road, where locals know little and climbers are generally in remote side valleys. However, this situation will not last. As has happened once already around Lake Basong, the first group of unauthorized climbers to be caught will cause a major clampdown, destroy the plans of all the expeditions aiming to go there the following season, and end up paying at minimum all of the costs they forgot to pay the first time. They may also be banned from China for some period and damage the livelihoods of the agency employees that provided their basic logistics.

Information:

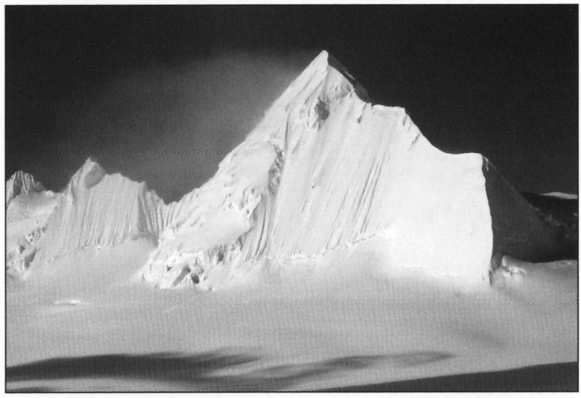
The best information and sketch maps are available in the recent publications of Tamotsu Nakamura (see, for example, the article in *AAJ 2003* and the annual editions of the *Japanese Alpine News*). The summit heights in these sketches are based on Chinese maps; Russian military maps also exist. The maps are reasonable for general topography but poor for peak heights.

BRUCE NORMAND, *Switzerland*

KANGRI GARPO RANGE

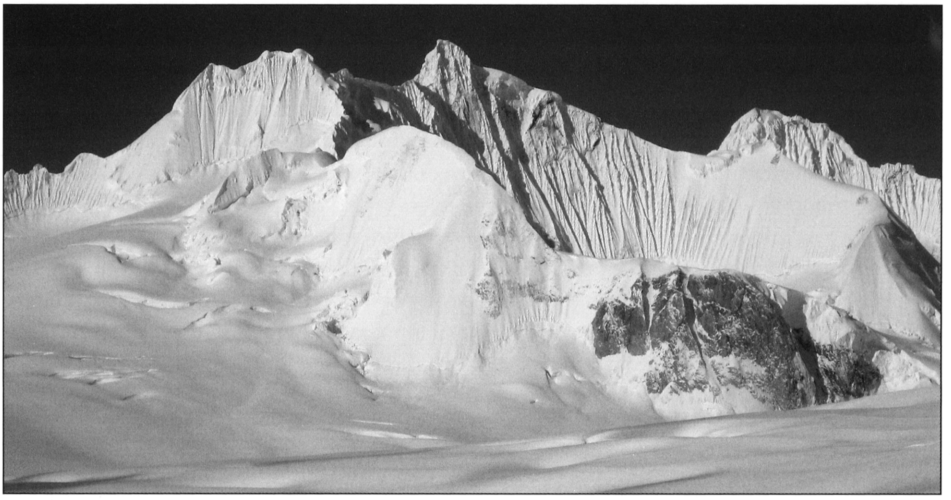
Lhagu Glacier, ski expedition and probable first ascent of Pt. 5,928m. In the past our Silver Turtle Group, composed of elderly mountaineers, has climbed several 8,000m peaks. More recently we have been concentrating on unexplored regions, notably the Lhagu Glacier in the Kangri Garpo Range of southeast Tibet. The Lhagu has the largest surface area of any glacier in Tibet and appears to be retreating quite fast. We first visited the glacier in 2000 but were not able to progress very far up it. We returned in 2001 and 2002 but were still not able to make much progress due to poor conditions and soft snow. As we had only snowshoes and crampons, walking proved difficult.

The unattempted Pt. 5,480m on the Lhagu Glacier, Kangri Garpo Range. *Kaneshige Ikeda/Tamotsu Nakamura Collection*



The north face of unclimbed Pt. 6,006m on the Lhagu Glacier, Kangri Garpo Range. *Kaneshige Ikeda/Tamotsu Nakamura collection*

In 2006 we planned to ascend the glacier on skis and finish our exploratory work. The expedition comprised Takeo Honjo (64, leader), Kaneshige Ikeda (67), Haruhisa Kato (62), Isamu Moriyama (67), and Hiroshi Sagano (61). We drove from Lhasa to Rawu via Bomi, finding the Sichuan-Tibet



The north face of unclimbed Pt. 6,321m on the Lhagu Glacier, Kangri Garpo Range. *Kaneshige Ikeda/Tamotsu Nakamura collection*

highway vastly improved, with most of it paved. On October 21 we set up a temporary base camp near Dapa Bridge on the way from Rawu to Lhagu village. Three days with horses took us to a base camp at 4,730m on the moraine of the Lhagu Glacier, where the yak trails ended.

On the 27th we established Camp 1 at 5,200m in a crevassed zone of the glacier, and Camp 2 at 5,260m. All the time we followed the north bank; in 2000 we had tried to go up the south. Above Camp 2 we decided to split into two groups: one would try to reach the headwaters of the glacier, while the other would try some nearer peaks.

On the 31st we were blessed with fine weather (in the autumn of 2006 the weather in this region was much better than normal) and left camp at 8:30 a.m. Unfortunately, although the temperature had fallen to –10°C the previous night, the snow remained unexpectedly soft, and ski tracks were still 10cm deep. Ikeda and Sagano skied up toward the glacier head and, after identifying surrounding peaks from a point just before the watershed with the Midoi Glacier. Meanwhile Kato and Moriyama headed up toward the 6,260m peak of Hamokongga on the northern rim, a little farther west of Camp 2 and skied up a 5,928m peak called Snow Dome.

By November 2 all members had returned to base camp, having enjoyed continuously fine weather since arriving on the glacier. The following day, as we waited for horses, Honjo suddenly became ill. His breathing became difficult, and after 15 minutes he lost consciousness. After a further 15 minutes his pulse stopped, and he passed away. There had been no time to perform even emergency measures.

Several photographs accompanying this report show some of the unclimbed peaks on the southern rim toward the head of the glacier.

KANESHIGE IKEDA, *Japan*

Editor's note: The first team to reach the upper Lhagu Glacier and the only team to climb a peak prior to the Japanese was a group of New Zealand climbers in 2001. They also hoped to try one of the major peaks at the head of the glacier (the highest is Pt. 6,606m) but had to be content with Pt. 5,750m.The Japanese explorer Tamotsu Nakamura, editor of the Japanese Alpine News, was also in this area at the

same time. He noted that Rawu Lake and the entrance to the Lhagu Glacier were becoming tourist spots, and an entrance fee of 20Rmb is collected from foreigners at Lhagu village. Nakamura and his party also visited the neighboring Midoi and Mimei glaciers, noting that the local government is developing the Midoi Glacier for tourism (there was a group of Chinese tourists on the glacier) and that the north faces of Gemosongu (6,450m) and Hamogongga (6,260m) were most impressive. The Mimei Glacier was surveyed by the Chinese Academy of Science in the 1980s, but only porters rather than animals are available for load carrying. Three 6,000m peaks were seen in the distance, but they were not particularly attractive. This was part of a greater journey that included treks toward the glaciers north of the Yigong Tso and, farther east, toward the mountains north of Bomi via the village of Yur, all in the Eastern Nyanchen Tanglha.

HIMALAYA

Xixabangma, new variant to normal north side route. On October 3 Inaki Ochoa de Olza reached the main summit of Xixabangma (8,012m) having made what is believed to be a new variant on the north face. The Spanish climber followed the normal route to Camp 3 (7,440m), the point where it climbs onto the final ridge leading up to the central summit (7,999m, Chinese map). From there he moved down and east, descending 150m before continuing his leftward traverse. He crossed a bergschrund and climbed to a rocky buttress, which he passed on the left flank via a step of UIAA III. He then continued up the northeast face (60°) to hit the southeast ridge at 7,950m, more or less at the same point where the 1982 British route emerges from the southwest face. From here it is a short distance back right to the summit.

Ochoa de Olza left Camp 1 (6,400m) at 1 a.m. and reached the main summit at 2 p.m. He has christened his 800m variant Lorpen-Diario de Navarra. Some years ago a Russian team left the standard route and climbed out onto the face below the summit, but this was rather higher and a completely different line. This new line avoids some of the problems that often occur with avalanche-prone snow high on the mountain, either in following the Chinese traverse or the sharp connecting ridge from the central to main summits.

Ochoa de Olza's solo ascent was the first to the main summit of the season, despite almost 100 climbers working on the mountain from the north. It is his 11th 8,000m peak and his fourth attempt to climb to the highest point of Xixabangma. He reached the central summit in 1995.

LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *Mountain INFO, CLIMB Magazine*

Palung Ri, south face. During my days spent acclimatizing for an ascent of Cho Oyu, I noticed a good line on the neighboring peak of Palung Ri (7,100m). I was working in this area as a guide, but bad conditions above 7,000m had confined us to base camp. The south face of Palung Ri is composed of steep snow and ice, interspersed with rock bands. It is not too difficult and offers good climbing in couloirs and mixed terrain. Higher up, the face becomes more open and leads to the summit ridge, where I found dangerous wind-blown snow and scary cornices.

I left base camp on the morning of September 19 and walked along the moraine to the bottom of the south face. I began climbing on rock and mixed terrain, with difficulties up to 4 and M4, and then continued up nice gullies with short steps of steep ice (80-90°). Difficulties were not sustained, just 10m of steep ground here and there in the long narrow couloir. Above this section the climb finished on snow and ice (50-60°) and became easier