

Autumn 2008 Expedition

–Gorge Country in SE Tibet and Mountains in Sichuan–

Tamotsu (Tom) Nakamura

The autumn 2008 expedition to the borderland of Tibetan marches again proved that Tom Nakamura is a man of “Blue Sky”. Throughout 40 days journey the God blessed and promised me for finest weather except a couple of days in Sichuan. The following is a brief report of the expedition.

Objective of expedition

1. Southeast Tibet - Exploration of Dungri Garpo 6090m in Deep Gorge Country

No one accessed to this massif from the west and photos were not taken. A name and height of the peak “Dungri Garpo” are seen only on a map of 1:2,500,000, Map of Mountain Peaks on the Qinghai-Xizang (Tibet) Plateau. Dungri Garpo massif is located on the Mekong-Yu Qu (tributary of Salween River) Divide north of Damyon massif. The main peak 6090m of Dungri Garpo is in E-98° 20' and N-29° 17'. The both massifs are northern extension of the Nu Shan ranging from north to south. The southern extension is Meili Snow Mountains. A 6070m peak just north of Dungri Garpo was also a target of our exploration.

2. Sichuan - Unveiling 6079m peak called Ren Zhong Feng south of Minya Konka

This peak also appears on the same map of 1:2,500,000, Map of Mountain Peaks on the Qinghai-Xizang (Tibet) Plateau. Ren Zhong Feng is one of a few unclimbed 6,000m peak in Sichuan. However, no record to have explored was reported and photos were available. The 6079m peak is located in E-101° 25' and N-29° 18'.

In addition, unclimbed Xiaqingla 5,470 of Daxue Shan range northwest of Danba town in the Dadu River basin was focused as another target.

Members of expedition

1 st stege

Japanese

Tamotsu Nakamura (Leader - 73 years old), Tsuyoshi Nagai (76), Tadao Shintani (63)

Chinese

Chen Xiao Hong (37 guide), Zhou Lu Liu (40 assistant guide 40), Jin Xuan (31 interpreter), Ge Ding (51 cook), Jiang Chu (53 driver), Gan Ma (32 driver)

Note: Jin Xuan (female) is Han and others are all Tibetan (male).

2 nd stage**Japanese**

Tamotsu Nakamura, Tadao Shintani

Chinese

Zhang Jiyue (45 male), Jian Li Hong (29 female)

Itinerary (total driving distance 4,000km)**1st stage (driving distance 2,270km)**

October 23: Tokyo/Hiroshima – Kunming, Yunnan

October 25: Kunming – (air) – Shangri La of Yunnan – (car) – Deqen

October 26: Deqen – (car) – Mekong River – Yangjing, Tibet

October 30: Yangjing – (car) – Markam

October 31: Markam – (car) – crossing Mekong River – Jo Ba La – Chudeng – Dengba

November 1: Dengba – (car) – Tongda La 5008m – Zhogong – Yu Qu – Jomei – Bake

November 3-8: Caravan (Hong Qu) to Dungri Garpo & peaks on Mekong-Yu Qu Divide

November 9: Bake – (car) – Markam

November 10: Markam – (car) – crossing River of Golden Sand – Batang, Sichuan

November 11: Batang – (car) – Litang plateau – Litang

November 12: Litang – (car) – Haizi Shan – Daocheng – Shangri La of Sichuan

November 13: Horse trekking to Kongga Xueshan

November 14: Shangri La of Shichuan – (car) – Daocheng – Xiangcheng

November 15: Xiangcheng – (car) – Derong – Shangri La of Yunnan

November 17: Shangri La of Yunnan – (air) – Kunming – Chengdu

2nd stage (driving distance 1,730km)

November 19: Chengdu – (car) – Dadu River/Tianwan River – Caoke Hot Spring
 November 20-23: Reconnaissance of Ren Zhong Feng
 November 23: Caoke Hot Spring – Dadu River – Luding
 November 24: Luding – (car) – Dadu River – Dangba – Dangling
 November 25: Horse trekking to Xiaqingla, Daxue Shan – (car) – Dangba
 November 26: Dangba – (car) – Ja-ra – Tagong – Kangding – Laoyuling Hot Spring
 November 27: Laoyuling Hot Spring – Xuemenkan pass – Mosi – Chengdu
 November 29: Chengdu – (air) – Kunming
 November 30: Kunming - Tokyo

Weather conditions (25 days were fine in 39 days)

October 23 – 25: Cloudy, Kunming
 October 25: Snow, Shangri La – Deqen
 October 26: Snow then cloudy, Deqen – Yangjing
 October 27 – 28: Rain, Yangjing
 October 29: Cloudy then fine, Yangjing
 October 30 – November 17: Fine weather continued for 19 days
 November 18: Cloudy, Chengdu
 November 19 – 22: Cloudy, Chengdu and Caoke Hot Spring/Tianwan River
 November 23: Fine then cloudy, Tianwan River and Dadu River
 November 24: Cloudy, Luding and Dadu River
 November 25: Cloudy then fine, Dangling
 November 26 – 28: Fine, Laoyuling/Xuemenkan pass/Mosi and Chengdu
 November 29: Fine, Chengdu and Kunming
 November 30: Fine, Kunming

Highlights

1. Discovery of Dungri Garpo 6090m – 1st stage

Problem arose first in Yangjing (Tibetan name is Yakalo.) on the way from Deqen (now famous for Meili Snow Mountains) to Markam, a junction of the Sichuan-Tibet Highway and Yunnan-Tibet Highway. Yangjing is well-known for salt-well and hot springs developing as a resort place. But a road north of Yangjing along the Mekong

River is notorious because of dangerous landslides that often stop traffic. In our case we were forced to stay 4 days at Yangjing hot spring due to dreadful falling rocks.

Our plan was drawn on the Russian topographical map of 1:200,000 to approach to Damyon and Dungri Garpo from north. But villagers told us that there was no trail to Damyon and also that deep snow would make it impossible to cross a high pass 5,300m to enter the valley of Dungri Garpo. Then we turned westwards driving the Sichuan-Tibet Highway to enter the Yu Qu, a largest tributary of the Salween River, mystery river of Tibet.

On November 1 we arrived at Bake village (3320m) in Yu Qu basin, which was a base for exploration of Durngri Garpo from the western side. A week caravan composing of ten horses and 5 muleteers was organized there and started marching up the Hong Qu, a tributary of Yu Qu. Three days caravan took us to a very cold and windy point at 4600m near the snow-covered headwaters of the Hong Qu, we could first viewed the west face of stunning Dungri Garpo of three peaks with steep buttress and hanging glacier.

On the way back we entered another branch valley to the north and found several attractive peaks of unvisited 5,800 – 6,000m close to Damyon on the Mekong-Yu Qu Divide. The north and east face of Dungri Garpo was photographed successfully in early morning at a high pass 4362m between Markam and the Mekong River. The profile was most challenging. A picture of 6070m peak north of Dungri Garpo was taken. Good pictures of Damyon massif were taken en route from Yangjing to Markam and also from Jo Ba La west of the Mekong River.

After Dungri Garpo we continued drive a long distance from southeast Tibet to Sichuan. We cross the River of Golden Sand (upper Yangzte) and drove a long distance from Batang to Shangri La of Yunnan enjoying wonderful scenic view throu Litang Plateau and Daocheng/Xiangchen Counties which is the heart of west Sichuan. Thanks to finest weather, we had a good fortune to take hundred nice pictures of outstanding peaks on the Shaluli Shan range such as Xiashe 5833m, 5838m peak in Litang Plateau, Genyen 6204m, and three famous holy peaks of Kongga Xueshan; Xiannairi 6032m, Yangmaiyong 5958m and Xiarudoji 5958m. Not only peaks but fascinating scenery of autumn leaves and Tibetan houses in Xiangcheng County must be attractive. On closing this part I would like to emphasize that Miss. Jin Xuan is an excellent interpreter and was much helpful to the team.

2. Veiled 6079m south of Minya Konka and peaks in Sichuan – 2nd stage

It was my subject for long time to unveil 6079m peak south of Minya Konka. The peak, tentatively named as Ren Zhong Feng is located south of Tianwan River flowing into the Dadu River, one of major tributaries of the Yangtze River. It is tentatively named as Ren Zhong Feng as the peak is in the headwater of Gang Gou valley north of Ren Zhong Lake. Access is very easy, only a few climbers have paid attention to this peak till today. One of them is John Harling III, a chief editor of the American Alpine Journal and an author of The Eiger Obsession. For questing for this peak, we can reach, a base, Caoke hot spring in a day drive from Chengdu.

We departed from Chengdu on November 19 by a 4WD vehicle driven by Zhang Jiyue, my 18 years friend, from Sichuan Earth Expeditions Inc. based in Chengdu. On the same day we arrived at Caoke hot spring (good hotel). However the valley was misted and mountains were cloud-draped. We had to stay for four days in the hot spring to wait good weather. On the forth day a couple of hours in morning were the only chance to take pictures. We were in a hurry to go up the valley to Ren Zhong Lake. The valley was deep and difficult to see the peak. But we were lucky to avail ourselves of a narrow chance. The photos thus taken must be of much value.

Apart from the mountain peak, we were surprised that construction of dams and hydraulic power stations were progressing in a large scale and terrific speed in the Dadu River basin, the main stream and tributaries. Naturally, destruction of environments was going on along the rivers. The Dadu River is known as a route of the Long March. A museum was newly built at the place where the Red Army crossed the river in 1935. The borderland is changing very fast.

On November 24 we moved northward along the Dadu River for the next target to reconnoiter Xiaqingla 5470m of Daxue Shan range of Dangling village northwest of Danba, which is called as "Valley of Beauties" and is unique for Gyalong style houses and historical defense towers. On November 25, one day horse caravan took us from Dangling village to a lake, Hulu Hai at 4,170m located east of Xiaqingla, a beautiful pyramid towering to the sky. The peak undoubtedly allures climbers.

The final leg of the 2nd stage was the last two days. The weather became again perfectly fine. In order to take pictures, Jiyue kindly took a long route from Danba to Chengdu via Ja-ra 5820m (Haizi Shan), Kangding, Laoyuling hot spring, Xuemenkan pass between Lamo-she 6070m/Baihaizi Shan 5924m and Minya Konka massif. Owing to his thoughtfulness many remarkable pictures have been added to my photos library. Among others, photos of the east face Mt. Edgar (E-Kongga) 6,618m are particularly important, as weather is always bad in this area of Minya Konka massif.

