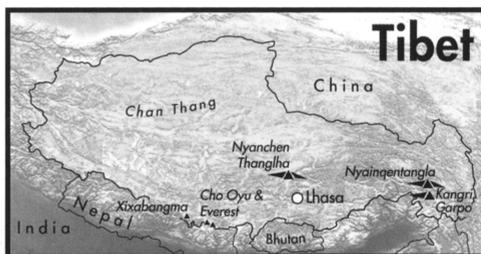


## Tibet



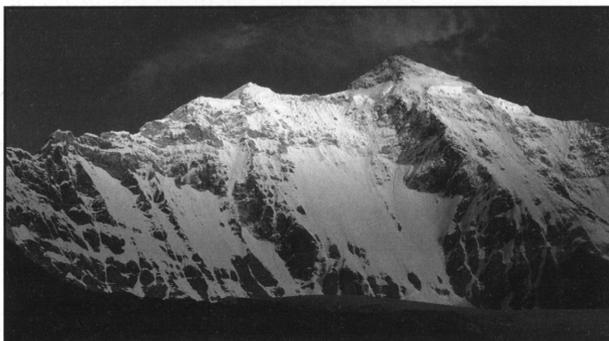
### HIMALAYA

#### NALAKANKAR HIMAL

*Gurla Mandhata (Naimona'nyi, 7,694m), first traverse.* For some years Kazuya Hiraide and I tried to visit Gurla Mandhata. We knew about ascents from the northwest, facing the holy mountain of Kailash, but never found any information about the south side. We also never received replies from the CTMA to our questions about the nearest village, Burang (first village north of the Nepalese border), or access to the south face via Ronggo Gully. With no information or permit, we went elsewhere, climbing a new route on Kamet and attempting Gauri Shankar.

Before leaving for Tibet in the autumn, we had only a few distant photos of Gurla Mandhata's southeast face, taken by Tamotsu Ohnishi from well south of the Tibet-Nepal border. We also had a little help from Google Earth. The CTMA had no idea as to the whereabouts of Ronggo Gully, and while our liaison officer, Tashi, had been several times to the mountain, he knew nothing of the south side.

After acclimatizing by making a circuit of Kailash, we asked a local goatherd the whereabouts of Ronggo Gully's entrance. Then we begged for horses to carry our food and equipment to the mountain, but it was harvest time, and locals were unwilling to help. The entrance to the gully looked narrow, steep, and more or less impossible. However, on September 13 a local horseman



Unclimbed southeast face of Gurla Mandhata. Southeast ridge forms left skyline. Hiraide and Taniguchi climbed face on right, directly beneath summit, to 6,300m before retreating. Later they climbed southwest ridge, which meets southeast ridge at distinct pointed snow summit, Naofeng Peak, in center of picture. *Kei Taniguchi*



Descending upper northwest slope of Gurla Mandhata, with Lake Rakshastal (left) and Manasarova (separated by strip of land, on which runs road from Nepalese border. Prominent peak in left distance is Kailash (6,638m). *Kei Taniguchi*



Hiraide climbing toward southwest ridge. Kei Taniguchi

found a way through, although it proved difficult for the horses to get all the way to our base camp at 4,700m, halfway to the foot of the southeast face. From there we had to carry equipment to the bottom of the face, over unstable moraine and glacier. We were the first people to see it from here, and after reconnaissance, during which we watched a big serac collapse several times, we found only one safe route to the summit.

After further acclimatization we were ready to go, but due to a spell of fine, sunny weather, the face was dry, with frequent rockfall, ice fall, and avalanches. On our first day we tried to avoid falling debris, as we climbed through loose rock bands and poor snow and ice. By evening we had reached a point just below the serac, where we bivouacked. It being clear that this was not the sort of climb we like, constantly exposed to unavoidable danger, the next day we ran away from the face, a disappointing end to our attempt.

Back at base camp we rested, then we began climbing north through an unexplored valley toward the southwest ridge. On the next day we continued toward the crest, then traversed east below it on a glacier shelf, where we made our second camp, south of Point 6,992m. On the following day we reached the crest and followed it to where the southeast ridge comes in from the right. We continued, with two more camps, over previously unclimbed Naofeng Peak (Gurla Mandhata south summit, 7,422m), to reach the main summit on October 9. We made our fifth camp high on the Original Route on the northwest slope, where there were commanding views of Kailash and Lake Manasarova. We reached the base of the mountain on the 10th. Routefinding was difficult, as there is a large labyrinth of seracs, where we needed to make some rappels. On the 13th we departed for Kathmandu.

KEI TANIGUCHI, *Japan*

*Editor's note: Gurla Mandhata was first climbed by a large Sino-Japanese expedition (Katsutoshi Hirabayashi, climbing leader) in 1985, with 13 members reaching the summit via the northwest slope. Swiss Paul Tschanz and Diego Wellig repeated this route in 1990. In 1997 Charlie Fowler, Tom and Quinn Simons, and Soren Peters climbed Peak 6,912m, immediately to the north, and a 6,902m peak, Guna La, to the northeast, before Fowler, Quinn Simons, and Peters climbed the north-northeast face to the summit plateau not far from the top. They retreated when Simons' hands were frostbitten. During the descent, at 6,800m, all three fell 450m. Simons and Peters were unhurt and descended to summon local help to evacuate Fowler, with a badly wrenched leg. French repeated the Original Route in 1999, and the following year Tomoyuki Furuya, Hiroshi Iwazaki, and Ayumi Nozawai climbed onto the north ridge from the east and followed the right flank to below the summit plateau, where they slanted across the east face to reach the summit. Two Japanese and a Tibetan reached the summit in 2001 by the Original Route, for the fifth ascent of the mountain. Americans made the sixth in 2006, via the Original route. Hiraide and Taniguchi's ascent is the third new route and possibly the seventh overall ascent.*