

no sign of human presence I assume that it had not previously been ascended. The peak is a mile northwest of the pass and affords a fantastic view of the north face of Kailas as well as of Gurla Mandhata and Nanda Devi in the distance. On the east side of the pass I attempted a spectacular granite spire, locally called "Thari" ("shovel" in Tibetan) because it is shaped like an upside-down shovel. Its narrow spire culminates in a wildly overhanging flake of granite. I got to within 15 vertical feet of the summit but could not solo the exceedingly exposed 5.11 final block. The highest point, however, is behind and to the left of the prominent shovel blade seen from the pass. This I ascended after several tries via 5.9 climbing on the north side. My altimeter read 18,100 feet. Both climbs were on June 16.

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*Tamchok Kambab Kangri.* While exploring the source of the Brahmaputra River for the National Geographic Society, I made a solo first ascent of the peak immediately above the two source glaciers about 60 miles southeast of Kailas. Tamchok Kambab means "the horse's mouth," an allusion to the appearance of the source of the river where the two glaciers form the horse's ears and the peak behind them is the face of the horse. The two glaciers are completely separated by the knife-edged west ridge of the peak. My one-day ascent began by headlamp on June 20 from a camp beside the river at 16,300 feet, which we had reached by driving 30 miles overland in Land Cruisers from the southern road to Kailas and then by walking for two days. The peak lies seven miles from the Tibetan-Nepalese border just north of Dolpo. At the point where the Tamchok Kambab Glacier produces the Chemayungdung River (the true source of the Brahmaputra), I found a herd of 17 wild yaks, the ancestor of the domestic yak. At over 17,000 feet, I found herds of Tibetan wild asses, as well as wolves, gazelles and antelope in the lower valleys. Because of mountaineering gear lost during my first leg of air travel from Oakland to Los Angeles, my equipment for the ascent was limited: high-topped trekking boots and adjustable ski poles. They served well as I walked by the edge of the glacier, scrambled up mixed snow and rock and traversed up a snow slope to the summit ridge at 20,000 feet. To my consternation, the true summit was a mile away along a corniced ridge, interrupted by rock turrets. By a combination of step-kicking and crawling, I traversed the ridge to a final 5.6 rock tower, where a 15-foot headwall of crumbling gneiss put me on the virgin summit (6285 meters, 20,620 feet). I dreaded descending the corniced ridge without crampons and ice axe and so I chose a route down a 50° snowfield that was perfect for stepkicking. A thousand feet below, the snowfield merged with rock walls dripping with water and festooned with icicles and verglas. The descent took almost as long as the ascent, and I finally made it back to camp at five in the afternoon.

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