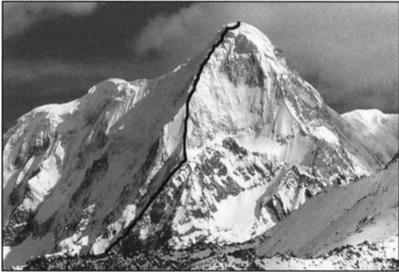


## SICHUAN

## SHALULI SHAN



Genyen (6,204m) in the Shaluli Shan with the route up the north spur marked. *Karl Unterkircher*



Approaching the serac barrier on the north ridge of Genyen during the first ascent. *Karl Unterkircher*

*Genyen, North Spur; Sachun, east face, attempt.* When we left Italy, we possessed only a few satellite photos and little information on the region we had chosen for our adventure. We traveled to the area by jeep on ever-worsening roads. The last day it took almost eight hours to cover just 91km between Zhanla and Litang. Finally, with yaks and horses we walked up the Garmunei Gou Valley (called Shuta by local monks) to the heart of the Genyen group, a massif that we had been admiring for many hours. We sited base camp near Nego Gompa (a.k.a. Lengo Gompa or Rengo Monastery) at 4,060m, surrounded by granite walls leading to snow-capped summits. In the first two days we explored the secrets of the range and climbed an easy summit of 5,000m. From this viewpoint the north face of Genyen (6,204m) looked worrisome, but the surrounding valleys held a wealth of unknown peaks. Our enthusiasm was enormous.

We became an object of exploration for the monks, who had never had contact with the Western world. Our association with them became friendlier day-by-day. They told us of the origins of the valleys, in accordance with their religion, and how the mountains that rise opposite the monastery are

sacred, because they cannot be reached by people, particularly Genyen with its snow-covered north and northeast faces. Were we the men who could discover the secret of Genyen?

With a good weather forecast, Simon Kehrer, Gerold Moroder, Walter Nones, and Karl Unterkircher went up to Camp 1, under the north spur, and slept there at an altitude of 5,000 m. The following day, May 16, after a climb of nine hours, we reached the flat summit of Genyen at 5:40 p.m. Snow conditions had been awful, and there had been steep sections of technically difficult climbing. Out of respect for the mountain's sacred status, we did not stand on the highest point. We then descended the south face, getting below the difficulties before making an improvised bivouac at 1 a.m. By midday on the 17th we were back at base camp.

Enthused by our success and by our meetings with the monks, listening to their beliefs and philosophies, we continued exploring the secret valleys. We discovered that though no one has climbed these mountains, the monks have names for them all. Each name has a divine meaning, representing a god's place of residence, and we won't rename these marvelous peaks.

We were attracted to the ca 5,800m peak of Sachun (the name of a Buddhist god), particularly the sheer granite east face. The monks enthusiastically helped establish Camp 1. However, monsoon-like weather hit the valley. Was it because the gods were angry with us? No, the

monks assured us it was only a meteorological coincidence. However, it rained for a long time. Back at base camp we split into two parties. Walter and Karl decided to cross into one of the lateral valleys, accompanied by two monks, and return to camp by a different route. Gerold and Simon decided to have another crack at Sachun, where they had left their climbing equipment. Their aim was to complete a hard rock route up the east face with one bivouac.

Karl and Walter returned after three days of constant storm. They had unexpected meetings with nomads, yaks, and tropical forest. Karl thought he had broken a rib falling into a river, and the monks had turned back, frightened by the weather. However, Karl and Walter had explored the Zonag Valley, crossed an unnamed 5,160m pass and stumbled upon warm springs. Back at base camp the monks came to congratulate the pair, smiling and showing visible satisfaction. Unfortunately, Simon and Gerold's three-and-a-half-day attempt was unsuccessful, though they got a good distance up the wall.

Our last night was blessed by clear skies and excellent views of Genyen. The true north face, a great route that we did not climb, stands out. We will come back. There is too much we have yet to discover, and the new friends we have found, monks young and old, and orphan children the monks are looking after.

DR. LEONARDO PAGANI and KARL UNTERKIRCHER, *Italy*

*Editor's note: This appears to be only the second climbing expedition to the massif. The first involved seven climbers from the Himalayan Association of Japan. On June 11, 1988, Tetsuro Itoh, Osamu Takita, and Kazuo Tobita reached the summit of Genyen. The three placed their base camp at 4,350m, below the south ridge of the ca 6,000m east peak of Genyen. They established camps on the ridge at 5,150m and 5,750m, before reaching the east peak and continuing up the connecting ridge to the main summit of Genyen. This information was supplied by Tamotsu Nakamura.*

*Genyen massif, Sachun, first ascent; Phurba, first ascent.* In October Dave Anderson, Molly Loomis, Andy Tyson, and Canadian Sara Hueniken visited the Genyen massif. On the 20th Anderson and Hueniken climbed the long south ridge of Sachun in a 17-hour roundtrip from their high camp. They called the climb Dang Ba 'Dren Pa (5.10+ A0 M5 70°), a Tibetan phrase meaning to inspire, enthuse, and uplift.

The following day Loomis and Tyson climbed a ca 5,685m peak they named Phurba, due to its resemblance to the triple-bladed Tibetan dagger. Leaving base camp they scrambled unroped up loose rock and a steep snow couloir to gain the south ridge, then climbed eight pitches of mixed snow and rock (5.8) to the top. They called the route Naga (Serpent). Loomis and Tyson also climbed the southeast and east face of a peak they called Damaru (ca 5,655m), reaching a point 25 feet below the twin summits. A feature story by Molly Loomis appears earlier in the *Journal*.

## DAXUE SHAN

*Haizi Shan, 2003 and 2005 attempts.* In October 2003 we traveled from Hong Kong to Sichuan by train. We were joined in Kanding by Neil Carruthers, Stephen Wai Wah Yip (Geordie), and Ron Yue, who arrived by plane.