After living and working around the world in Pakistan, Mexico, New Zealand and Hong Kong, he made around 40 expeditions to the borderlands from 1990 to 2019. Now Nakamura is Honorary Member of HC, AC, AAC, JAC and NZAC, and Fellow of RGS.



EVEREST

Reflections on the Solukhumbu

Photographs by SUJOY DAS / Text by LISA CHOEGYAL

Foreword by SIR CHRIS BONINGTON / Preface by DR. LHAKPA NORBU SHERPA

'Mountain tourism, trekking and climbing, has changed Sherpa lives since we took the "last step" on Everest back in 1978. They have become great mountaineers, and today I would like to see Sherpas take over the management of Sagarmatha – it is their mountain. I highly recommend this spectacular tribute to Everest and its valiant people on the centenary of Sir Edmund Hillary's birth.'

Reinhold Messner, mountaineer, writer and filmmaker

'This captivating book portrays the contemporary Sherpa people of Solukhumbu and their amazing mountain home. As Patron, I am delighted that the Himalayan Trust has played a crucial role in the development of the Everest region since it was founded in 1960 by Sir Edmund Hillary, touching so many lives over the decades, and giving choices and options to many Sherpa women and men in their changing world.'

Rt Hon Helen Clark, Patron of the Himalayan Trust, Prime Minister of New Zealand 1999-2008, and UNDP Administrator 2009-2017

'There are many books about the splendours of Sagarmatha and our Sherpa people who live in its shadow, but EVEREST is very special. Sujoy Das' stunning images capture the spirit of our Solukhumbu community and show our mountains in a new light. Lisa Choegyal's text reveals insights born from her many years living and working with us in Nepal. We are proud that this book is published, and I think you will enjoy it.'

Ang Tshering Sherpa, Khumbu elder, tourism entrepreneur and doyen of Nepal mountaineering



Sujoy Das

A seasoned trekker and photographer, **Sujoy Das** (www.sujoydas.com) feels most at home in the high Himalaya. Founder of South Col Expeditions, he has introduced many trekkers to the magic of the Everest and Annapurna regions in Nepal, where he has been photographing for 30 years. His images and

accompanying essays have featured in the *Washington Post*, *Alpinist*, *Insight Guides*, *Outdoor Journal*, *Outlook Traveller* and many other publications. He has co-authored and photographed several books including *Nepal Himalaya A Journey Through Time*, *Sikkim A Travellers Guide* and *Lonely Planet Nepal for the Indian Traveller*.



Lisa Choegyal

British-born **Lisa Choegyal** has made Kathmandu her home since 1974, deeply involved with Nepal tourism and conservation. She worked for 25 years with the Mountain Travel Nepal group of adventure tourism pioneers and is director of Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge. As a specialist in sustainable

tourism, she consults throughout the Asia Pacific region. Author and editor of *Nepal Himalaya A Journey Through Time*, *Kathmandu Valley Style*, *The Nepal Scene Chronicles of Elizabeth Hawley* and *Offerings from Nepal*, she produced the *South Asian Insight Guides* series and contributes a fortnightly column to the *Nepali Times*. Lisa serves as trustee on a number of pro-bono organisations, and since 2010 is New Zealand's Honorary Consul to Nepal.



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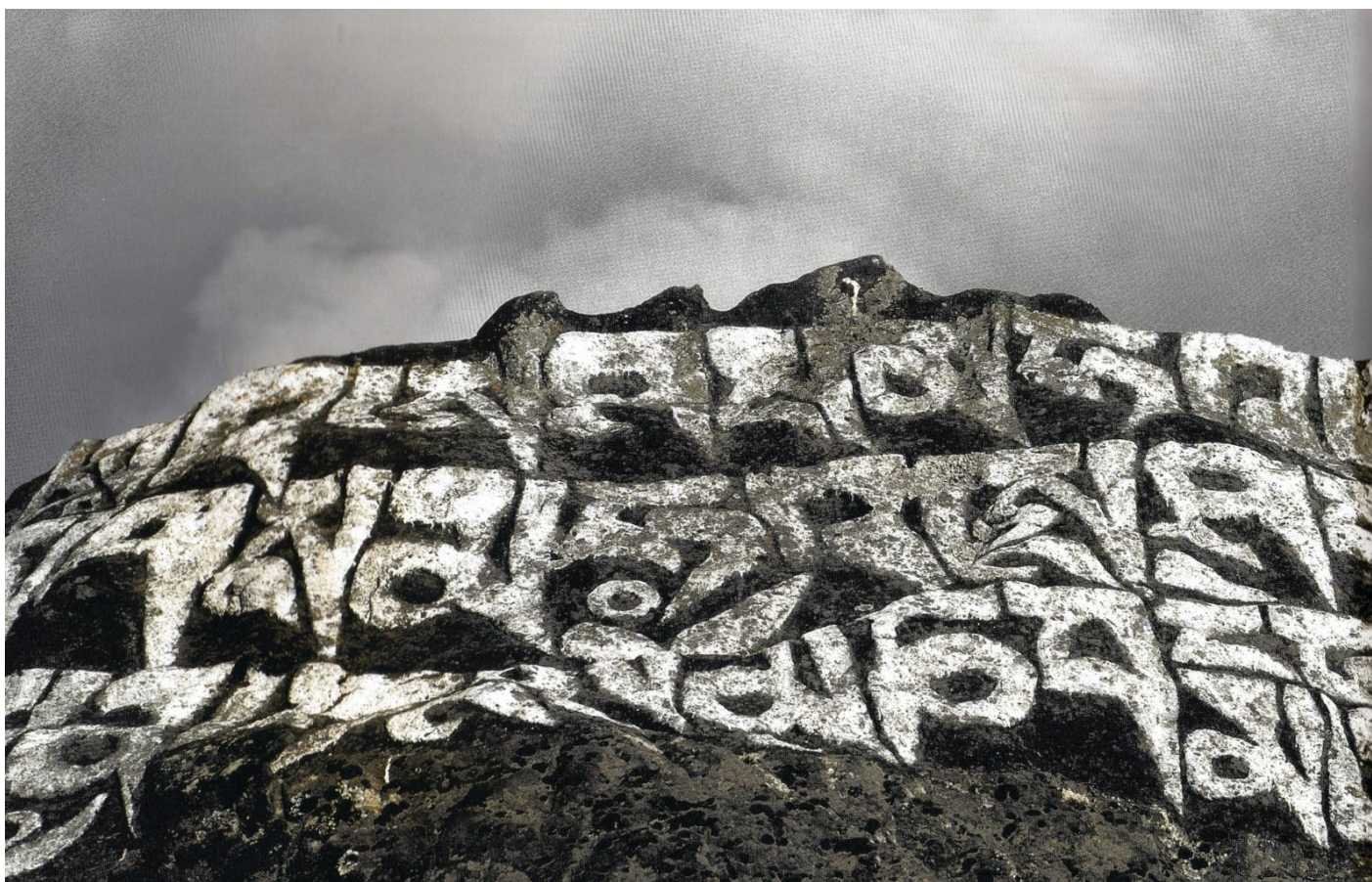
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Trekkers cross the icefield below the Cho la pass heading to Dzongla in the Khumbu valley



The third lake of Gokyo



A large mane stone on the trail to Thame from Namche Bazar

FOREWORD



This book is a wonderful tribute to my old friend Sir Edmund Hillary on his birth centenary. His historic climb with Tenzing Norgay and subsequent philanthropic work in Solukhumbu are integral to the Sagarmatha story.

The glorious peaks of the Himalayan range are also central to my mountaineering career, and the precious friendships with my Sherpa climbing colleagues are lodged deep in my heart. My fifteen trips to the mountains of Nepal include three expeditions to Mount Everest, leading the first ascent of the south-west face in 1975 on which Doug Scott and Dougal Haston became the first Britons to summit, and eventually reaching the top myself in 1985 at the age of fifty.

I salute the participation of the Sherpas without whom we could not have enjoyed such success, and with whom I have shared the triumphs, trauma and tragedy that are part of any pioneering mountain adventure.

My perpetual fascination with the highest points on earth is appreciated by many, and this beautiful book will appeal to all who share my passion for the soaring scenery and the amazing Sherpa people of the Solukhumbu.

Sujoy Das has spent months and multiple visits over many years to capture these extraordinary images and insights into daily life. Lisa Choegyal's text charts the history of the Everest region, its people and development since tourism began in the 1950s. She reminds us how life in the Solukhumbu has evolved over recent years, reacting to increased trekking and changing mountaineering patterns that have brought benefits to local communities, as well as a range of impacts that include climate change, earthquakes and avalanches.

This is not just one more book about Everest, but a special celebration of the haunting beauty of Solukhumbu and its people. Civilisation depends on the health of our high places, and I wish my Sherpa friends all the best with successfully navigating their future course.

SIR CHRIS BONINGTON

Chapter 1

..THE HIMAL.. *No bird can fly over it*

*'Usually Jomolungma is said to mean "Goddess Mother of the World."
Sometimes "Goddess Mother of the Wind." But it did not mean either of these
when I was a boy in Solukhumbu. Then it meant "The Mountain So High
No Bird Can Fly Over It." This is what all Sherpa mothers used to tell their
children – what my own mother told me –and it is the name I still like the best
for this mountain that I love.'*

~ TENZING NORGAY SHERPA, Man of Everest



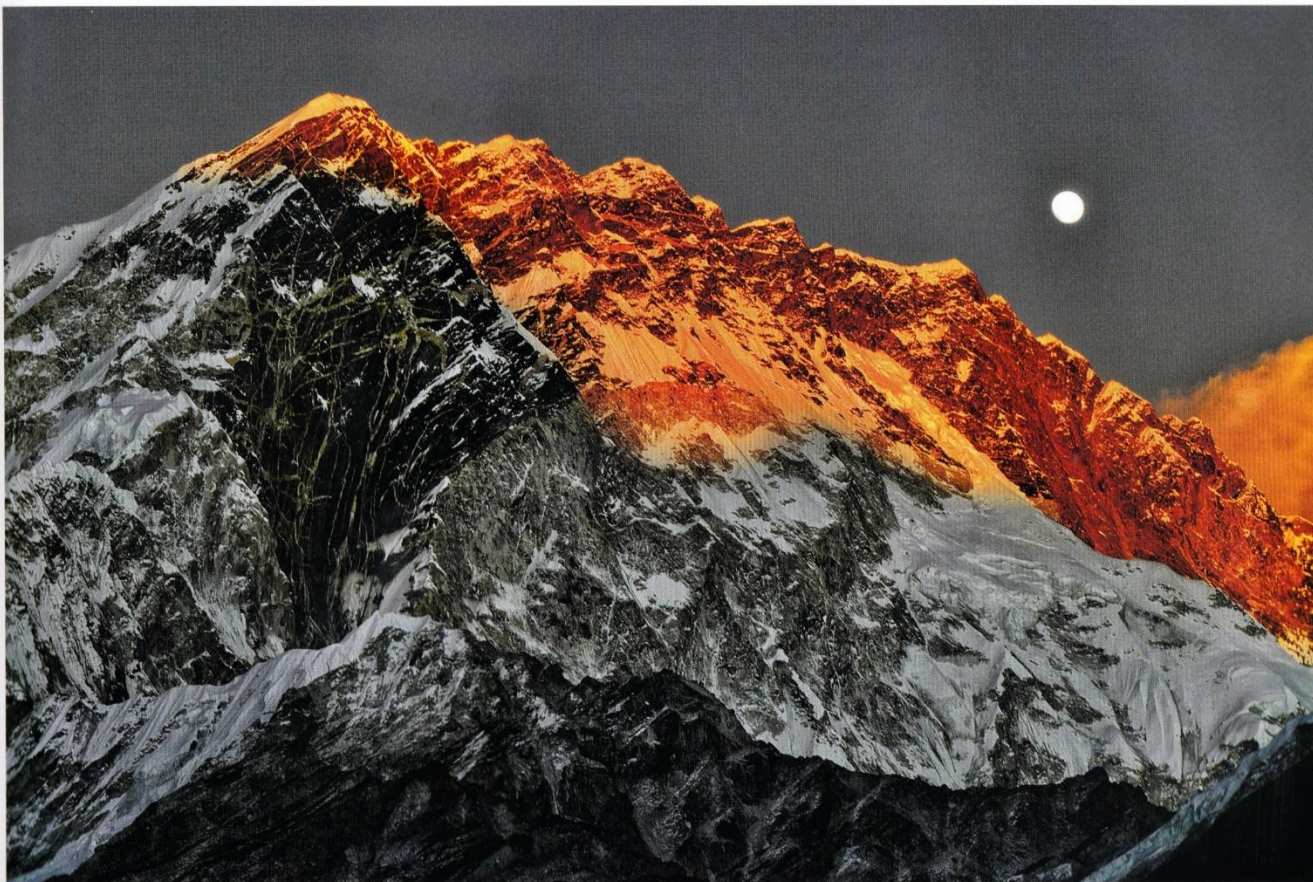
A monsoon morning offers a fleeting glimpse of Ama Dablam from Khumjung before the clouds close in



A chorten above the village of Dingboche catches the morning sun rising behind Ama Dablam



A cold starry night at Lobuche, with Nuptse as a back drop



As the dying rays of the setting sun illuminate Nuptse, the full moon rise over its shoulder



Taboche and Cholatse great a snowy sunrise from a viewpoint above Duglha



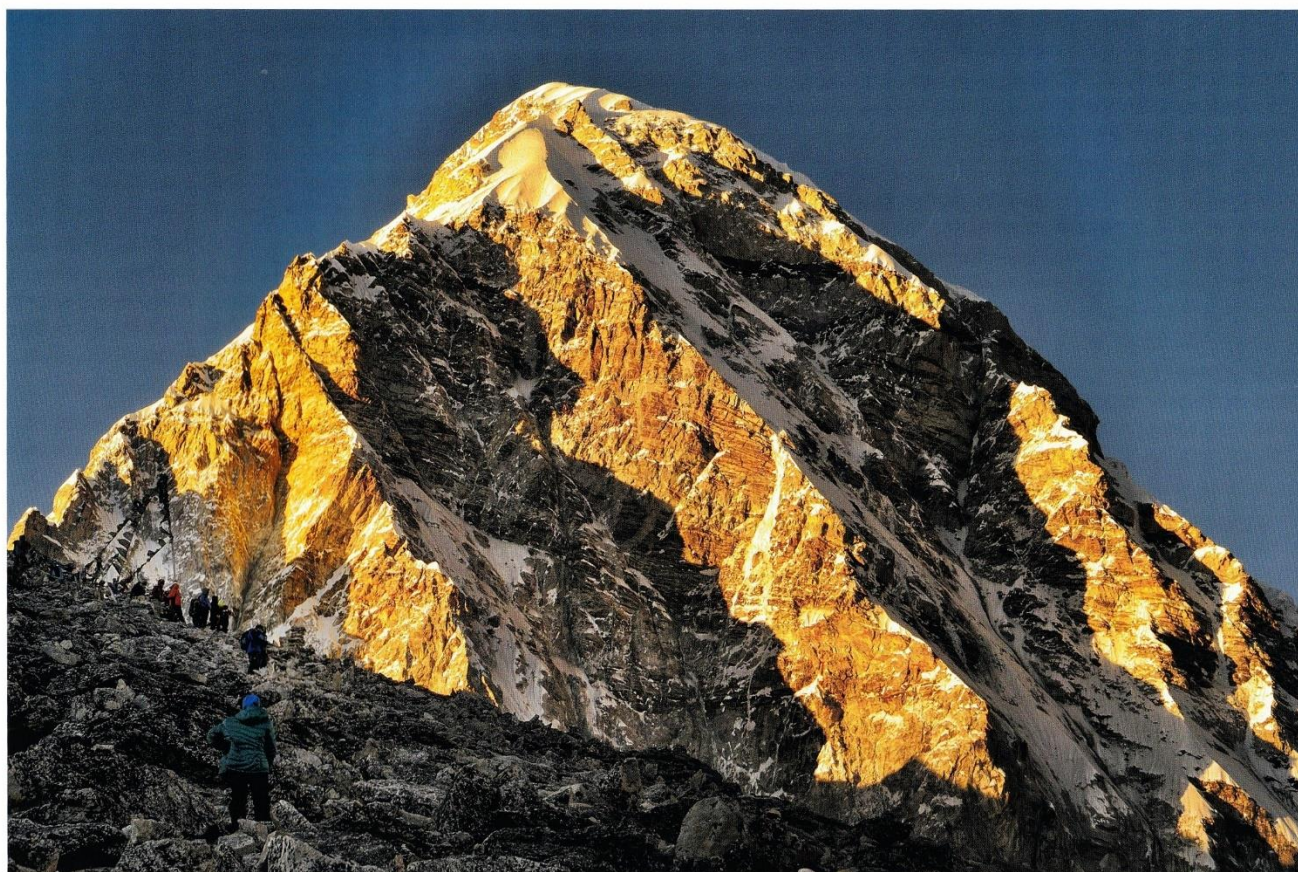
A lone lammergeier flies towards Ama Dablam as seen from Dingboche



Early morning catches the full moon setting behind Taboche on the walk to the point of Nangkartshang hill above Pheriche



^ Rhododendrons in bloom near the Sagarmatha National Park office at Monjo



The prayer flags of Kala Pattar are dwarfed by the huge bulk of Pumori, daughter of Everest



The peak of Cho Yu dominates the Gokyo valley seen here reflected in the third lake



^ The morning sun warms two trekkers gazing at Kangtega and Thamserku from the village of Luza on the Gokyo trail

Chapter 2

Sujoy Das

..DUMJI FESTIVAL DEVOTIONS..

'It was near the end of the ritual. Slowly the Rinpoche began to sing. Om mani padme hum, the old mantra of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of Compassion, the great mantra of Tibet, the mantra I had seen carved on the hillsides, on the stones in the mani.... He sang it again and again, slowly, quietly, with a dark tender gravity, rising and falling. And the monks sang it with him also.'

~ ANDREW HARVEY, *A Journey in Ladakh*



The Tengboche Rinpoche arrives at Namche monastery for the Dumji festival



^ On the opening day of the Dumji festival at Khumjung, Sherpa elders Lhakpa Dorji, Ang Chuldim, Mingma Nuru, Pemba Tshering, Sonam Tshering, Chuldim Dorji and Tenzing Tashi makes offerings to the lamas



^ The hosts of the 2018 Khumjung Dumji festival present katas to Khumbi-Yullha



A villager from Khumjung gets ready to dance as the yeti at the festival



Lhakpa Doma and Ang Mingma offer katas for ceremonial blessings from the Tengboche Rinpoche at Namche

Chapter 3

Sujoy Das

..A SHORT WALK IN THE MONSOON..

Namche to Phaplu

*'The hills are shadows and they flow
From form to form and nothing stands
They melt like mists; the solid lands
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.'*

~ H.W. TILMAN, Nepal Himalaya



A caravan of mules start the long climb from Surkhe to Puiyan



A porter with a load of corrugated sheets in the ghostly mist near the Khari La pass



The trail past Puiyan climbs stone steps through lush forest encrusted with orchids, moss and ferns



A family descends on slippery steps near the village of Pakhipani



A basket weaver near Nuntala

Chapter 4

Lisa Choegyal

..THE LEGACY OF ED HILLARY..

'I believe that of all the things I have done, exciting though many of them have been, there's no doubt in my mind that the most worthwhile have been the establishing of schools and hospitals, and the rebuilding of monasteries in the mountains.'

~ SIR EDMUND HILLARY





The three chortens commemorating Sir Ed alongside his wife Louise and daughter Belinda, tragically killed in a 1975 air crash, stand on a ridge above Kunde village with sweeping Himalayan views



..SHERPA LIVES.. *Claiming the high ground*

'In the quiet of the forest, the infinitely fading moments of the present become day, day, night. These lights and darks become weeks. Ever so slowly, these weeks gather into seasons and become hot, become rainy, become cold, and become hot again. The winters are neither better nor worse than the monsoons; they are simply different parts of a cycle. When things change, we feel deprived, but we are always free to step back and to see all change as part of a larger composition. The notion that one's life will be improved by holding on to possessions, people, or ideas becomes absurd when one encounters the ineluctable rhythms of change.'

~ HUGH R DOWNS, *Rhythms of a Himalayan Village*



The kani (entrance) at Chaurikharka



A porter on the trail to Thami – Om mani padme hum, the mantra of Avalokiteshvara, loosely translates to 'hail to the jewel in the lotus'



During the brief summer months Dingboche fields are ploughed by dzobjok or dzomo, a hybrid between the yak and domestic cattle, whilst the women collect potatoes

Chapter 6

Lisa Choegyal

..NAMCHE BAZAR..

The Sherpa heartland

'Namche Bazar in 1961 probably hadn't changed much in the last hundred years. It had a magical atmosphere with everyone in traditional dress offering generous quantities of chang. At the weekly market, surrounding villagers would meet to barter and buy, and traders from the valleys below would bring rice, grain and other products. Very few foreigners reached the village and essentially they had a subsistence economy. House roofs were slabs of slate, there was no glass for the small windows, and families lived upstairs with smoke from the log cooking fires finding its way through chinks in the roof tiles whilst the body heat of their yaks and goats provided the central heating. Perhaps traditional and romantic, but it's not surprising how many people suffered from conjunctivitis and chest colds in those days.'

~ SIR CHRIS BONINGTON



