

*Everest, Various Activity on the North Side, and Cho Oyu, Various Activity.* Ten commercial expeditions on the Tibetan side and two in Nepal (several of them commercial as well) made attempts on Everest, but not a soul got to the top. This was the first autumn season since 1987 in which no one summited Everest. (Ten years ago, all four teams on the north side and all three from the south failed.) Fierce winds and new snowfall were the villains this autumn.

A highly experienced Nepalese Sherpa, Apa, and the Swiss mountaineer Jean Troillet, who himself has seven 8000ers to his credit, including Everest already in a remarkably swift ascent of the mountain in 1986, reached together the highest point on the vast mountain that anyone achieved this season, 8700 meters or only 150 vertical meters below the top, on the north side. Troillet had intended to descend from the summit by snowboard; he went down on one from 8700 meters.

Everest claimed one life this autumn. A South Korean expedition sent a party to the North Col very early in the season, on September 8, to deposit gear there. One of them, the expedition's climbing leader, Choi Byung-Soo, was buried without trace by a big avalanche just below the Col.

Commercially organized efforts on Cho Oyu fared much better. On Cho Oyu's normal route on the northwest side, 17 out of 22 teams managed to put a total of 75 people on its summit. A 19-member Italian team led by Giacomo Scaccabarozzi was faulted by others on Cho Oyu for leaving the mountain and deserting one of their teammates, Claudio Mastronicola, who was still there struggling to climb it and soon afterward had to be rescued and taken care of by other expeditions when he became seriously disoriented and frostbitten. One member of his group explained in Kathmandu that this had been a north Italian expedition with most members sympathetic to the movement favoring the north's secession from Italy, while the man they had left behind was a southerner.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY

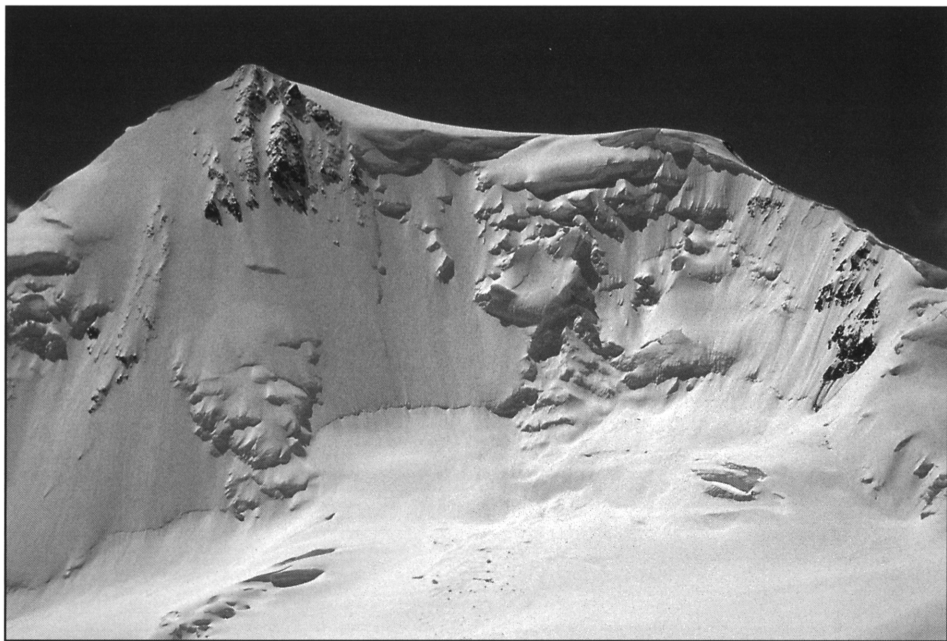
*Kula Kangri, Third Ascent.* It was reported that a Spanish expedition made the third ascent of Kula Kangri (7554m) in May. Base camp was established on May 4; by May 15, a route that roughly followed the west ridge had been established to Camp II at 6450 meters, and on the 18th, with a break in the weather, the team reached the summit. They also reported ascending two unclimbed subsidiary summits to the east, one (Kula Kangri II?) at 7430 meters, and the other (Kula Kangri III?) at 7150 meters. (*High Mountain Sports* 186)

## CHINA

*Geladaintong, Northeast Face.* I was invited by Geographic Expeditions to guide two American clients, William Rom, M.D. and Dan Luchtel, Ph.D., on a peak called Geladaintong (one of a few spellings), which is 6621 meters high and located at what the Chinese like to call the source of the Yangtze River. Technically speaking, there is a source located farther south and west that is a half mile or so farther from the mouth of the river, but it's an unspectacular mud flat at a lower elevation than the glacial source at the foot of Geladaintong. To geographers, tourists and travel agents alike, Geladaintong makes a more attractive source for the mighty river that China is damming to create the largest hydro-power plant in the world.

Geladaintong is located in Qinghai Province, just north of Tibet, approximately 60 kilometers northwest of the Tangula Pass. The main road from Tibet to China, which goes from Lhasa to Golmud and on to Xining, traverses the Tangula Shan mountains via the Tangula Pass.

We arrived in Tibet on August 27 and spent several days touring cultural sights and accli-



*Geladaintong. Mark Newcomb's solo ascent took the snow face up to the central couloir. The north ridge follows the right skyline to the summit. MARK NEWCOMB*

matizing. Then we spent three days driving to the base camp, two along the highway to Golmud, Qinghai Province, and one traversing 90 kilometers overland on a track that disappears entirely several kilometers before base camp. We spent September 3 and 4 doing reconnaissance and acclimating. The mountain had been climbed first by Japanese in 1984 and second by a team from Beijing University in 1994. We found garbage from the '94 expedition at base camp and Camp I, along with deep ruts from the large truck they drove over delicate tundra vegetation in order to place their base camp two kilometers farther up the valley than where we placed ours.

Bill and Dan rested on September 5, but in order to keep our momentum up and carry out more recon, I carried a load of gear to CI on my own. After dropping the load, I crossed the glacier on the flank of the northeast face and proceeded to climb a steep snow line up the northeast face that I had carefully scrutinized two days before. Presumably it was a first ascent, as neither the Japanese nor the Chinese had mentioned anything about climbing any route other than the north ridge. The line started at the lowest point on the face (5800m), crossed a small bergschrund, traversed up and slightly right past a small serac, entering a 50° couloir at around 6300 meters, and topped out within five meters of the knife edge summit. The crux of the climb was a section of 55-60° ice about four meters long. The rest of the climb was entirely on snow, varying between ankle and knee deep. I downclimbed the standard route on the north ridge. The round trip took just over nine hours from base camp.

The next day Dan, Bill and I started up together, stopping for the night at CI (5600m) on the east edge of the glacier that aprons the northeast flank of the peak. We spent a second night at 6100 meters in a col at the base of the north ridge. The glacier that spawns the Yangtze river is several hundred meters below the west side of this col. The following morning (September 8), we set out at dawn along the gradually steepening north ridge toward the summit. The climb is non-technical, though it's worth carrying two or three ice screws and/or some snow protec-

tion in order to protect a couple of short, 45-50° bulges. We encountered weak, sugary snow on two of these bulges, triggering a small slab avalanche (about 15cm deep) on one of them.

The ridge leads to a plateau a couple of hundred meters long at around 6550 meters. Geladaintong's sharp summit rises from the southeast end of this plateau with one short pitch of steep snow leading to the peak. We summited around 1 p.m., and returned to CII around 4:30 in the afternoon, descending all the way back to base camp the following day.

MARK NEWCOMB, *unaffiliated*

## SICHUAN PROVINCE

### DAXUE SHAN

*Daxue Shan Range, Various Ascents.* During the month of October, 1996, Fred Beckey led an expedition to the Daxue Shan range of central Sichuan Province in the People's Republic of China. The marketing people at Ross Labs agreed to support the trip financially as Fred offered his services as spokesman for their nutritional drink Ensure. The climbing team included John Chilton, Jia Condon, and Rich Prohaska, all from Whistler, B.C., Mark Carter from New Zealand and Steve Must from Seattle. Three mountains were summited for the first time in an area north-northeast of Gongga Shan known as the Lamo-she range. The three peaks extend north from the mountain known as Lamo-she (the Goddess Peak, 6070m), which was first climbed in 1993 by Grey Thompson and Jon Turk (see *AAJ* 1994, pp. 269-70). The compact range of mountains all hover around 6000.

Fred had extensively reconnoitered the surrounding terrain during the 1993 trip. This eased most of our logistical problems. With the assistance of our Chinese liaison Shao and Jing Jing, a few Tibetan horsemen and their team of horses, we established an initial base camp at 13,500 feet in a valley below two of our objectives and only a day's hike from the nearest village. We arrived at a high camp around 16,000 feet, and woke to a few inches of snow. This gave us another day to acclimatize and it turned out to be the only inclement weather we were to encounter up high. Although the valleys were consistently lost in a lake of clouds and damp drizzling rain or snow, the skies were clear and sunny above 14,000 or 15,000 feet. Fred had problems with the altitude and returned to base camp after two sleepless nights. The rest of us set off to explore the glacier and continued on to the top of the smaller peak. Carter and I went up the corniced north ridge as the clouds climbed out of the east to meet us. A few steep sections made the rest of the deep stepping interesting. We reached the summit and found the three Whistler climbers waiting patiently and getting cold. They had opted to climb a steep face that led to the gentle west ridge. We all descended the north ridge. The local name for this mountain is Snake Lake Peak (5760m).

The next day, the Whistler trio were eager to launch an assault on the towering and unnamed summit, just to the left, or north, of Snake Lake Peak. Carter and I were feeling the altitude and exhaustion from the previous day's work and retreated early. The others continued on and reached a rock band that required 5th-class climbing. They fixed a few ropes and returned to high camp. Meanwhile, Carter and I had returned to base camp. Rich, John and Jia completed the climb the next day via the northwest ridge during a technical and strenuous 14 hours and called the peak Wu Shan, "Misty Mountain" (5987m).

Our support team congratulated us all with ample supplies of *py jiu* (Pabst Blue Ribbon), *bai jiu* (rice whiskey) and fresh yak meat. While most of us struggled to recover from the poisonous beverages the next day, our smiling Tibetan horse team efficiently saddled the horses and we moved camp to the next valley to our north. I learned their secret as they passed