

# ASIAN ALPINE E-NEWS

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West face of Tengi Ragi Tau in Nepal's Rolwaling Himal.

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# Piolets d'Or 2020

An International Celebration of Grand Alpinism

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Press Release # 3 - August 2020

## THE PIOLETS D'OR 2020 AWARDS AT THE 25<sup>TH</sup> LADEK MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL

Four remarkable ascents will be awarded Piolets d'Or in Ladek-Zdroj on September 19. The year 2019 turned out to be very rich for modern alpinism, with a substantial number of significant first ascents from all over the globe. The protagonists were alpinists of wide diversity. There were notable ascents by the "old guard" of highly-experienced high altitude climbers, but also fine achievements by a promising new generation of "young guns".

Our eight-member international technical jury had the difficult task of making a choice, the intention being not to discard any remarkable climbs, but to choose a few significant ascents as "ambassadors" for modern, alpine style mountaineering. In the end the jury chose what we believe to be a consistent selection of four climbs. These will be awarded next month in Ladek.

The four ascents comprise two from Nepal and two from Pakistan. Most had seen previous attempts and were on the radar of number of strong parties. All climbed to rarely visited, or in one case virgin, summits. They are detailed, in no particular order, in the following pages.

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Announcing this year's recipients of Piolets d'Or is a moment of joy, and the presentation ceremony will undoubtedly be a superb celebration of high-end alpinism. However, we also want to use the occasion to inform the entire mountaineering world of sad news - the passing away of Jan Kietkowski, one of the world's greatest chroniclers of alpinism, and author of many guidebooks to the Greater Ranges. His death on the 5th April, 2020, was a big shock to the Polish mountaineering community but was poorly publicized outside his home country.



Born in 1943, Kietkowski was a talented alpinist. In common with most Polish climbers he started his career on the limestone rocks of the Polish Jura and the granite walls of the High Tatra Mountains. In 1963 he discovered a passion for the vertical world, and in the late 1960s and '70s put up many new lines in the Polish mountains. He created six new routes on Kazalnica, the highest wall of the Polish Tatras, more than any other individual climber. He also climbed in the Cordillera Huayhuash, Caucasus, Pamir, Hindu Kush and Himalaya. But his biggest contribution to world climbing was his documentary work. Starting with the first edition of Mount Everest Massif in 1985, he published over 20 guidebooks for alpinists on areas of the Himalaya, Karakoram and Andes, including 11 volumes of the well-known "Mountaineering Series" between 1995 and 2015. Together with his wife Małgorzata he was the main editor and co-author of seven volumes of Wielka Encyklopedia Gór i Alpinizmu (Great Encyclopaedia of Mountains and Alpinism), published from 2013 to 2017. This work, currently only available in Polish, is the world's biggest resource of its type.

With the announcement of the 2019 awarded ascents and Piolet d'Or Carrière, we now wait for the forthcoming Ladek Mountain Film Festival. There, we will pay tribute to the outstanding career of Catherine Destivelle, and the incredible climbs achieved last year in the world's mountains. But we will also remember Jan, whose works have played a pivotal role in the development of exploratory climbing over the last 35 years.





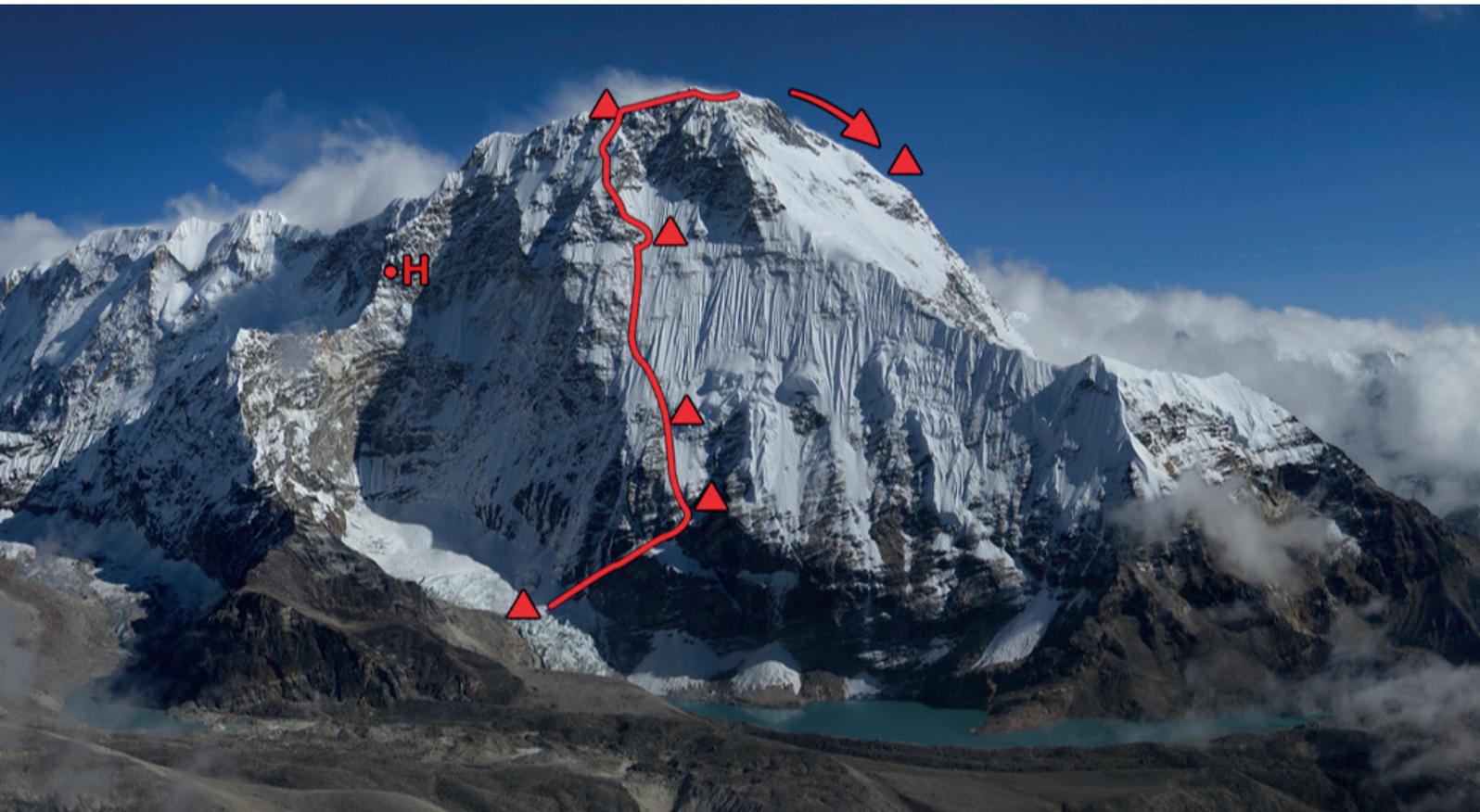
### NORTHWEST FACE, UFO LINE, 2,000M, W15 M6, AND TRAVERSE OF THE MOUNTAIN, MAY 17-23 ROUND TRIP FROM BASE CAMP

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Since he first saw it in 2001 Marek Holeček had dreamed of climbing the great northwest face of Chamlang in Nepal's Mahalangur Himal. Others had shared the same dream, and after more than half a dozen attempts the face had become one of the most coveted in the country. When Holeček and Zdeněk Hák arrived in spring 2019 it was obvious the face had little snow and a lot of hard water ice. Outflanking objective dangers in the lower section would prove to be one of the keys.

From a bivouac at 5,300m on the glacier below the face the two Czechs headed up more or less directly below the summit. On the fourth day they reached the upper east ridge and bivouacked 80m below the top. On May 21 they crossed the summit and spent the rest of the day trying to navigate the Original Japanese route on the south ridge. This proved more difficult than expected. Two more bivouacs - without food - and difficult down-climbing and rappelling in often poor visibility were needed to reach the valley.

The route was named UFO Line as a tribute to Reinhold Messner and Doug Scott, who in 1981, with Sherpas Ang Dorje and Pasang, were the first to climb the north side of the Chamlang massif and reach one of the middle summits. There, they were puzzled by a box-like object that hovered above them, shining magnificently in the midday sun.



***UFO Line on the northwest face of Chamlang (7,321 meters). The seventh bivouac site - on the descent - is hidden.  
(H) marks the high point of a 2019 attempt on Chamlang's unclimbed north pillar.***

©Andy Houseman (autumn 2012 photo) / American Alpine Journal





### WEST FACE, RELEASE THE KRAKEN, 1,600M, AI5 M5+, OCTOBER 13-17 ROUND TRIP FROM A GLACIER CAMP BELOW THE FACE

\*\*\*

In 2012, on their first expedition to the Himalaya, Alan Rousseau and Tino Villanueva made the first ascent of Langmoche Ri on the north ridge of Tengri Ragi Tau in Nepal's Rolwaling Himal. Walking below the west face of Tengri Ragi Tau they were mesmerized by its sheer magnitude and fine ice runnels through beautiful granite. They returned in 2014 to attempt a direct line, climbing to around 6,500m in less than ideal weather before retreating. Five years later and the face was now attracting the attention of several strong parties.

After crossing the Tashi Lapsa pass and camping on the Drolambo Glacier, the two Americans climbed the initial dry-tooling pitches to access the snowy face, then made three bivouacs before reaching the summit. A tricky rappel descent was made down the line of ascent. With a multi-pitch ice crux high on the route, followed by steep flutings of unprotectable snow, this technical and elegant line on one of the most outstanding unclimbed faces of the Rolwaling was just reward for the perseverance of two experienced alpine guides. Their ascent was only the second of this difficult mountain and the first in alpine style.



© Tino Villanueva / American Alpine Journal



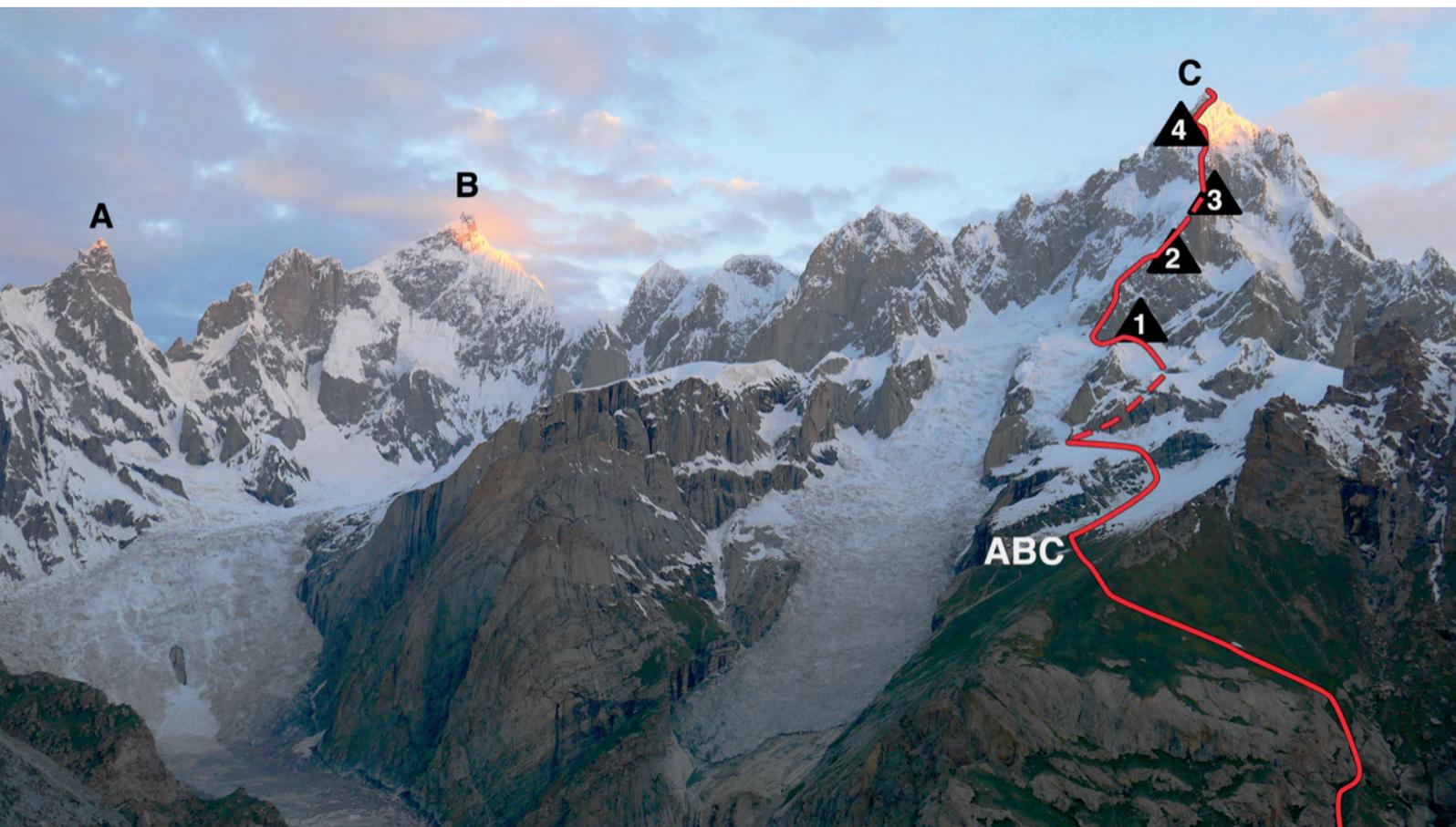
**FIRST ASCENT VIA THE SOUTHEAST FACE, 2,300M, AI4 M6+ 90°, JULY 31-AUGUST 8 ROUND TRIP FROM AN ADVANCED BASE AT 4,700M.**

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Another much-coveted problem, this time in the eastern Pakistan Karakoram, Link Sar had received at least eight attempts before 2019. But the difficulties are not just about climbing the peak: the Indo-Pakistan conflict has made this region an on-off affair (largely off) when it comes to obtaining a mountaineering permit.

Steve Swenson first attempted Link Sar in 2001 with a strong American team, and then again, after a number of failed permit attempts, in 2017 with Chris Wright and Graham Zimmerman. Having now discovered a feasible line of ascent, these three decided to reinforce the team in 2019 with the addition of Mark Richey.

Six days after setting out from Advanced Base, they reached the top. During that time they had waited out a 36+ hours storm, and on the summit day recovered from a 35m leader fall due to avalanche and overcome an ungradable final pitch of deep, steep and unstable "Peruvian" snow. A little over two days were then needed to reverse the route. These climbers succeeded because they were persistent, used their 126 years of combined climbing experience, and understood what partnership meant.



**(A) Changi Tower.**

**(B) K6 Main.**

**(C) Link Sar (7,041m) from the southeast, showing the line of the 2019 ascent, advanced base camp, and bivouacs.**

©Matteo Della Bordella / American Alpine Journal

**SOUTH FACE AND SOUTHEAST RIDGE, 4,000M FROM BASE CAMP, JUNE 27-JULY 3 ROUND TRIP FROM BASE CAMP.**

\*\*\*

The Hunza region of the Pakistan Karakoram holds a number of impressive mountains that fall only a few hundred metres short of the 8,000m mark. One of the most outstanding is Rakaposhi, first climbed via the southwest ridge in 1958. Whilst the south side of the mountain - leading to the crest of the great southeast ridge - had been reconnoitred in the past, it remained untouched, climbers unable to find a feasible route. An ascent from this less visible side of the mountain would be highly exploratory.

From a 3,660m base camp at the snout of the glacier, and in generally unstable weather, Kazuya Hiraide and Kenro Nakajima climbed the south face to 6,100m, both to acclimatize and confirm that their chosen line would go.

On their second outing they took three days, strenuously climbing through often deep soft snow, to reach a camp at 6,800m on the southeast ridge, where they were forced to wait two days in bad weather. After this they climbed to the summit and back in a single long day, and on the following reversed their line of ascent all the way down to base camp.

Although the route does not feature the high technical difficulties of the three other awarded ascents, its huge length, and the commitment and style of Hiraide and Nakajima's determined ascent on a rarely-climbed mountain, makes it of equal merit for a 2020 Piolet d'Or.



©Kenro Nakajima / American Alpine Journal



# DOLPO – Far West Nepal

Tamotsu (Tom) Nakamura

Part 1: Introduction

Part 2: 122 Days Winter Journey 2019 – Kaori Inaba

Part 3: Dolpo 1999 & 2003 – Tamotsu Ohnishi

## Part 1: Introduction

Dolpo (Standard Tibetan: དཱལོ་) is a high-altitude culturally Tibetan region in the upper part of the Dolpa District of western Nepal, bordered in the north by China. Part of the region lies in Shey Phoksundo National Park. The sparse, agro-pastoral population, known as Dolpo in standard Tibetan and Dhol-wa in the local dialect, is connected to the rest of Nepal via Jufal airport, which can be reached in three days by horse. There are no precise population numbers for the region, with estimates including less than 5,000 and 18,000

The Dolpo are generally adherents of Bon, a religion whose origins predate Buddhism but whose modern form is officially accepted as a fifth school of Tibetan Buddhism. The remote region has preserved its Tibetan culture in relatively pure form, making it attractive to Westerners. Dolpa was the location for the 1999 Oscar-nominated film Himalaya and more recently for the German documentary Dolpo Tulku.

In spite of the near inaccessibility of the region and tourism restrictions for the more remote parts, Dolpa is a popular destination for trekking tourism.

## Geography

Dolpo is geologically part of the sedimentary Tibetan-Tethys zone. It is surrounded by Himalayan mountain chains including the Dhaulagiri (8,172

metres (26,811 ft)). These cloud barriers cause a semi-arid climate, with reported annual precipitations of less than 500 millimetres (20 in). The region is historically divided into four valleys: Tsharka ("good growing-place"), Tarap ("auspicious excellent"), Panzang ("abode of monks"), and Nangkhong ("innermost place"). They constitute four of the seven village development committees (VDCs) that were created in 1975. The valleys south of the watershed drain into the Bheri River. The VDCs in this area are (roughly from east to west):

Chharka (Tsharka Valley)

Mukot

Dho (Tarap Valley)

Phoksundo.

The northern valleys between the watershed and Tibet drain westward by the Langu River, a tributary of the Karnali River via the Mugu Karnali. The VDCs in this area are:

Tinje (Panzang Valley)

Saldang (Nangkhong Valley)

Bhijer.

Dolpo can be roughly divided into four valleys, each of which is represented since 1975 by a village development committee (VDC): Dho (Tarap Valley), Saldang (Nankhong Valley, the most populous), Tinje (Panzang Valley), and Chharka (Tsharka Valley). There are also smaller VDCs at Bhijer, Mukot and Phoksundo.

Agriculture is possible at heights of 3,800 to 4,180 metres (12,470 to 13,710 ft) (villages of Shimen Panzang Valley and Chharka, respectively) but often requires irrigation. Apart from barley, crops include buckwheat, millet, mustard, wheat, potatoes, radishes, and spinach. Similar to transhumance in the Alps, the population migrates between villages and high-lying (4,000 to 5,000 metres or 13,000 to 16,000 feet) summer pastures, in a lifestyle referred to as samadrok (roughly "farming nomads").

Dolpo makes up the greatest part of the area of the Dolpa District, but the district's population is concentrated in the lower southern parts, where also

most of the VDCs are located.

## Trade

Local products are not sufficient to guarantee survival. The Dolpo traditionally trade salt from Tibet to the lower parts of Nepal, where they maintain netsang (literally "nesting place") relationships, first described by Kenneth M. Bauer. According to Bauer, each family in Dolpo has netsang partners in most villages of Dolpo District, a network that facilitates travel as well as trade. In return for salt, the netsang provide grain and shelter.

The netsang partners trade with each other on preferential terms, based on fictitious family relations that may last for several generations. Recent changes such as the easy availability of salt from other regions and the closed border with Tibet have put the netsang system under pressure.

## History

Dolpo appears in historical records since c. 8th century. In the time from the 6th century to the 8th century the Tibetan Yarlung dynasty conquered most Tibetan-speaking territories. This seems to have caused a southward migration towards Dolpo and the peripheral areas along the upper Kali Gandaki River (Lo and Serib). In 842, Tibet fell apart, and Dolpa fell under the kingdom of Purang. Purang and Dolpa became temporarily part of the kingdom of Guge in the 10th century, but soon became separate again when King sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon divided Guge among his three sons.

During the reign of the Ya-rtse king A-sog-lde around 1253 both Dolpo and Serib were lost to the ruler of Gungthang, mGon po lde. The latter then reunited both the Dolpo and Serib and classified them among one of three provinces of mNga' ris. It is also known from historical documents that Mongolian troops reached Dolpo to conquer this province when they conquered many parts of Tibet and finally handed over the power to the

ruler of the Sakya period.

In the 14th century Dolpo fell under its eastern neighbor the Kingdom of Lo, which controlled the trans-Himalayan trade route through the Kali Gandaki Gorge. The Dolpo had to pay tax and travel to Lo Monthang to provide manual labor.

For some time between the 15th century (1440?) and the 16th century, Dolpo was temporarily independent and ruled by a king from the Ra nag dynasty. In 1769, the Gorkhas conquered Kathmandu and established the Kingdom of Nepal, which would soon reach the country's modern extent. In 1789, Nepal swallowed the Lo kingdom and with it Dolpo. The kingdom's attempt to wrest nominal suzerainty over Tibet from China ended in a massive Chinese intervention that left Nepal paying tribute to China.

### The region in film

The 1999 French-Nepalese movie Himalaya, which gives insight into the local customs, was the first Nepalese film to be nominated for an Oscar award and also a huge success in Nepal itself, drawing the country's attention to the region. Kenneth M. Bauer notes that the film's authenticity was in large part artificial, as dialogues mixed the standard Tibetan of the professional actors with the villagers' local dialects and all external influences in the region (such as clothes, Maoists and tourists) were hidden.

The 2009 documentary Dolpo Tulku accompanies Sherap Sangpo (born 1981 in the Tarap Valley) on his journey from India back to his home region and his first steps as a Buddhist spiritual leader of the Dolpa. in Karnataka. After 16 years in southern India his education was finished, and in 2008 he returned to his home region to take over the responsibilities of his predecessor as a Buddhist spiritual leader of the Dolpa.

Part 2:  
122 Days Through Upper Dolpo 2019–2020  
In Intense Cold Winter Season      Kaori Inaba



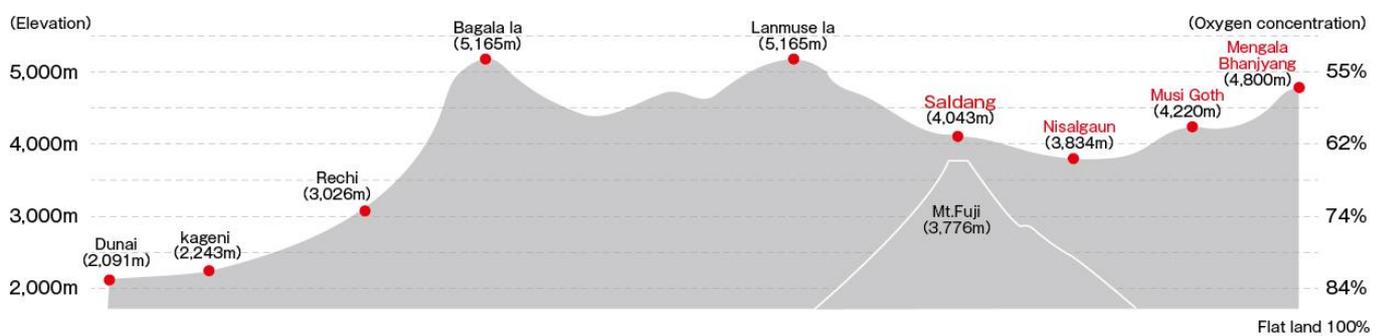
Winter in Dolpo

Late Tamotsu Ohnishi was one of the great explorers of mountains of the west Nepal. His footsteps widely spread over the upper Dolpo of far west Nepal. Having been deeply moved and allured by his narratives, pictures and particularly excellent cartographies, my odysseys crossing the far-flung border lands were conducted four times from 2007 to 2016 during the best seasons, summer full of alpine floras and autumn of cropping golden colored barleys. There are autumn leaves even in less-vegetated barren Dolpo. They tinge mountains to red color and sunshine makes amorous breathtaking beauty in the surroundings.

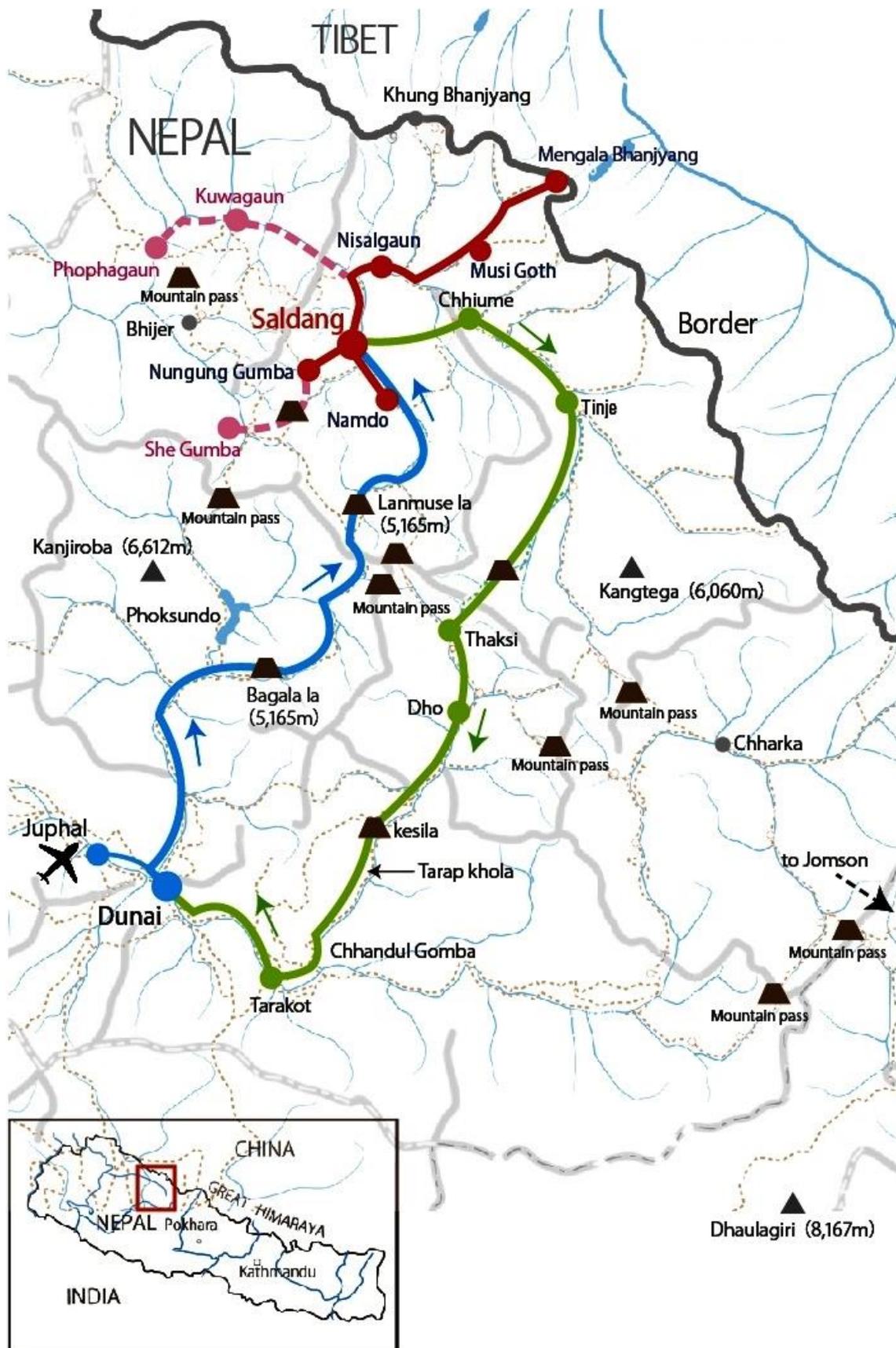
I have come back to Dolpo after three years. How has the borderlands been changed? How is the villagers' life in immense coldness of winter? How is

landscape of mountains in winter? I was unable to overcome temptation to return to Dolpo in mid-winter. Ohnishi's report of 2018 soloing two weeks journey to uninhabited area of northwesternmost rim of Nepal triggered to realize my dream of passing winter in Dolpo.

Ohnishi's outstanding accomplishments will remain as an enigmas for generations.







## Explanation of route taken:-

Blue——Dunai via Bagala to Saldang (8 days) November 18

Red —— Travelling during winter (83 days), stayed at Saldang from November 19 to February 10 visiting other places

Pink——Planned but given up because of worse snow conditions

Green——Return way from Saldang to February 15 to 25 via Choila 5,058m  
Stayed one day at Dho because of heavy snowfall

I left Osaka on November 11, 2019 and returned home on March 11, 2020. It was three months field work in mid-winter with an objective to research how local inhabitants are living in very severe environments of sterile and waste highlands. Five points were focused: (1) foodstuffs (2) cooking (3) fuel (4) water (5) communication.

## Geographical features of the region

To enter the upper Dolpo you must cross the high passes of 5,000m spreading existing in every direction. Local villages are scattered at about 4,000m in average. Circumstances are very severe. To reach Saldang two high passes at 5,000m must be crossed. The passes are totally closed in winter. Tibetan culture is dominating the area.

## Brief itinerary of journey

November 11 – 15: Osaka~Kathmandu~Juphal

November 16 – 24: Dunai (2,091m) ~Bagala la~Lanmuse la~Saldang

November 25 – 29: Saldang (4,043m) 0°C-minus 13°C

Supplies for winter journey were procured in Dunai

November 30 – December 4: Saldang~Nisalguan (3,834m) ~Musigaon (4,229m)

December 5 – 9: Musigaon~Mengala~Mushigaon

December 10 – January 9: Saldang

January 9 – 14: Saldang~Namdo (4,047m)  
January 15 – 19: Namdo  
January 20 – 24: Saldang~Nisalguan  
January 25 – 30: Nisalguan~Tilin (3,782m)  
February 1 – 8: Tilinz~Saldang  
February 8 – 14: Saldang  
February 15 – 20: Saldang~Dho  
February 21 – 25: Dho~Dunai  
February 26 – March 1: Juphal~Nepalganji~Ppkhara  
March 2 – 11: Pokhara~Kathmandu~Narita

### Best place of base for winter journey – Saldang

Saldang is a village in Dolpa District in the Karnali Zone of north-western Nepal. Saldang lies at an altitude of 3,620m in the Nankhang Valley, in the historic Tibetan region of Dolpo. At the time of the 1991 Nepal census, Saldang had a population of 1,714 in 386 individual households, <sup>[1]</sup> and as of 2011 it has a population of 2,103 people.

The British Tibetologist David Snellgrove wrote in 1967: "Like many other Dolpo villages, Saldang consists of a group of scattered houses built high on an 'alp' well above the gorge. The name probably means just 'Raised Place'".

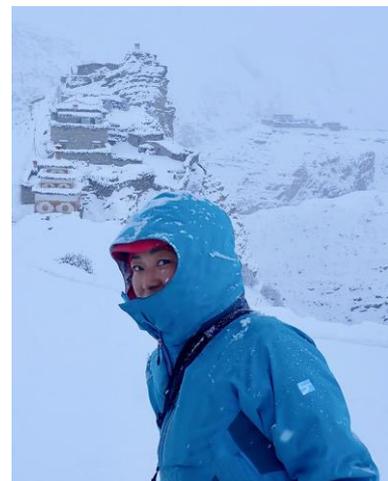
The most populous of the sparsely populated valleys making up the culturally Tibetan region of Dolpo. To the northwest of Saldang is the village of Bhijer and Shey Phoksundo National Park. Payang Town in Shigatse, Tibet, is about 80 kilometres (50 mi) by air northeast of the village. It is a two-day walk from Saldang to Yang Tsher Monastery to reach Kato, a market on the border with Tibet where salt and wool from Tibet and food grains from Nepal are traded.

The village contains Shree Shelri Drugdra Lower Secondary School, which was founded by Lama Karma Dhondup in 1997 after forming a School

Management Committee. The school opened in 1999 with 33 children and 2 teachers. In 2004 an Upper School was built for older children. As of 2019 it has around 80 children from pre-school to sixth year, teaching a curriculum of Nepali, Tibetan and English languages, science, music, dancing, sports and games. The following picture is Saldong in summer.



### Photo Gallery of Kaori Inaba















Part 3: Dolpo 1999 & 2003 – Tamotsu Ohnishi



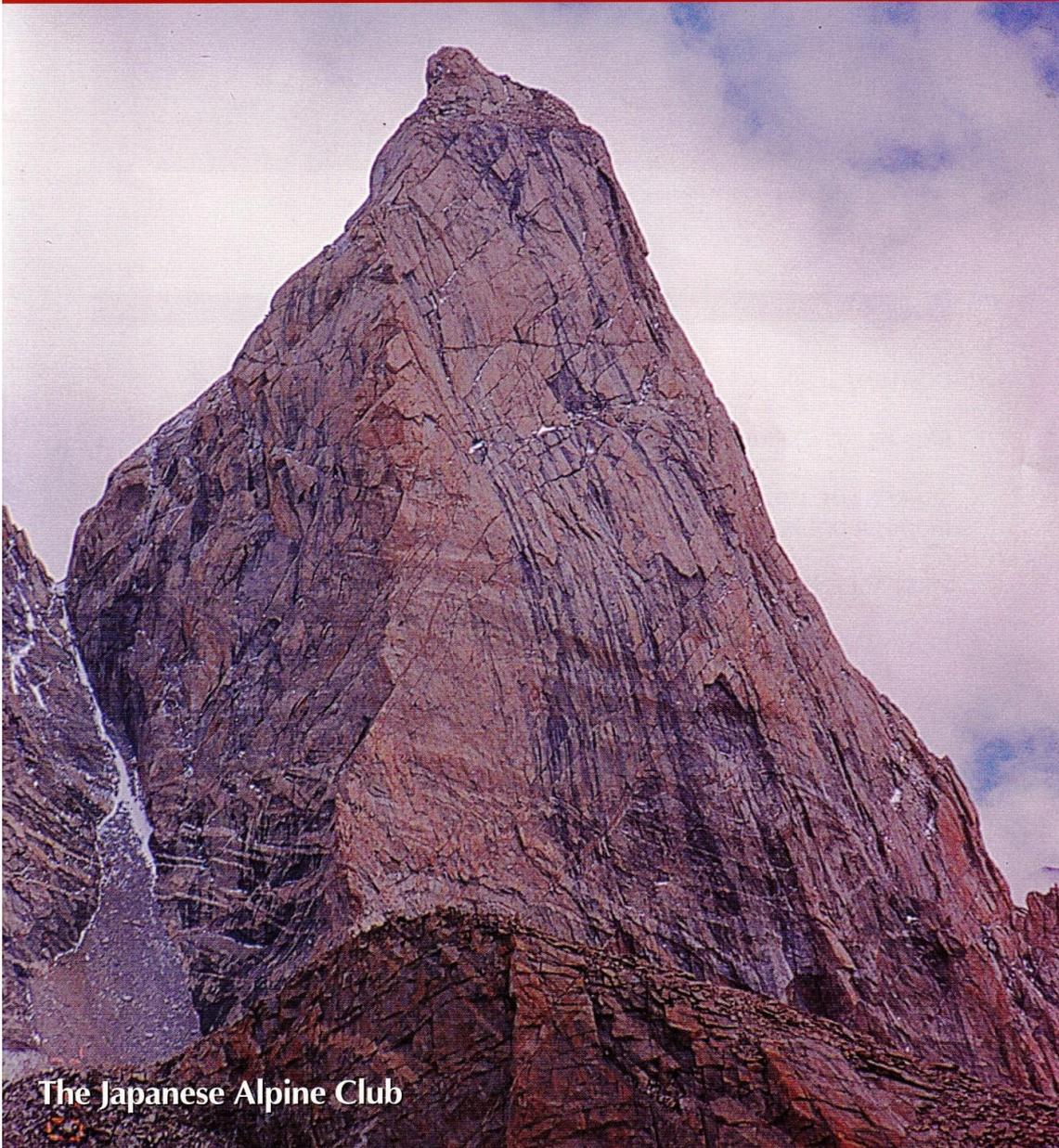
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Vol.5 May 2004

# UPPER DOLPO IN NEPAL

Summer 1999 & 2003

Pioneering Expeditions, Notable Ascents & Adventures and Scientific Field Research



The Japanese Alpine Club

SUPPLEMENT TO  
**JAPANESE ALPINE NEWS**  
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View toward Gyang Dzong Kang 6080m seen from Gyang Dzong La.

**UPPER DOLPO IN NEPAL**

**Tamotsu Ohnishi**

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**MAP**

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Front cover: Gyang Dzong Kang 6080m South face.

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## EXPLORATIONS IN THE BORDERLAND OF UPPER DOLPO

In succession to the previous expeditions to Kanti Himal, Gorakh Himal in 1997 and Changla Himal in 1998 in Northwest Nepal, we continued our quests for Dolpo in 1999, Mustang in 2000 & 2002, Nalakankar Himal of the far western part of Nepal in 2001, and returned to Dolpo in 2003.

The following is a report of our first expedition to the borderland of Dolpo in 1999. The objective of the 1999 expedition to Upper Dolpo was firstly to unveil least-known mountain ranges in the upper Dolpo region which had long been kept secret because of geopolitical reason, and secondly, to search for and to ascend to the unvisited passes on the border between Nepal and Tibet. There are two mountain ranges called Gautam Himal (southeastern part) and Palchung Hamga Himal (northwestern part) which are shown on the maps of Survey of India (1962-63). The former range from Sana La Bhangjyang (5465m), very close to Arnikochuli(6034m) of Mustang-Dolpo border to the west, to Laru Bhangjyang (5239m). Most peaks on the border are nameless and not exceeding 6000m, except a few rocky towers. The latter, Palchung Hamga Himal, which was the main target of our expedition, ranges from Laru Bhanjyang to the Peak 6236m (N29 41 20, E82 49 40) at the northwesternmost of Dolpo district, most part of which had never been explored. Peaks and topography of the range had been left quite unknown till our approach. Some peaks would presumably exceed 6500m. However, only one peak named as Daphe Sail 6103m high (N29 40 20, E83 00 32) is indicated on a recent map. This might not be the highest peak. In the vicinity there are several passes on the border between Nepal and Tibet which had been used by local people. The Indian maps showed only the important passes. In 1900, a Japanese Buddhist monk and explorer, Ekai Kawaguchi, entered Dolpo, a "terra incognita" for foreigners and crossed one of the passes to the Tibetan high plateau. In his travel book, however, he described very little about the route that he had traced in Nepal. As a result, an identification of the pass that he had crossed has long remained controversial in Japan. Therefore we wish to highlight the Kawaguchi's footsteps in the later part of this report.



On the way between Sangda village and Tuje La, a splendid view of two peaks, Yakawa Kang (6482m) at left and Khatung Kang (6484m) at right can be seen at the direction toward Muktinath. These two peaks were added in the list of open peaks in May 2003, as the 50th memorial of the first ascent of Sagarmatha (Mount Everest).



Sangda

At the evening of the 2nd day, we arrived at Sangda in heavy sand storm, where peoples of Tibetan stock same as Dolpo is living. The village is now in the midst of late spring and terraced field among the steep slope in the valley was irrigated and covered with fresh green. Geba La (GPS 5136m, N28 54 904 E83 36 259) is seen at right of the photo.

Dhaulagiri 1 peak (8167m) from the inner pass to Chharka. In 1999 and 2003, we took an alternative route for Chharka, not ordinary Tuje La route. Kiraphuk La (5580m) is led by Lhang Himal Khola and on the way up to the pass, we can see a splendid figure of Dhaulagiri 1 on the southern view.

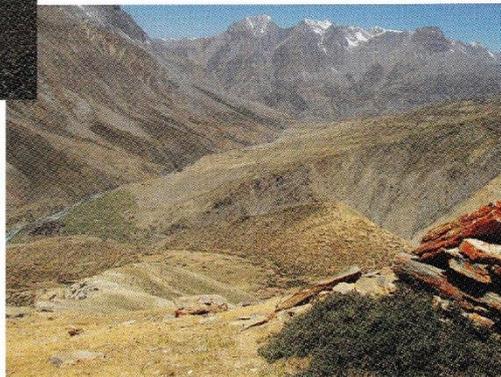


Dhaulagiri 1 (8167m)



Kiraphuk La (5580m)

Chharka →



Looking down to Chharka Tolsi Khola and Bhabung Khola from hills (Ghyamdu Lek 5565m).



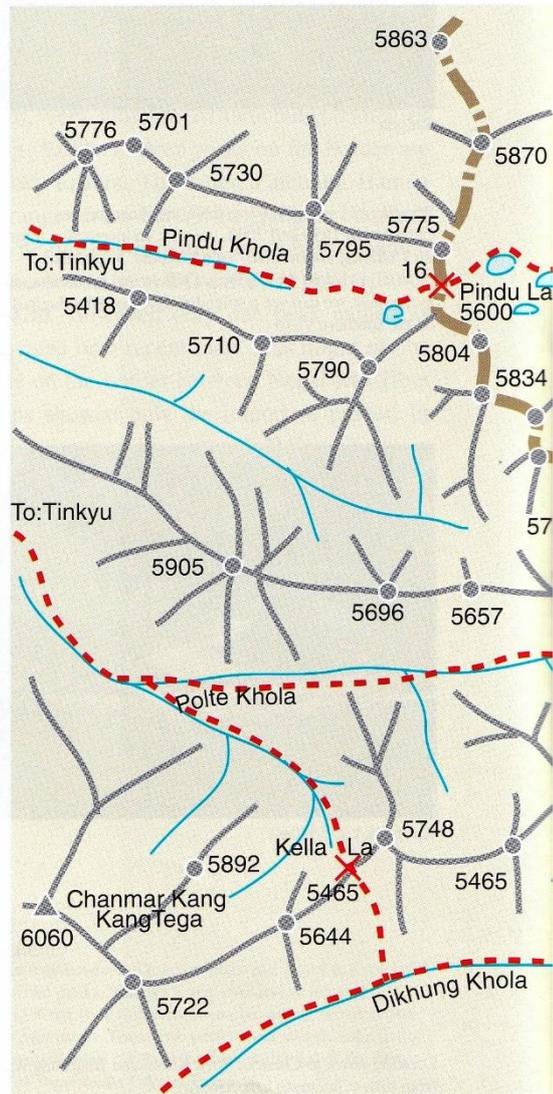
Nepal side, and Tibet side with Guide of Tinkyu boy and climbing Sherpas on Pindu La.



At Polte Te village. A woman wears the typical head dress (Tipu) on her head. However now a days this custom seems to be disappearing.

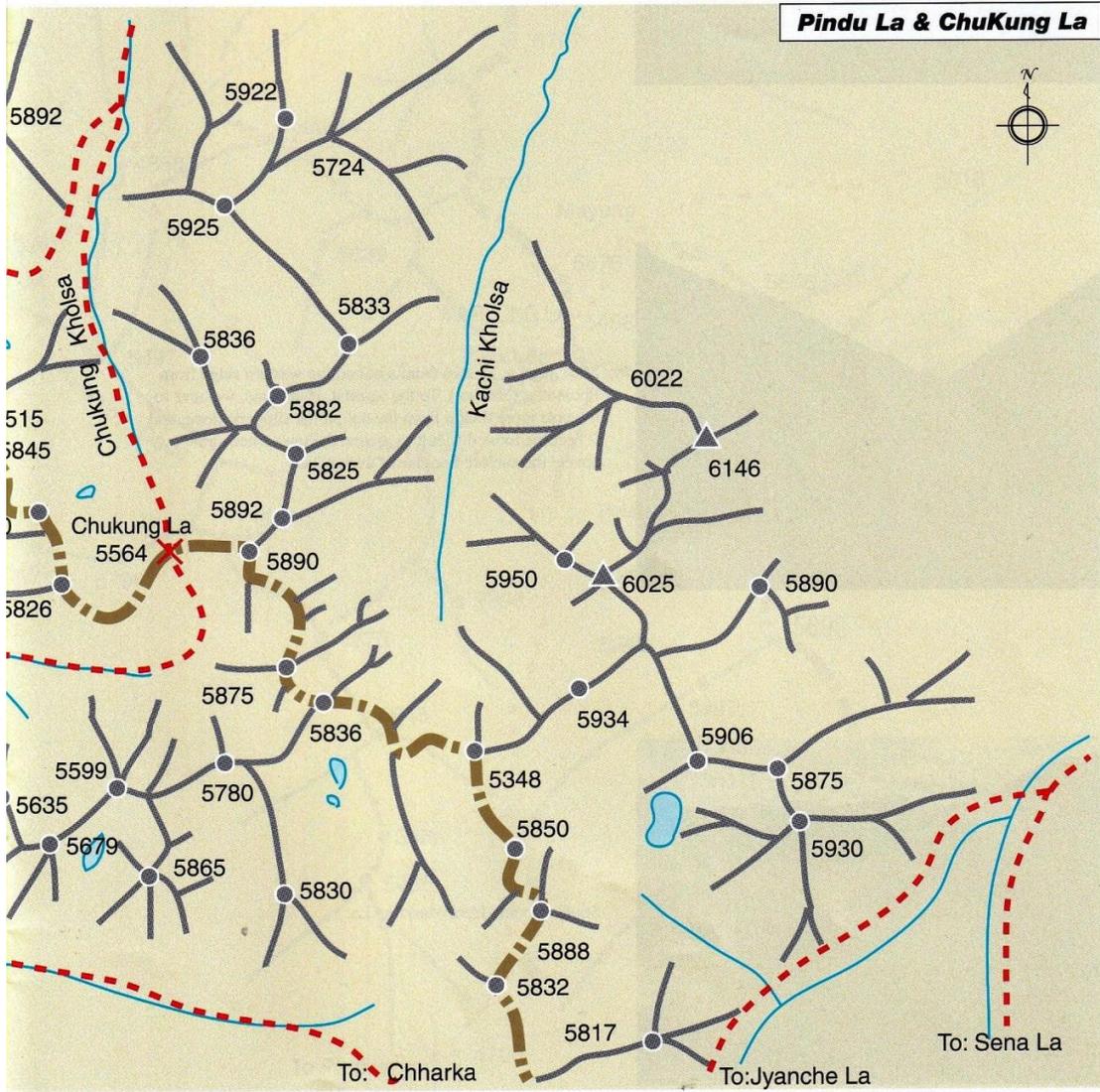


Changmar Kang (6060m) N29 14 08 E83 21 48  
This peak can be seen to NE (compass direction 41 degrees) from the point just before crossing Charku La.  
Panzang Khola side of this peak is called Kang Tega.





Araniko Chuli has a great snowfield extending toward north, northeast, and east. We repeated the ascent to this peak in 2002 and 2003.





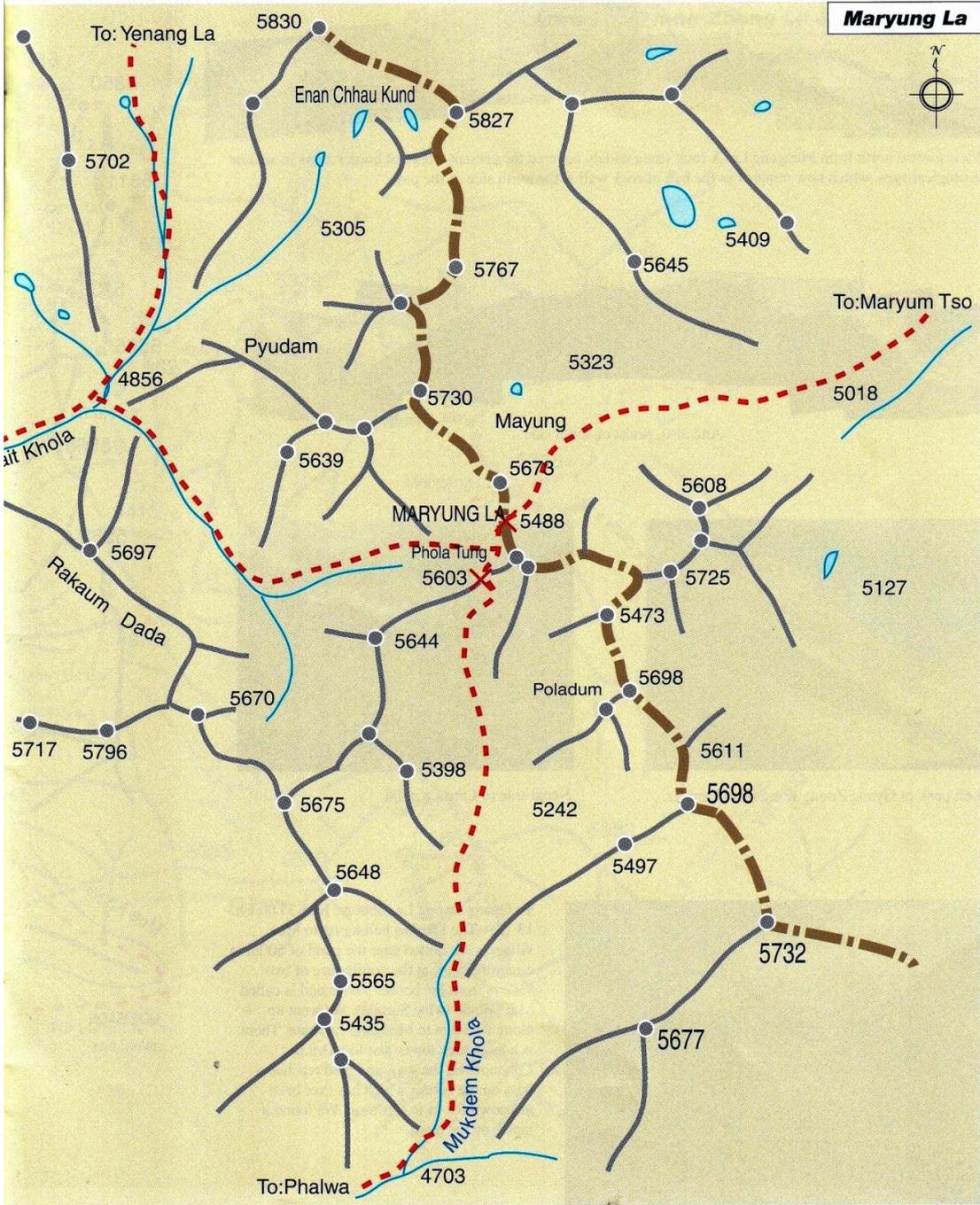
Looking toward northeast from Maryung La. The main river of Zhangbo is not visible. Swelling mountain range in the background is Trans Himalaya, and a lake is coming in the middle distance.



Maryung La, as seen from a col on the western ridge from Pholatung (5603m.). To the summit of the pass, we have to traverse more 0.7km from the col on the slippery slope, and it becomes more difficult to ascend the pass when snow covers the surface because of avalanches.



Southern view from Maryung La.





View toward north from Mengang La. A rock strata widely covered the present whole of border areas in ancient geological ages, which now remains as the belt of rock wall at the north side of the pass.



And also, peaks of south side.



Left peak of Gyang Zdong Kang from Laru La

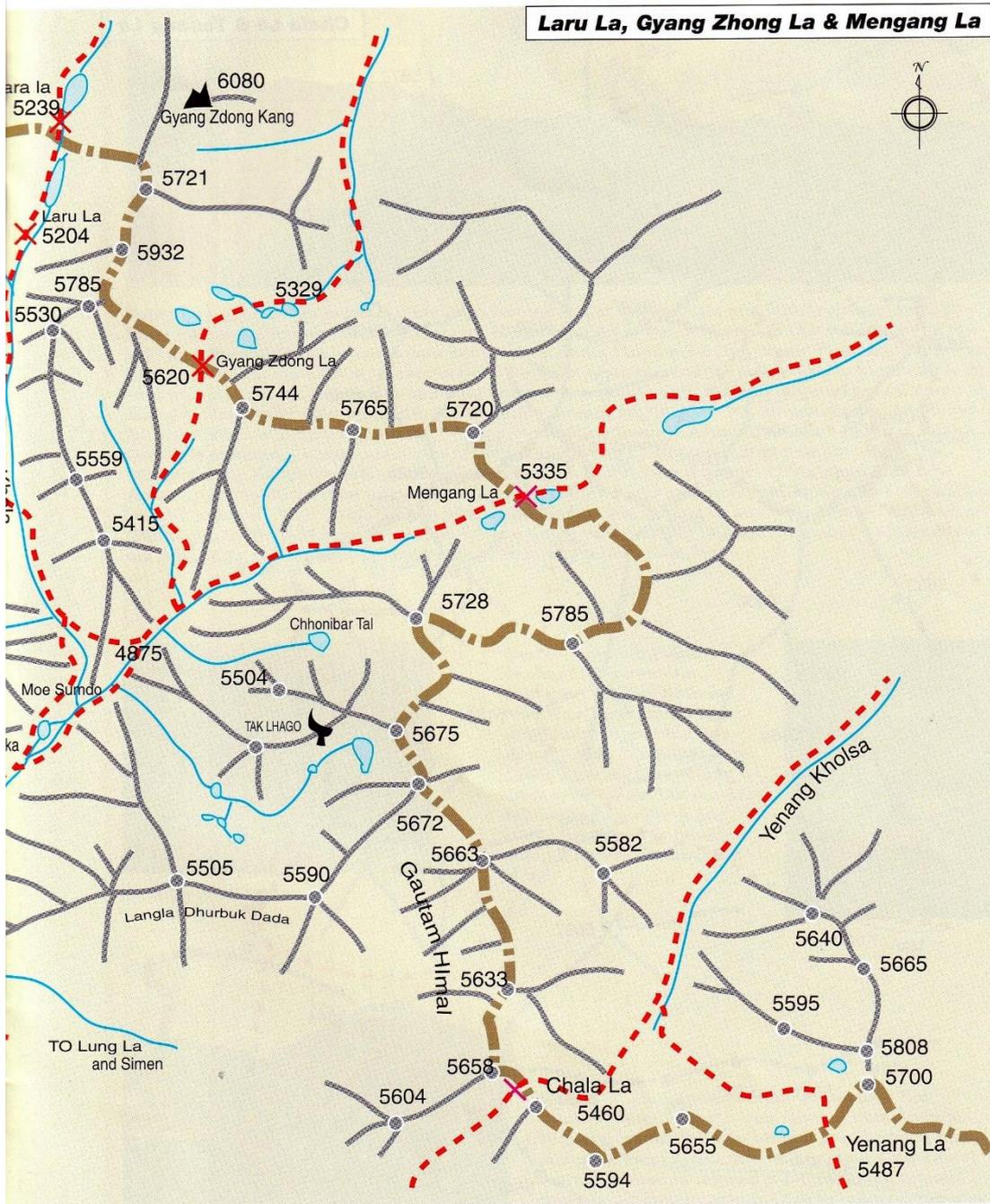


Nepal side of Laru La pond



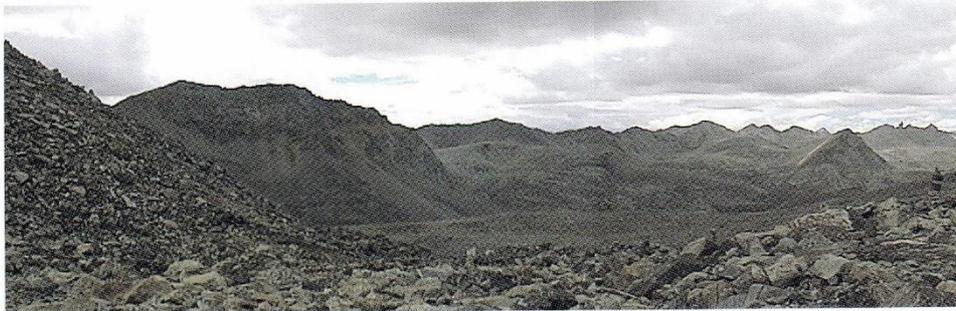
To Gyang Dzung La (5600m, N29 35 00 E83 13 12) : The kharkas belonging to Moe villagers are dotted near the pond of 500m in circumference, at the confluence of two valleys from the border passes and is called Mai Sumdo (Moe Sumdo). We went up along a stream to Mengang La route. There is a huge rock tower just like Dru in Chanonix on the way, and then reached a pass on the border which has ever been unknown for us to this time. We found a laptse on the pass.







Tibet side of Yenang La



Yenang La is one of the typical pass in Upper Dolpo. From the pass we observed to the west, 7km (from south ) length of border ridge, part of Gautang Himal before our eyes. To the Tibetan side (north), 5658m peak is 4 km distance from the pass and Tak Lhago was seen 7km beyond the up stream of Yenang Kholsa. The name Tak Lhago means "Finger Rock" in Tibetan, although we call this rock tower as " can opener rock". When Ekai kawaguchi stood on a pass, he was much impressed by the scenery toward north, and described "the undulating stretch of the northeast steppes of Tibet, interspersed here and there with shining streams of water, which appeared to flow of and then disappear into the clouds." On the southeast side, it can be seen that Mait Khola flows down to the upper half the route down to the confluence with Panzang Khola at 4 km east of Simen. Distance from this junction to the pass is 14km for one and half days walk. At the above center of the photo, Kang Tega (Changmar Kang, 6060m) is seen beyond the col on the foreground ridge (compass direction 172 degrees), and the ridge extend to peaks, 5600m to 5700m at right. Dhaulagiri are not visible from this pass, notwithstanding that Ekai Kawaguchi had described as follows, "As I stood on that high point, which commanded on the south the snow capped heads of the Dhaulagiri (Dhavalagiri) family", or "Toward the south, far, far away, beyond the sky-reaching Dhaulagiri (Dhavalagiri), I imagined that I saw Buddhagaya, sacred our beloved Lord Buddha". (Three years in Tibet, p74 & 76).



Nepal side of Yenang La

Rainbow bridge over Panzang Gorge. Panzang Khola between two confluences of Khung Khola and Moe (Musi) Khola, there is a great gorge making impossible to pass through. On the New Map of Nepal (2001), a foot trail is erroneously drawn in this section. This mistake is followed the Indian Survey Map (1964). It is proceed for freezing season of the winter to Simen from Nisal.



Chala La



Villagers of Simen together with their animals go to Tibet commonly by the Yenang La route. However, when they go to Tibet for pilgrimage to Goshar gompa in Naquchushan in Tibet, they use the Laru La., because of its short access. Chala La is the most unfrequented pass because of its difficulty and steepness, and especially unsuitable for animals. Chala La is seen from the point 2 km west of the pass (at the center on the photo).



Khung La



View toward north east from Khung La. Khung Khola flow down strait to Zhangbo to north northeast direction. From the pass we can see whole scenery of the Zhangbo and a view of swelling far beyond of Trans-Himalaya. Khung La is one of the passes which considered Ekai Kawaguchi had crossed in 1900. From the pass, Dhaulagiri group of distant south is impossible to get the view concealed higher peaks (5650m, 5732m, 5550m) of foreground. To the southwest, some of the snow covered Kanjiroba Himal and Norbu Kang group can be seen from southern Laptse on the pass.



Southwestern View from Khung La.



About 100m down to Tibetan side from Upper Lung Chung Kamo La (5493m), there can be seen a Pokhari (pond)

View toward the south from top of Yemelung Kang. pond, a shape of lengthwise gourd can be seen just bellow the pass of Tibetan side. At present, the boundary pillar No.14 is placed on the Khung La of the Khung La road we call now. However, the actual source of Khung Khola is not Khung La at present but exist more western Lung Chung Kamo La and its surrounding areas. Foot track to this Lung Chung Kamo La is led from the junction where Khung La route apart the main stream and go up to the hight of left bank. This photo, taken from the summit of Yemelung Kang (6024m), just east of Lung Chung Kamo La. Norbu Kang group in the center and eastern Kanjiroba Himal group (from Kanjerawa to Tso Karpo Kang) can be seen at the right, but peaks of Dhaulagiri main group are not visible.

Phoksumdo Lake and Mr.Tinle



On the path settled high above the right bank cliff of Phoksumdo Lake, by chance we met a few villagers of Saldang and donkeys carrying some cargo from the south on their back. Among them we found an elderly person with whom we remembered we had ever met somewhere. Then his characteristic voice and his looks reminded us that he was the hero in the French movie "Himalaya (Caravan)". produced by Eric Valli. His first name "Tinle" was the same as in movie and now he is living at Saldang. The background of his figure is Phoksumdo Lake mysteriously glittering in emerald green in early afternoon sun shine. A week later, at Saldang, we had a pleasant meeting again with him in our tent and talked about Dolpo at present and the past. When I asked him about late Nyma Tserin who was a most important figure of Dolpo, he was much surprised and returned his question to us why his name was known among us. He revealed out the fact that Nyma Tserin's wife was the elder sister of his wife. I was taught from him so much, especially about the historical events since Chinese invasion into Tibet. In 2003, our DVD cinema show were held at Chharka, Ringmo and Saldang with great number of villagers.



Yungdrung, a dirty boy of 12 age, and his afterwards. In 1956, Prof.D.Snellgrove visited Samling gumpa, as the first foreign visitor to survey this old Pon-po monastery. In his book "Himalayan pilgrimage", he wrote a little about the boy and a sheet of picture attached. When we visited Samling in 2003, we found him continuing his service only for the gumpa as layer Lama since after for 47 years. Our request to him to write his name by himself was refused shamefully because he could not write.

## SEARCH FOR THE BORDER PASSES IN UPPER DOLPO AND TRAVERSE TO MUGU.

After having acclimatized ourselves to high altitude for a week around Tilitso, we started from Jomsom on the 11th of June and arrived at Chharka on the 18th. Heavy rain and snow stopped us for two days on the way to Dolpo. Geba La 5136m and Tuje La 5124 m which are the first passes to enter Dolpo, we met unexpected deep fresh snow. After that, however, we were blessed with lovely summer weather of Dolpo with occasional cold rain and hail. All the members of our party gathered at Tinkyu on the 20th June, via Chharka and Moh La, where we separated to two groups, one as the main trekking party to cross high hills and valleys of upper Dolpo toward Phoksumdo, and the other to walk around all the passes on the border. Both groups were expected to meet at Shey Gumpa about four weeks later.

The latter group of two Japanese with two Sherpas and six porters made a Spartan tour without logistic support of food to investigate all the passes on the border one by one: from Maryum La (or Mayun) La to the westernmost pass among the two border ranges. We ascended seven passes to confirm their topographical position on the border, and collected their local names. In old days, villagers' life in Dolpo had partly depended on the trade between Tibet and Dolpo: cattle grazing in Tibetan high plateau during winter and bartering grains or daily necessities from the south for Tibetan rock salt, wool, or Chinese tea blocks. These economic systems of the Dolpo people suddenly changed in the beginning of 1960s. As a result these northern passes of Dolpo became less important. Although we often met a few villagers from the south and also Tibetans from the north on the way to and from the passes, we hardly encountered traditional caravans with yaks or cattle in a large scale.

We climbed Yemelung Kang (6024m, N29 39 37, E83 08 31), located to the east of Lung Chhung Kamo La (5393m, N29 37 15, E83 07 47) in the eastern part of Palchung Hamga Himal in order to get a full panoramic view from the summit. We left our footprints on the seven passes among the two mountain ranges, but we gave up reaching the northwesternmost pass on the border, which is scarcely known even among the locals, because of the difficulty to access from the south. The most appropriate approach to this isolated pass would be from the east to Daphe Sail, the south face of which soars dominantly like the Matterhorn. It would be the highest peak of Palchung Hamga Himal.

Here we have to comment on an accurate topography of Daphe Sail (6103m). This peak and the other higher peaks in the range are surely on the border which forms the great watershed westward. Most of the inhabitants in the western Dolpo believe that it lies on the border. Also from the north, on the motor road from Lhasa to Purang along the north side of the Tsangpo River, this peak can be seen as an outstanding peak on the border, and though its height is shown as 6103m on the map, it has been considered higher. We confirmed that this Daphe Sail (6103m) is on the border and the highest point (exceeding 6500m) in the range is located at 1.2km north of Daphe Sail. It was also confirmed that it was called Pachun Ham in Tibetan side. A view of these two peaks from the south is overlapping as if a single peak on the border. We identified them clearly from the following directions: east (from Lung Chhung Kamo La), south (from the track between Shey and Phijor) and southwest (from the road above Poe village). Details of the each pass are shown on the maps attached hereinafter.

In 1900, a Japanese Buddhist monk, Ekai Kawaguchi, entered Tibet via a pass in Dolpo. On his

book "Three Years in Tibet", he narrated that he had marched north being piloted by a clearly viewed mountain, which was once considered as "Kawaguchi's mountain as a guide to Tibet". However, the pass in Dolpo which he crossed to Tibet is still unknown and remains in question. He entered Tibet on the 4th July in 1900, about a hundred years ago.

The second program was carried on by the same team. All the members of our expeditions gathered at Shey Gompa on 12th July. The main group commenced trekking to Jumla via Lake Phoksumdo, Kagmara La, Hurikot and Maure La. Poe, the remotest small village of Dolpo in three days' walk from Shey Gompa, was our starting point of the second program. In the western part of Panchung Hamga Himal, most of peaks on the border exceed 6000m and some of them are over 6400m. They range westward to Kanti Himal 6859m peak which we had explored twice in 1997 and 1998. One of the objectives of our research in this year was to connect the northern area of Dolpo to Kanti Himal and further northwestern part of the border ranges having visited in the past two years.

A poor track led us from Poe to Mugu district through the southern foot of Kanti Himal. We climbed up along Swaksa Khola toward north to the snout of a glacier flowing down from one of the peaks on the border range, and crossed Yala La (5425m, N29 39 10, E83 49 40) on 19th July. A panorama from the top of the pass provided newly opened several peaks on the border which were attractive. One of the peaks (6455m, N29 41 22, E82 52 27) was climbed by a German-Austrian Joint Expedition in 1993. The party was forced to change their target to the northern peak on the border since they were unable to ford the torrent of Langu Khola before reaching the northern foot of Kanjiroba Main Peak. (AAJ vol.36. 1994)



Pachum Ham (6529m, N2940 55 E83 00 25) : Among the border ranges of Panchung Hamga Himal, Pachum Ham (6529m) is the most excellent and prominent peak. Once we considered this peak was surely Ekai Kawaguchi's "a mountain as a guide". However, as our research advanced in these few years, we concluded that it might be another characteristic peak which can be seen on his way to the border. The reason is that it is visible from only a limited places on Kawaguchi's supposed route, especially from any place on the track in Namgung, it revealed out its impossibility. In Tibet, Kaqur Kangri which was climbed by Doshisha University in 2002 Autumn, is considered as husband god and Pachum Ham as his wife goddess. The white snow peak in the foreground is Daphe Sail (6103m, N29 40 20 E83 00 32). In this Panorama photo, the strange shaped rock tower is about 6000m, a black pyramidal peak in center is 6025m, two peaks of Mariyang 6528m and swaksa Kang in the clouds are opened in Spring 2003.

The highest peak of this group (Mariyang 6528m opened 2003, N29 41 38, E83 53 14) lies 1.7km east of the 6455m peak. There are other several peaks (including those in Tibetan side) of 6200-6500m with abundant snow and glaciers in the both side of the border. All the peaks remain untouched except one peak. From Yala La, we suddenly entered a world of full green forests and bushes, quite different from the scenery around Dolpo. Our eight Nepalese from Kathmandu raised a shout of joy. Presumably they felt as if they had returned home. In a traverse westward on the southern side of Kanti Himal, we struggled against densely growing bushes. We followed the route of 1998 till reaching Ghora La (5182m). Food of our expedition party was a matter of serious concern. We depended chiefly upon local Tibetan meal of tsampa and tea in the later half of the caravan, and at Mugu even such local supplies finished. Fortunately, however, an abundant rice stock having been deposited there by us in the previous year narrowly saved starvation crisis among the porters. We enjoyed a wonderful landscape in the return trek to Gamgadhi along Mugu Karnali River, but it was a silent march as we much suffered from fierce heat of the summer.



Ku (or Kuba, Kuwa, an isolated village along Panzang Khola). Located at 12km north northeast from Phijor.

They Gompa is the most famous sacred place for Buddhists all over Dolpo and nomads in Tibetan high plateau. Yearly festival in July and the great festival held every 12 years is well known and people all over Dolpo gather there for pilgrimage.



At Poe, the remotest village of Dolpo, there is a small gompa of Nynmapa order named Choyukoring Gompa. The lama, Tenjing Pinzo Lama, is also Amji (Doctor) of the village. In a slack afternoon during our stay, he played loudly his Milkan (Tibetan clarinet made of human thigh bone) for us. Later, in July 2003, I met a Poe villager at They gompa who came there to receive our present medicines for them. He brought us a sad news of the death of Tenjin Pinzo Lama in previous year.

## FIRST ASCENT OF NORBU KANG (6085m) OF DOLPO IN 2003.

In the summer of 2003, we sent another expedition to Dolpo for carrying out more extensive survey than 1999. We left Jomsom on the 2nd of June and reached Chharka on the 10th via Dangar, Sangda, Geba La (GPS 5136m N28 54 895, E83 36 363) and Kiraphuk La (GPS 5580m, N28 59 075 E83 35 598). After two days rest at Chharka, the climbing party to Norbu Kang (6085m, N29 07 02 E83 03 34) separated from the main party and headed for the mountain range between Tarap and Phoksumdo. Norbu Kang is the highest peak this range, which had been reconnoitered from the west by the Kitazato University expedition in 1973 on their way back from the successful ascent of Selkhu Dolma in the north-eastern Kanjiroba Himal. Norbu Kang is one of the newly opened peaks by the H.M. Government of Nepal in the fall of the previous year together with neighboring Kang Tega (Kangfu Gia, 5916m, N29 06 13 E82 59 45) in the same area. From Chharka, we proceeded to Tinkyu by Mo La (GPS 5027m). Beyond the pass, the river water flows down northward and the scenery comes to resemble Tibetan high plateau. Then we entered another tributary to the west and crossed Charku La (Jhyakoi Bhanjyang, GPS 5453m) on the 5th of June. On the pass spotted by remaining snow, a distant view of Norbu Kang was in sight beyond the gorges of Tarap Khola to the WSW. We entered Do/Tarap division of Dolpo. From Do, we went northwestward passing through the village of Tokkyu and crossed Numla South (GPS 5333m). Num Ri (5547m), a rock peak just north of the pass is a splendid lookout point toward the mountain groups of Kanjiroba Himal. The pass was covered with abundant snow. Fluttering prayer flags of the Laptse and freezing cold wind let us feel we are in Tibetan high plateau.

Now in June, a band of Maobati's was prevalent in Do/Tarap and menacing the villagers and travelers. They requested us to pay US\$100 per person. Tenacious protest and negotiations made them to unwillingly reduce the amount to R/S2000. and to issue a receipt mentioning an oath to require additional donation in no way. They usually carry a carbine and a survival knife with them. In June, most of villagers all over Dolpo go to grassy hills of Tarap to collect "Caterpillar Fungus", which is also called Vegetable Wasps or Plant Worms (*cordyceps sinensis (berk) sacc*), Yachagumba in Nepalese. The name of this plant or insect is written 冬虫夏草 in Chinese and Japanese. The meaning is "Insect in winter, grass in summer". It commonly grows in all over Dolpo district, but "Tarap Yachagumba" collected in June is of the best quality and is sold at a higher price. Usually it is classified by color (black, brown, gold) and its length (3 to 8cm). The big and golden color is the most expensive. At Num La south (GPS 5333m), we entered the area of Shey Phoksumdo National Park. At the broad river bed of Chuchun Khola, coming down straightly from the north side of Norbu Kang group, we camped near by the stream. Here too, we met many young Nepalese to collect Yachagunba. On the next morning we crossed Baga La (GPS 5199m). Some of the collectors were near the pass. A loud and ear-splitting sound of Nepal's New Music was flowing out of a cassette. Young generation is suffering also in Nepal. "For what do you do so?" An answer returned swiftly "Money! Money! Money is the first." They earn much money from this job. However, a part of their money would be targeted by Maoist's fund making. We encountered here a band of a few hundreds of Yaks. From the junction we entered a tributary Chhoitai khola. Nurbu Kang was not yet visible due to dense haze. This stream is dammed up at the point of 400m above the junction and we had to climb a steep slope

of the right bank to Chhoitai Tal (lake). Another score of young people were working for Yachagumba near a lake.

On the 20th of June, we set up a base camp (GPS 4805m, N29 07 877 E83 01 666) above the Chhoitai Tal. After reconnaissance for the following two days, we pitched a high camp at the end of a glacier (GPS 5041m N29 07 508 E83 02 958). On the 23rd of June, we proceeded to a col near a small glacier and crossed two crevasses en route. On the following day, a storm with heavy rain prevented us from climbing to the summit. On the 25th, we left the camp at 5.00 am and reached a foot of the north face of Nurbu Kang at 6.00 am. From there we started climb through ice crusted chute of avalanches at an angle of 40 degrees and the climb got steeper on an ice face of 60 degrees. We ascended the summit ridge and stood atop at 10.30 am. Rappelling down the same route and returned to the high camp at 15.30 pm. It was a wonderful climb of 15 pitches in all and the route grade 4, pitch grade 5.8 respectively. The weather was cloudy. In the following morning, we started a trek toward Phoksumdo, where we stayed two nights at the beautiful lake side. The mountains at the northeastern corner of Kanjiroba Himal were well known to us since we had first succeeded in scaling the highest peak, Tso Karpo Kang in 1971. We visited our old base camp just above Lake Tso Karpo, one and half days trek from Ringmo. Unfortunately the weather was so bad that we could make no attempt on a lovely virgin peak of Shey Shikar (6139m). On the 4th of July, as originally scheduled, all the party members assembled at Shey Gompa after one month.



North side of Norbu Kang seen from campsite of Panklanga Khola(GPS4479m N29 10 384 E83 03 177)

## EKAI KAWAGUCHI'S FOOTSTEPS IN DOLPO

On the 4th of July in 1900, a young Japanese monk named Ekai Kawaguchi crossed the border from Nepal to Tibet. Already the first of his race to enter that isolated, mysterious country, he went on to become the first outsider to reach the forbidden city of Lhasa.

Ekai Kawaguchi was born in 1866 at Sakai, an old commercial town adjacent to Osaka. His first name in childhood was Sadajiro. His father was a craftsman of SAKE-barrel making and deeply religious. His mother was a well-educated woman. At the age of fifteen, he became conscious of Buddhism. He was impressed by a small book on the life of Shakyamuni, and then devoted himself to read Buddhist texts. At the age of twenty five, he entered Buddhist priesthood of Ohbaku Sect and then "Ekai", his Buddhist name, was given by his tutor. In the later half of twenties, he was involved in the power struggle of the sect and renounced the cloth. After that, he made up his mind to go to Tibet and collect original Buddhist texts written in Sanskrit or Tibetan, because he thought it was the most important to compare the original texts with those translated to Chinese, which had been brought to Japan more than a thousand years ago and became the basis for the Buddhism in Japan.

At the age of thirty two, he left Japan for Tibet on the 6th of June, 1897. He was stationed in India for one year to be prepared to enter Tibet. He learnt Sanskrit and Tibetan languages and Tibetan manner and way of living being helped by Sarat Chandra Das, a famous secret agent (Pandit) of the Survey of India, who was a forerunner to Tibet. He visited the sacred places in India and Nepal. In those days to trespass to Lhasa from India was strictly guarded by both of the Tibetan and British-Indian governments. He chose an alternative of Nepal route and searched for unfrequented paths to Tibet, so that he could safely travel in disguise to a Chinese Buddhist priest.

His book "Travels into Tibet" (Japanese version 1904, Tokyo) and "Three years in Tibet" (English version 1909, Madras/London) are an account of his remarkable journey. A brief record in Nepal is as follows. He thought that it was the best way for Lhasa without a passport to cross the Tibetan border at Lo (Mustang) and to make a detour to Lhasa, by way of Kang-Tise (Mt. Kailas) and Lake Manasarowar. He left Kathmandu for Mustang at the beginning of March and reached Chharang in May via Tukche. He came to know at Tsarang, however, that the pass to Tibet from there was strictly watched and it was difficult to clear the check post without a permit. So he stayed at Chharang for more ten months to seek for the other pass. He learnt there the life style, custom and language of the native Tibetans. After all, he determined to take the way to Dolpo and to cross one of the hidden passes connected to Tibet. For Dolpo, he left Marpha with a guide-porter. On the 12th of June in 1900, he left Marpha for Dolpo accompanied with a guide-porter and arrived at Chharka on the 22th via Dangar (Dangar Dzong), Sandar (Sangda) and Tuje La. After two days stay there, he traversed to Dolpo in 11 days trek, and reached the border on the 4th of July and could successfully put his footprints on the Tibetan high plateau just three years after he had departed from Japan.

After circumnavigation of Mt. Kailas and Lake Manasarowar, he reached Lhasa in March, 1901. In Lhasa he studied much about the philosophy and practice of Tibetan Buddhism at the Sera monastery for more than a year and collected Buddhist texts. In May, 1902, however, he suddenly fled from Lhasa to India, because someone got to know of the fact that Kawaguchi was

not a Chinese Buddhist monk but Japanese. A malicious rumor was prevalent that he was an agent sent by the British government. He had a narrow escape at every check posts on the way to Sikkim and fortunately returned to Darjeeling in July of the same year.

In 1958, a Japanese Scientific Expedition to the Northwestern Himalaya led by Prof. J.Kawakita first took the Kawaguchi's route. They were convinced that the Kawaguchi's descriptions were very accurate, notwithstanding that the credibility of the records in his book was questioned and the academic circles in Japan criticized it with prejudice. He returned home in 1903 and published his book in 1904. People welcomed a story of breathtaking adventures full of curiosity and strangeness, whilst some of the scholars did not trust his narratives and called him as a great boaster.

*(to be continued to the next issue)*



At the north face of Norbu Kang, Our first party is already reached just below the cornice of the summit ridge and now breaking it to find the route.



North face of Norbu Kang seen from the point of west col (5492m). Two figures spotted lower part of the snow face are climbers of us.



Looking down the steep snow face route. Two climbers are now climbing to the cornice just below the summit ridge.



Poe, a small village of innermost Dolpo, had been visited twice by Japanese in 1958 and 1970. At the time in 1958, this village was reported by Prof.J.Kawakita's expedition as a village just before falling disappeared, because of the poverty or lack of water supply probably by a drought of the year. In 1970, Prof.T.Tomimori found out this village that very poor but only a dozen people still survived there. At Poe in 1999, we found that the new village was built there for 29 years since Tomimori's visit in 1970 and Poe village has been revived chiefly by new immigrant from Saldang. From our survey, we came to know that at present, 9 families of 47 people were living there. Among them, we observed 5 girls in the village were suffered from goiter. We planned that after the end of the expedition at Mugu, we took a porter-guide whom we had employed there to Kathmandu with us and ask him to bring back to Poe some medicines for the sick girls. This porter, named Nyngma Lama, was an honest and gentle minded youth at the age of 26 and one of five sick girls was his sister. Later, he fulfilled his job faithfully: from Kathmandu to Dunai by air for a half day and Dunai to Poe for 5 days on foot.



At same place as above right (2003)



At east end of Tinkyu village (1958)



At same place as above right (2003)



Looking down to Simen village from the hill. (1958)



Tak Lhago peak (P10)

This rocktower is called Tak Lheko peak and can be seen from Nisal, on the route from Poe to Yala La, some villages of Namdo, Koma, and on the direct route from Taraka to Saldang. Tak Lheko means Rock of Buddha. This type of rocktowers are scattered a few places in Dolpo.



Panoramic view of Mustang Himal from west. Dounglung Kang is at extreme right.



From eastern side of Pindu La, we can obtain the view of a pyramidal peak Dungleung Kang (6369m), which belonging to Mustang Himal.

