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Golden Flying Route: Trans-Himalaya from West Tibet (Ali) to Lhasa

HENGDUAN MOUNTAINS CLUB
Legacy of Silver Turtle Ski Expedition 2016–Photo Album
Untrodden Peaks of the Lhagu Glacier & Ata Glacier-Kangri Garpo East
“KANGRI GARPO – THE LAST FRONTIER IN THE GREATER RANGES”
TAMOTSU (TOM) NAKAMURA

Golden Flying Route: Trans-Himalaya from West Tibet (Ali) to Lhasa
Remarks:
Most of pictures were taken by Liu Yuhong and one picture by other Chinese. Area covers Indian Himalaya, Nepal Himalaya, Trans-Himalaya (Tibet) and Bhutan Himalaya.
Peak Identification: by the Himalayan Association of Japan
Most of the mountaineers, even though they are Himalayan experts, would undoubtedly be unable to give correct answers to these questions: “Which glacier flows down to the lowest altitude in Tibet?” “Which glacier has the largest surface area also in Tibet?” The former is the Ata Glacier (south) of 14km in length, which end reaches 2,440m above sea level, and the latter is the Lhagu Glacier which is 30km in length by 2 – 5km width that reminds us of those in Patagonia and Alaska as well. The both glaciers are located in the eastern part of Kangri Garpo mountains range.

More than 40 peaks exceeding 6,000m still remain unclimbed. The highest peak Ruoni 6882m which had been first identified by a British early explorer and plant hunter, Frank Kingdon-Ward in 1933. In 1973, 1976 and 1980 the Lanzhou Institute of Glaciology and Geocryology and the Chinese Academy of Sciences conducted field researches of Kangri Garpo East, the Ata Glacier and the Lhagu Glacier. In 2003 the Alpine Club of Kobe University (ACUK) challenged the highest summit of Rouni but retreated from at 5,900m. In 2006 Silver Turtle team entered the Lhagu Glacier for ski-climbing and unveiled the glacier. They brought back stunning, alluring and breathtaking pictures surrounding the Lhagu Glacier. Selection of these picture are introduced here.

In 2009, ACKU and Wuhan Geology Collage joint expedition succeeded in the first ascent of the second highest peak Lopchin 6,805m Lopchin is the only 6,000m ever climbed in the range.

**Geography and Glaciers**

Kangri Garpo is a sizeable mountain range stretching 280km from northwest to southeast in N:28° 30’ – 29° 60’ and E:95° 30’ – 97° 30’. It exists between Tsangpo Great Bend, the eastern end of Himalayas, and Baxoila Ling that is the western end of the Hengduan Mountains. Kenneth Mason described little about the mountains of East of the Himalayas, whilst Frank Kingdon-Ward specified the mountain in question to be in an extension of Sino Himalaya. On the contrary, however, the Chinese Academy of Science maintains their opinion that Kangri Garpo is to be defined as an independent range from a point of the view that the geographical structure has a similarity to that of Nyainqentanglha range in the north of Kangri Garpo.
The range is encircled by three tributaries of the Tsangpo-Brahmaputra. The northern side is deeply eroded where Parlung Tsangpo, a tributary of the Tsangpo river forms a narrow and precipitous gorge in the valley. To the south and east of the range, the Lohit river (Chinese name is Zayul Qu) has an important role. The river separates into two tributaries, Kangri Garpo Qu (river) to the northwest and Sang Qu to the northeast. The confluence is in a small upper point at Samai in the Zayul County not far to the border with Arnachal Pradesh, India. In the south of the range, Dihang River, a tributary of Brahmaputra is flowing in low level of 2000 – 3000m, and the mountain ridges do not exceed an altitude of 4000m which does not function as a climatic barrier effect.

Therefore, Kangri Garpo, which constitutes the southernmost rim of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, receives a direct humid southwest seasonal wind from the Indian Ocean. This causes much precipitation in the monsoon season and heavy snowfall in winter and spring. The north of the watershed has a complicated topography. The eastern end is a high plateau while to the west the valley of Parlung Tsangpo becomes a forested deep gorge. In the south the valleys are extremely eroded. For at least three months a year, villages are isolated from the outside world because of heavy snow.

In an area surrounding Ata Kang La and Lhagu Glacier, 61 glaciers are observed over 200 square km. The total surface area of all the glaciers in Kangri Garpo amounts to 1683 square km according to the survey conducted by China Academy of Science. The survey also indicates that Kangri Garpo is a mountain range where the ratio of glacial coverage is the largest in Tibet. In particular, glaciers of Kangri Garpo are concentrated in the eastern part of the range.
Rich in Fantasy surrounding Lhagu Glacier—(above) 5480m (below) 6000m peaks east face: ST
The Lhagu Glacier and Ata Glacier are the crux of the Kangri Garpo East. In particulars, harmony of alluring snow peaks and glacier is enchanting.
Kangri Garpo Range is a bit far away from commercial air flights route from Chengdu to Lhasa and Kathmandu, Nepal.

Pictures: Wuri Wusa (above) Liu Yuhong (below)
Peak Identification: Tatsuo Inoue, Alpine Club of Kobe University (ACKU)
Peaks—Gongyada 6423m (left) Zeh 6127m (right)
Lhagu Glacier and Lake Lhagu viewed from Lhagu village: TN
Dawn in Kangri Garpo East viewed from Lhagu village: TN

Glacier terminus of Lhagu Glacier: TN
Views from near Lhagu village towards Lhagu Glaciers and surrounding 6000m peaks: TN
Lhagu Glacier and 6377m peak in the glacier head: ST

Hamokongga 6260m east face receiving sunshine in dawn: ST
(above) Shugden Gompa, entrance to mountains: TN (below) Silver Turtle team: ST
(above) Silver Turtle team and villagers, porters (below) Dawn in the mountains: ST
Before entering glacier (below) unique strata showing marks of glacier movement: ST
Lhagu Glacier lower part mid-stream and branch glaciers: ST
Setting up an advance camp on the left rim (east side) of the Lhagu Glacier
(above) Nameless 6000m peaks (below) 6091m peak-center, Gongyada 6432m-right: ST
Zeh 6017m east face and branch glacier of Lhagu Glacier: ST
(above) Nameless 6000m peak (below) Luqendo II-1 6390m east face: ST
(above) Reconnaissance: ST (below) 6377m-left, Lhagu Gl, Hamokongga 6260m-right: TN
(above) Zeh 6170m, ascending to upper camp (below) Camp on upper glacier: ST
Ascending Lhagu Glacier
Upper Lhagu Glacier and 6350m peak northeast face: ST
(above) Gongyada 6432m·left, Zeh 6127m·right (below) 6000m peak in upper glacier: ST
(above) To the glacier headwaters (below) 6377m seen from upper Dome 5900m: ST
(above) 6536m Pk highest in Lhagu Glacier: ST (below) Gemsong 6525m & Midui Glacier: TN
Descending to lower camp after finishing activity in Upper Lhagu Glacier: ST
Ruoni 6882m highest peak in Kangri Garpo (above) NE face: TN, (below) NW face: ACKU
(above) Twin Pks 6200m·left 6290m·right E face (below) Shana 5596m NW face: ACKU
(above) Lopchin 6805m 2nd highest (below) Pk 6726m 3rd highest east face: ACKU
(from left) Pk 6720m, Zyaddo 6205m in front, 6554m only top, 6340m, Twins 6200m, 6290m E-NE face viewed from road to Dema La: TN

Ruoni 6882m·left Lopchin 6805m·right NE face viewed from road to Dema La: TN
Dojitsenza 5662m east face viewed from road to Dema La: TN

Dema La 4920m from Rawu to Zayul: TN
Ata Kangri 5760m-left, north of Ata Kang La 4612m: TN

6000m peak north face and Gheni West Glacier viewed from road to Dema la: TN
Gheni 6150m north face seen from road to Dema La: TN

6000m Pks-left, Gheni 6150m-center, 5850m-right N face viewed from Ata Glacier: ACKU
Panorama looking to south from road to Dema La: TN

5700m peak north face seen from road to Dema La: TN
Huhe Kangri 6327m north face-center beyond col seen from road to Dema La: TM

Yuhe Kangri 6327m east face, easternmost of Kangri Garpo: HW
New glacial lakes being born in North Ata Glacier: TN

Young monk reading a sutra, Shugden Gompa: TN