

acclimatize, and visited an exquisite Tibetan temple called Sandens, where we prayed for success and drank butter tea and ate yak cheese with the lama.

From Zhongba, it was a day's hike to our base camp (4,500m) below a rocky cliff of Peak 5,148m, in a beautiful green meadow that looked just like a valley in the Alps, the Sierra, or the Rockies. On June 5, with three horses and three horsemen, we ferried 160 kg loads of food and equipment to a meadow at 4,900m, just below the southeast ridge of West Peak, which would become C1. At the eastern end of frozen Yamou Lake, we could see our three peaks.

Yangmolong looked almost impossible to climb from the south, with a rock cliff at the bottom, a hanging glacier in the middle, and a large cornice on the summit ridge. But it looked like West Glacier would allow us to reach a col between West Peak and Central Peak.

On June 7, after two nights of rest at BC, we set up C1. That same afternoon, we made a reconnaissance and found that West Glacier does not lead to the col between West Peak and Central Peak, because it falls directly from the south snow face of West Peak and is blocked by the rocky southeast ridge. But we found that Central Glacier does lead to a col between the two peaks, so we spent three days climbing the left side of its lower icefall. We fixed four pitches on the lower icefall, and reached the site of C2 (5,335m) on a plateau below the upper icefall. While Tanaka and I ferried the loads to C2, Miyagawa and Murayama fixed three ropes through the upper icefall, to a col (5,565m) between West Peak and Central Peak. The next day (June 11), we went down to BC for two days of rest. We decided to forget about Yangmolong, which seemed too risky for our elderly party, and to concentrate on West Peak—Dangchezhengla.

We ferried additional loads to C2, then started our final attack on the virgin peak at 4 a.m., June 17. Miyagawa and Murayama climbed at a fast pace, while Tanaka and I followed along behind. When Miyagawa and Murayama reached the col (5,565m) at 7 a.m., Tanaka and I had become exhausted climbing the ice cliff in the upper icefall. Three pitches behind, we decided to give up the summit. Miyagawa and Murayama continued up, and traversed right at a big crevasse resembling a shark's mouth on the shoulder of the ridge. The right side of the ridge was a 500-meter-high steep ice face, which they climbed using double ice axes. The knife-edge ridge was an unstable mixture of hard ice and soft snow, with a treacherous cornice. They proceeded along this tricky ridge cautiously, and reached the summit of West Peak at 12:10. They had climbed 11 pitches between the col and the summit. On top, they found themselves in a dense mist, so for evidence they photographed their wristwatch and GPS together, showing an altitude of 5,870m. They returned to C2 at 5 p.m. We spent three days carrying all of our equipment and garbage down to C1, and then down to BC on June 21.

Although we were unable to climb Yangmolong and Central Peak, we were very satisfied with our expedition. We are proud of our clean mountaineering and safe climbing, and hope that the beauty of this mountain area will be preserved forever.

KIMIKAZU SAKAMOTO, *Hengduan Mountains Club* (translated by Tamotsu Nakamura)

## NORTHWEST YUNNAN PROVINCE

*Yunnan Province, Hengduan Shan, ascent of Peak 4,750, attempt on Baimang Shan, and reconnaissance of Meilixueshan and Habaxueshan areas.* During April and May Paul Macleman and I visited the Hengduan mountains of northwestern Yunnan Province. This was my second journey to the area (AAJ 1999), which is still not popular with foreign expeditions but is becoming

increasingly popular as a destination for domestic Chinese package tours.

Driving from Kunming to Lijiang can now be done in around eight hours by bus on the new highway. A cable car up the eastern slopes of Yulongxueshan (5,596m) was completed in late 1998; it gave us an interesting day out, with nice views, as well as a minor degree of acclimatization, as it stops at just over 4,500m on snowfields above the glacier. From Lijiang we continued north to Zhongdian (3,200m), where we spent a few days acclimatizing, buying food and visiting the beautiful Songzhalin monastery. Then we took a public bus toward Deqen, but we jumped off at the 4100m high pass to the east of the attractive and unclimbed Baimang Shan (5,500m).

Passing evidence of increased human traffic in the area—partially completed stone huts, trash, human feces, road crews—we camped slightly above the road, beneath the hill that I climbed in 1998. Two days later we ascended this



An avalanche sweeps the route that Damien Gildea and Paul Macleaman had just vacated on Baimang Shan. Damien Gildea

peak, our altimeters registering around 4750m, significantly lower than I previously thought. On this occasion we climbed the northern ridge in deep snow and over loose rock to arrive on the summit after a couple of hours. The Konkaling peaks were again visible far to the east but we were lucky enough this time to obtain a magical view of Kawa Karpo (6,740m, a.k.a. Meilixushan, Kagebo) rising to the northwest above a sea of cloud.

Upon descending we decided that Baimang Shan held too much fresh snow, so we immediately hitched a ride on a truck to the city of Deqen. There has been a significant increase in the number of tourists traveling across the Mekong River from Degen to visit the Minyong Glacier, for a fee, and the nearby monastery.

Using a local tour operator for jeep and horse hire, we crossed the Mekong 45 minutes north of Deqen and turned left toward Xigong hot springs where we left the jeep and loaded the horses. Around six hours of pleasant walking up and over a forested ridge, past prayer flags and small meadows, brought us down in to the Yibong valley and its uppermost village of Yibong. Whilst descending to the village at around 3200m, we got several glimpses through the

mist of the lower reaches of the main range to the west, including not only the 6000m peak directly south of Kawa Karpo that we wished to attempt, but also the approach gully to the north ridge of the spectacular 6,054m Miancimu (Metsemo). The next day we hoped to reach the “Japanese Camp” used by the ill-fated Sino-Japanese expedition that lost 17 members in one avalanche higher up on Kawa Karpo in January 1991. There is now a very basic trekking-style lodge in Yibong that can accommodate small groups.

While spending the night in Yibong we learned that although the villagers were happy for us to explore the area, they had been told by the monks from the monastery at Minyong that they would be “punished” for allowing foreigners to go above the village without a local guide. Spiritual reasons were cited for not allowing foreigners to climb or trek in the mountains above—not just Kawa Karpo, but all the peaks—and this prohibition also extended to other activities like plant collecting. We knew beforehand that such issues may affect climbing here but wanted to see for ourselves. Though disappointed, we left the area the next day, content to abandon any climbing plans there out of respect for local beliefs and the well being of the villagers.

After a few days in Deqen we again took a public bus to the pass near Baimang Shan. After spending a day scoping the east face and waiting out the usual rain and snow, we descended directly down hill through low brush until we hit a path that followed the river north to south along the valley floor. Shortly after, this path forked and we took the route that headed west, over a ridge then straight up the valley beneath the east face of Baimang. Passing several crumbling herders’ huts, we arrived after five hours at a clearing in the cirque beneath Baimang, in view of the approach slopes to the face. There was a larger herder’s hut here, with a partially dismembered and mummified dog stored in the corner.

After waiting a day here, hoping the sunny weather would help settle the face, we set off at 3 a.m., planning to enter the rightmost broad couloir, then follow it to a point where we could cross a rock rib to access and follow the upper part of the central couloir to where it exited on to the summit ridge, a climb of around 1,400m. By 5 a.m. we were up on the lower snow slopes, about to climb a diagonal gully to access the first couloir. However for the last 30 minutes we had been winding through increasingly large blocks of avalanche debris, invisible from below. The instinct for self-preservation took over and I suggested that the route was too dangerous in its present condition. Paul, exhibiting a lesser talent for flotation than myself, had been sinking up to his waist in the approach snows and readily agreed to descend upon encountering the television-sized blocks around us. We were back in our bags within an hour, disappointed again. Rising at 9 a.m., we spent over an hour admiring the scene of our most recent failure when a massive boom shook the air and the whole upper section of the central couloir cut loose, tons of snow cascading down the face and obliterating our proposed route. After watching several smaller avalanches bombard the slopes on which we had been recently standing, we had a two-second, non-verbal discussion before happily packing up and walking back to the road that led to Zhongdian, Lijiang, beer, pizza, pancakes, and ice cream.

After a few days of such hardship we decided to visit the northern side of Habaxueshan (5,490m), a peak that has been climbed at least three times and is situated on the northern side of the famous Tiger Leaping Gorge. Crossing the Yangtze on the old ferry near Daju, we slogged uphill to the ugly “new village” on the northern bank of the river. Here we shared a tractor ride with a large cow for three hours, winding over the hills to reach the village of Haba, high on a hillside to the northeast of the peak of the same name. Spending the night at an excellent lodge, where the woman who owned the establishment helped us register with the police for a

“trekking permit” and also hire her brother and his horse, we set off the next day and made the 1,400m ascent, past grazing cows and the raging river, up through slippery forest to the picturesque lake known locally as “Black Sea,” situated at 4,100m to the north of Habaxueshan. The next day, upon hiking up a small hill near camp, we realized that we did not have enough time to negotiate the approach to the actual climbing on Haba, which necessitated some winding through pinnacles and traversing slopes before touching the main slopes of the peak itself. However, we did gain an awesome view of some jagged, unclimbed 5,000m peaks that were close to the southwest of Habaxueshan and could probably be accessed through Tiger Leaping Gorge. The following day, after a savage hailstorm and a hike up another snowy 4,305m hill, we quickly descended to Haba village, from which we left the next day and retraced our steps to Lijiang and eventually Kunming.

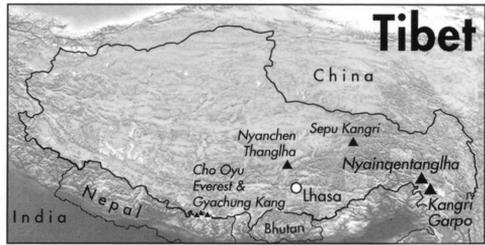
DAMIEN GILDEA, AAC

## Tibet

*Kangri Garpo, reconnaissance of Ruoni (6,882m).* The Alpine Club of Kobe University obtained a permit from the China Mountaineering Association (CMA) to climb the highest peak in Kangri Garpo in the fall of 2003. In October 2002, they sent a reconnaissance

party to search for and find a viable climbing route to the summit. Three members arrived at Lhagu village on the 8th, entered the valley to the south and set up the base camp on the bank of Hyuna lake north of Ata Glacier (north). They ascended the glacier and reached 4,650m.

TAMOTSU NAKAMURA, *Japan Alpine News*



## NYAINQENTANGLHA RANGE

*Sepu Kangri, first ascent.* A seven-member team of mountaineers from the U.S. made the first ascent of Sepu Kangri in the Nyainqentanglha Range (previously attempted by Christian Bonington and Charles Clarke—see *AAJ* 1998, 1999). Mark Newcomb and Carlos Buhler reached the 6,956m (22,821') summit on October 2 during a snow storm. See “Sepu Kangri,” earlier in this *Journal* for the story.

*Nyanchen Thanglha southeast summit, probable first ascent.* From April 12 to June 1 I guided an international expedition to the Nyanchen Thanglha (also spelled Nyainqentanglha) range. Our idea was to acclimatize for 10 days before heading to Mt. Everest. After climbing small peaks up to 5,700m around Yangbajing (the main village in the south of the mountain-range), we moved to the highest part of the area. The base camp was built up in the valley to the south at about 5,050m. It is a five-hour hike from the village near the road from Yangbajing to an area with giant boulders in an alpine lawn.

The mountain rejected us during our first attempt to climb Central Peak in a bad snow-storm (we reached camp 1 at 6,200m), so we took a rest day in base camp. The second try was