

it runs south of the large lake of Pelku Cho and were thought to be previously unclimbed (there does not appear to be a record of their ascents). The three climbers approached by walking seven to eight hours south across the plateau and up the valley leading to the peaks. They then climbed the more easterly and higher peak, Pt. 6,473m (N 28° 41' 50.6", E 85° 25' 20.3"), on September 12, via the northeast slope, and named it Free Tibet. They climbed the more westerly peak, 6,063m (N 28° 43' 07.9", E 85° 25' 10.5"), on the 14th, also from the north, and named it Bochánek. Panoramic views from both peaks are superb.

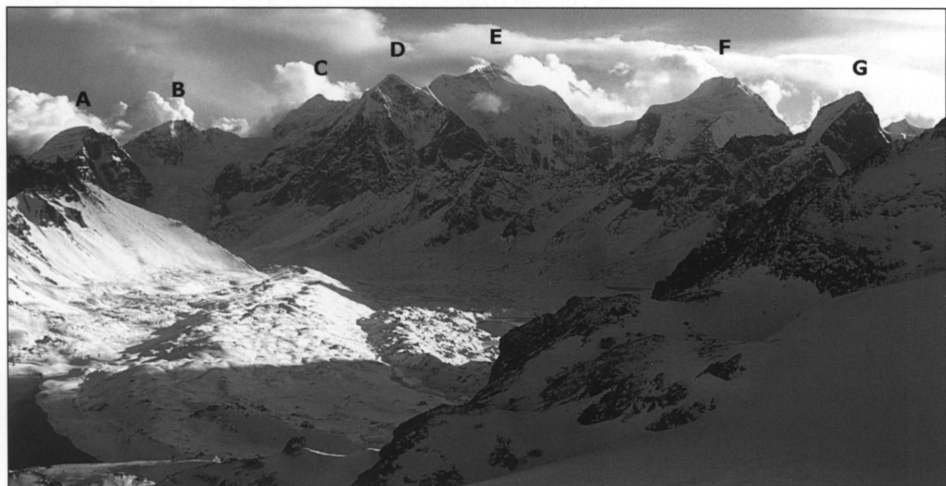
THOMAS RUCKSTUHL, *Switzerland*

*Risum, ascent of east ridge.* On September 20 Isomi Okanda (61) of Japan and a porter made an ascent of the east ridge of 7,050m Risum (Fuqu in Chinese). Okanda followed the route of the first ascent, which was made on May 10, 1997, by Kazuyoshi Kondo and two friends. The expedition approached via the large glacial plateau northwest of Xixabangma.

TAMOTSU NAKAMURA *and the JAPANESE ALPINE NEWS*

*Tsha Tung, first ascent.* During my 2003 winter attempt on Xixabangma I noticed a small peak on the south side of the Phu Chu Valley just east of Eiger Peak (6,912m), as it was called by Doug Scott's 1982 Xixabangma expedition. Later study showed it to be a northerly outlier of Gyaltsen (6,151m). My Tibetan yak herder and camp assistant, Kesang Tsering, told me it was called Tsha Tung and was, as far as anyone locally knew, unclimbed. It looked like a perfect objective for a short, semi-commercial trip (I believe the correct phrase is "not-for-profit").

Later that winter I was guiding in Chamonix, when my client said he would be interested in a trying something new but not too difficult in the Himalaya. The seed of the



Looking more or less south from the slopes of Xixabangma down the snow-covered Phola Valley to peaks on or close to the Tibet-Nepal border: (A) Tsha Tung (5,995m), (B) Gyalzen Peak (6,151m), (C) Bhairab Takura (a.k.a. Madiya Peak, 6,799m), (D) Eiger Peak (quoted as 6,912m but according to contours on the Chinese Mi Desheng map likely to be less than 6,800m), (E) Lengpo Gang (a.k.a. Big White Peak, 6,979m), (F) Gur Karpo Ri (6,889m), (G) Ice Tooth (6,200m). *Lindsay Griffin*



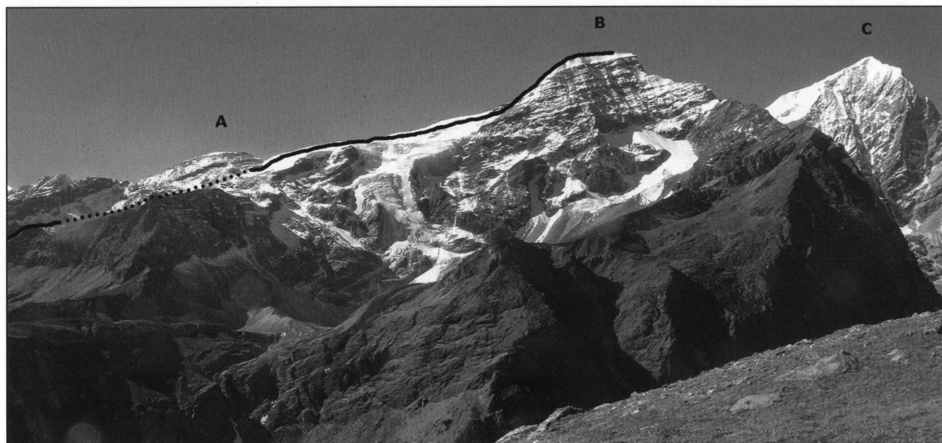
A pile of partially burnt foam, plastic and other material adorns the base camp site used to climb the southwest face of Xixabangma. This, and other abandoned rubbish, is believed to be attributable to recent winter expeditions. *Victor Saunders*

idea was formed. The final team and camp staff were Jo Cleere, Vernon Gayle, Philip Jeffery, Victor Saunders, and John Tunney (all British), plus Kasang Tsering and Penpa Tsering (Tibetan Chinese), with Yie Xie and Huang Zhi Qiang (Chinese). Jo takes up the story:

“June 2005. Our plan had been to trek from the Xixabangma north-side base camp to the south-side base camp. The average altitude of our trek would have been around 5,000m giving us sufficient acclimatization for an attempt on Tsha Tung (5,995m). In the event we were unable to hire yaks at the last village before the north-side base camp. Lack of rain in the spring had been hard for the yaks and their herders didn’t want to exhaust the animals on another expedition. The plateau in this part of Tibet is a

barren and desolate place, and the villagers rely on their yaks for food and transport. In addition, the yaks are an important source of income during the main climbing season on Xixabangma, when they are used to carry loads. So, we were back in the 4x4 for another exciting drive to Nyalam (3,700m). The morning after our arrival we used yaks to carry loads up the first eight kilometers of the Phu Chu Valley to our base camp at Drak Po Che (a.k.a. Smaug’s Lair, 4,070m).

“The most logical route on our peak was the wide, snowy east ridge. We used a couple of donkeys to carry loads up to Camp 1 (4,600m), located in a beautiful hanging valley fed by a couple of streams. The following day we scrambled up loose boulders and rock for about 400m



Part of the Langtang-Jugal Himal, viewed from the northeast above the Phu Chu Valley in Tibet. (A) The top section of this small, broad-topped summit a little southeast of Tsha Tung and just rising above the ridge is most probably Gyaltzen (6,151m). (B) Tsha Tung (5,995m). (C) Eiger Peak (quoted as 6,912m but according to contours on the Chinese Mi Desheng map likely to be less than 6,800m). The route taken on the first ascent of Tsha Tung via the east ridge is marked. A high camp at 5,135m was positioned close to the left edge of the picture. *Victor Saunders*

and then followed a rocky shelf, establishing Camp 2 (5,135m) at the snout of the glacier. June 19 was our summit day and initially involved moving westward on a broad glacial shelf and climbing a 100m 40° ice wall to the ridge. Seven hundred meters of snow led to the fine summit pyramid. As the clouds drifted in and out, we had an occasional glimpse of the fearsome-looking north face of Phurbi Chachu and a set of pinnacles at its eastern end, which we dubbed The Coolin Towers. The grade of our route equated to Alpine PD, and descent, following our route of ascent, was straightforward, with even some judicious glissading to ease tired legs.

“On June 21 we cleaned the area around base camp and bagged our tins to be carried down by yak, taking care to leave the camp as we found it. Then we finished our expedition with a trek up to the base camp under Xixabangma’s southwest face. Here we found huge amounts of garbage left by recent winter expeditions. The piles of rubbish and debris were quite recent (winter 2004) and even included car batteries, which had been dumped next to the lake in the middle of the camp. They had been discarded together with large piles of plastic, unwanted gear, and gas canisters. It is unacceptable to leave camps in such a state.”

Jo is right. It is quite unacceptable. Over the years there has been much informal discussion as to who is to blame for this type of execrable behavior. American and Nordic expeditions are often contrasted, favorably, with those of other nationalities. Sometimes the blame is laid at the door of the growing commercial expedition industry, but the more I visit the Himalaya, the more I come to the opposite conclusion: amateur expeditions often leave much more rubbish than commercial trips, possibly because commercial ventures have a vested interest in keeping their sites clean for future clients. At this camp site the most recent offenders had left a calling card; a bleached yak skull signed by members of the Italian-Polish winter expedition. The marker pen had been left alongside.

VICTOR SAUNDERS, *Chamonix, France*

*Gaurishankar, northeast ridge attempt.* The noted American mountaineer, John Roskelley, and his son Jess aimed to make the first ascent of Gaurishankar (7,134m) from its Tibetan side. The mountain defeated them as it had at least three earlier attempts from the north. [Although Don Whillans 1964 British expedition approached the Tibetan side of the mountain from Nepal and attempted the north face to northwest ridge, the northeast ridge was not attempted until 1997, when Japanese, Yasushi Yamanoi and his wife Takeo Nagao, climbed the ridge to 6,300m, at which point the way ahead looked steep, narrow and highly corniced. They retreated. The following year another Japanese team with the same objective failed to reach the base of the mountain—Ed.]

On a clear day the mountain is visible from Kathmandu on the northeastern horizon and was thought to be the world’s highest mountain until the British Survey of India made more careful measurements. The first ascent was made from Nepal by John Roskelley himself in May 1979 via the southwest face, the feature seen from Kathmandu. However, the main summit (Shankar) of Gaurishankar has only been summited twice since Roskelley’s success.

The Roskelleys were unable to get very far in their efforts on one of its northeast ridges, of which there are several. Their ridge comprised unstable rocks, “like a house of cards” and some of these had huge icicles hanging from them. John and Jess gave up at only 5,450m due to the dangerous terrain and the difficulty of the climb, which appeared to get worse the more they ascended.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY, *AAC Honorary Member, Nepal*