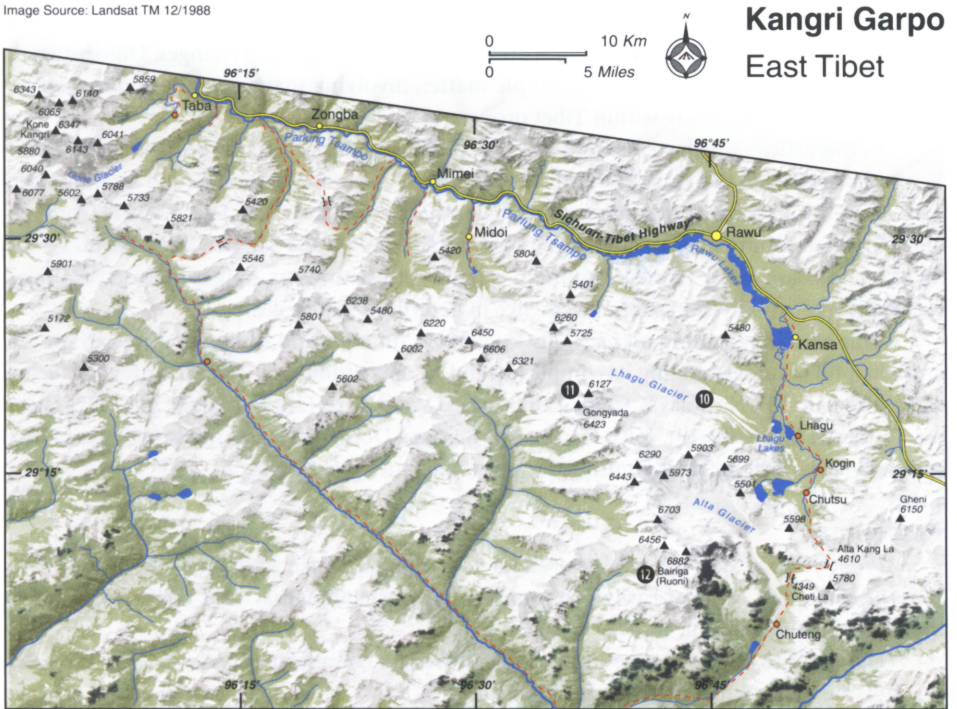


# EAST OF THE HIMALAYA

## Part I

# EAST TIBET

Image Source: Landsat TM 12/1988



THE NUMBERS INSIDE CIRCLES ON THE MAPS CORRESPOND WITH PHOTOGRAPHS. ALL PEAKS ARE VIRGIN UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

East Tibet holds two principle mountain ranges, the Nyainqentanglha and the Kangri Garpo. Nyainqentanglha is a huge range: 750 kilometers long, it extends west-east between latitude  $30^{\circ}\text{N}$  and  $31^{\circ}\text{N}$ . The westernmost end is a massif of four 7,000-meter peaks south of the Tibetan sacred lake, Nam Tso, while the easternmost end extends to Rawu, east of the Great Bend of the Tsangpo River. Over this tremendous distance there are two primary natural divisions; they split east versus west near the town of Lhari. Kangri Garpo is a sizeable mountain range stretching 280 kilometers from northwest to southeast in  $\text{N}:28^{\circ}30'-29^{\circ}60'$  and  $\text{E}:95^{\circ}30'-97^{\circ}30'$ . It exists between Tsangpo Great Bend, the eastern end of Himalaya, and Baxoila Ling, the western end of the Hengduan Mountains.







No.1: The Matterhorn of Nyainqentanglha, Kajaqiao (or Jajacho) (6,447m), in a view from west.



No.4-5: Lake Basong and the west face of Jieqinnalagabu (6,316m) (right) and Lumbogangzegabo (6,542m) (left).

## NYAINQENTANGLHA WEST

Nyainqentanglha West forms a part of the high altitude Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Climbers from the Tohoku University of Japan made the first ascent of the highest peak here, Nyainqentanglha (7,162m) in 1986. All of the other 7,000-meter peaks have already been climbed. Glacier development is concentrated only in the vicinity of the mountaintops. Snow lines are as high as 5,700 meters. (See AAJ 2002, ppg 427-429, Jon Otto.)

## NYAINQENTANGLHA EAST

Nyainqentanglha East is located on the southeastern rim of Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. The upper tributaries of Yalung Tsangpo erode the plateau into deep valleys like creases in wrinkled cloth, sewing seams. The topography becomes complicated. The climate is humid and brings much snowfall, which buries the summits, fosters glaciers below, and grows beautiful conifer forests below the permanent snowline. The highest peak of the main range is Sepu Kangri (6,956m), which was first climbed in 2002 following repeated attempts in the late 1990s. All the other stunning 6,000-meter peaks in the range remain unclimbed.

The main range of Nyainqentanglha East forms the watershed between Yalung Tsangpo and the Salween River (a.k.a., the Nu Jiang). The upper Salween flows in the north, and two tributaries of the Yalung Tsangpo—Yigong Tsangpo and Parlung Tsangpo—flow in the south. Countless peaks exceeding 6,000 meters still exist, veiled and unvisited, while unexplored glaciers reach up to 35 kilometers (22 mi.) in length (the Qiaqing Glacier). Few of these peaks are even known to climbers; Sepu Kangri is the only significant peak to have been summited. One branch of the Nyainqentanglha East separates from the main range near Lhari to the east in the south of Yigong Tsangpo. Here are many fascinating snow peaks. At Lake Basong (Bassom Tso), mountains and valleys surround a scenic and historic spot with an island lamasery. Turquoise blue Lake Basong, with neighboring peaks that rise 3,000 meters higher, brings to mind the European Alps; I call this region the “Alps of Tibet.” The highest peak, Nenang (6,870m) is guarded with a precipitous snow face and a treacherous ridge. The breathtaking pyramid, Jajacho (or Kajaqiao, 6,447m) soars into the sky in an impressive Matterhorn-like tower.

Within the main Nyenqentanglha East, we can think of four geographic groupings. The following is a brief chronicle of the explorations, scientific researches and climbings in these areas:

### *Northwest Region: north of Yigong Tsangpo to Sepu Kangri massif*

Sepu Kangri (6,956m) was challenged by the British parties lead by Chris Bonington and Charles Clarke in 1996, '97, and '98 successively. They came within 500 feet of the summit in 1998 (*Tibet's Secret Mountain: The Triumph of Sepu Kangri*, 1999). On October 2, 2002, Americans Carlos Buhler and Mark Newcomb reached the summit (see “Sepu Kangri”, later in this Journal). No other peaks have been attempted.

### *Lhari to Lake Basong region south of Yigong Tsangpo (1-5)*

Japanese parties from Nagano Prefecture visited in 1994 and 2000. They explored the northern





Top: No.2: The beautiful west face of Chuchepo (6,550m), east of Punkar. No.3: Middle: The south face of Nenang (6,870m). No.7: Bottom: The north face of Kongga (6,488m).

side of Kajaqiao in 1994 and entered the valley north of Lake Basong in 2000. In October 1999 a New Zealand party led by John Nankervis attempted a 6,250-meter peak to the east of Basong Lake and reached nearly 6,000 meters on Jieqinnalagabu (Namla Karpo, 6,316m). In 2001, T. Nakamura's Japanese party tried to go down Yigong Tsangpo from Lhari, but frequent and dangerous landslides blocked them soon after they left Lhari. In 2001 John Town and colleague visited the valley north of Lake Basong. In March-April 2002 Nicola Hart and John Town (U.K.) entered Yigong Tsangpo from Lhari and made a reconnaissance of the northwestern side of Nenang (6,870m, currently the highest unclimbed peak in Nyainqentanglha) and other peaks that surround Niwu Qu. In April 2002 John Harlin and Mark Jenkins (USA) reached 5,250 meters on Jieqinnalagabu but retreated due to avalanche danger (they plan to return in 2003); they then trekked north of Lake Basong and looped over a 5,000-meter pass to southwest of Basong. In October-November 2002 T. Nakamura's party made a reconnaissance of the southern slope of Nenang from Julia and ascended to a high pass, Laqin La (5,300m), on the watershed to Niwu Chu.

*Central Region: north of Yigong Tsangpo to Tsangpo-Salween Divide (6, 7)*

In 2000 Charles Clarke (U.K.) approached from the north to unvisited glaciers south of Shargung La. In April and May 2002 T. Nakamura's party (Japan) searched for peaks and

glaciers in the north central part of the range south of Pelbar (Pemba) on the Tsangpo-Salween Divide.

*East Region: Botoi Tsangpo basin north of Parlung Tsangpo (8, 9)*

In 1989 a joint Chinese and Japanese party of science institutions carried out a field survey and research of Zepu Glacier and its vicinity of Botoi Tsangpo north of Parlung Tsangpo. In October-November 2002 T. Nakamura's party explored unknown peaks surrounding Zepu Glacier and Jalong Glacier in Botoi Tsangpo basin, a tributary of Parlung Tsangpo. Here remain many magnificent untouched 6,000-meter peaks.

## KANGRI GARPO

In this almost unknown mountain range lies the lowest-altitude Tibetan glacier (Ata Glacier South, 2,440m) and Tibet's largest glacier by surface area (Lhagu Glacier, 30 kilometers long by 2 to 5 kilometers wide). The range is encircled by three tributaries of the Tsangpo-Brahmaputra River. The northern side is deeply eroded where the Parlung Tsangpo, a tributary of the main Tsangpo, forms a narrow and precipitous gorge. To the south and east of the range, the Lohit River (Chinese name Zayul Qu) plays an important role. The river separates into two tributaries, Kangrigarpo Qu (qu and chu mean river) to the northwest and the Sang Qu to the northeast. The confluence is in a small point at Samai, in Zayul County not far from the border with Arunachal Pradesh, India.



Top: No. 6: The east face of Kona I (6,378m) (right) & Kona II (6,334) (left), Puyu valley. No.8: Middle: The stunning east face of Jalong I (6,292m), west of Zepu Qu, Botoi Tsangpo. No.9: Bottom: The west face of a spiky peak (5,844m), east of Yuri village, Botoi Tsangpo.



In the south of the range, the Dihang River (a tributary of the Brahmaputra) flows at 2,000-3,000 meters, while the mountain ridges only reach 4,000 meters, which is too low to provide a climatic barrier effect. Therefore, Kangri Garpo on the southernmost rim of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau receives a humid southwest seasonal wind direct from the Indian Ocean, resulting in considerable precipitation during the monsoon season and heavy snowfall in winter and spring. North of the watershed the topography is complicated. The eastern end is a high plateau, while to the west the valley of Parlung Tsangpo becomes a deep forested gorge. In the south the valleys are extremely eroded. For at least three months a year villages are isolated from the outside world because of heavy snow. All the 6,000-meter peaks in Kangri Garpo remain unclimbed. The New Zealand party climbed only one minor and nameless 5,000-meter peak along the Lhagu Glacier.

*Kangri Garpo East: Mountains surrounding Lhagu Glacier and Ata Glacier (10-12)*

In May 1999 T. Nakamura's party entered Lhagu Valley and first explored Ata Glacier North to make a reconnaissance for a climbing route to the highest peak Ruoni (or Bairiga, 6,882m). In October to November 2000, the Silver Turtle Party (Japan) explored the Lhagu Glacier to 5200 meters near the ridge dividing Lhagu and Ata Glaciers. In October-November 2001 the Silver Turtle Party again visited Lhagu Glacier and then went to Ata Kang La and descended the Zayul side to the north for a complete view of the eastern side of Ruoni. In October to November 2001 a New Zealand party headed by John Nankervis: Lhagu Glacier investigated the glacier extensively, but were unsuccessful at climbing due to bad weather. In October 2002 the Kobe University Alpine Club (Japan) made a reconnaissance of Ruoni; they have a permit to climb it in fall 2003.



No. 10: The Lhagu Glacier and the east face of Hamokongga (6,260m) west of Lhagu village.



No.11: The east face of Gongyada (6,423m) (left) & Zeh (6,127m) (right), Lhagu Glacier.



No.12: The northeast face of Ruoni (or Bairiga) (6,882m), the highest peak of the range, southwest of Kogin, Lhagu valley.

*Kangri Garpo West: Mountains west of Lhagu Glacier extending to Kone Kangri*

In September to October 1999 the Gakushuin University team (Japan) searched for what was expected to be the second highest massif, Kangrigarpola Feng (6,602m). They entered the Gone valley from Taba village (3000m) on the left bank of Parlung Tsangpo. However, no peak of that altitude was found; they concluded it must be Peak 6,347m according to the 1:50,000 China People's Liberation Army (PLA) map. They named it Kone Kangri.