

# NEWLY OPENED TENGI RAGI TAU 6,943m IN NEPAL

First Ascent by Hokkaido Mountaineering Association

*Koichi Ezaki*

It was in the spring of 2000 that I saw Tengi Ragi Tau (6943m) for the first time while we climbed Parchamo (6279m). Pushing through the snow to the top, I looked back and found the triangular peak sky-high with the top like a monk's hat. Rock wall in front stood roughly 500m higher than Parchamo. It strongly attracted my attention as the new target to climb but it was a forbidden peak according to our guide's explanation. A rugged rocky high peak and a gentle snow peak with Tesi Rapcha La in between, such a sharp contrast gave me a strong impression unforgettable.

Nepali Government released 103 mountains to climbers in 2002. Hokkaido Mountaineering Association celebrated its jubilee in the same year. These 2 events led to actualize the memorial expedition to one of the 103, the unclimbed Tengi Ragi Tau. As far as judging from my observation from Parchamo, the confronting south-east face looked unclimbable and it seemed cleverer to search for some easier route in its west side. Our conclusion given from maps and information then available was that one of the 2 rock ribs on the west wall of 1600m might be feasible, and our plan was prepared based on that assumption. The expedition was composed of 5 members with 5 sherpas and 4 kitchen-staffs.

On November 26, we established BC (4800m) at the snout of Thyagb Glacier. Accompanying 2 sherpas, I crossed Tesi Rapcha La down to Drolambau Glacier through slope covered with loose stones, with somewhat danger. On the following day, started ABC set at the side moraine, we followed up the glacier and later traversed it up to a col located across. To my disappointment, those rock ribs drawn in maps were actually mere projected rock faces which looked beyond negotiable routes. Fretting about unexpectedness I held binocular tightly and looked around everywhere seeking for any other possibilities in place of those illusory ridges, but all in vain. What a day! I was quite at a loss how we should do after then.

At any rate, there was another peak, climbable one, nearby, so we all made an ascent of Parchamo and returned BC on November 11. The confronting south-east face was out of consideration from the beginning. But let me see...isn't there any possible way? It may be worthwhile reconsidering it. So, we started to rivet our eyes on the wall and watched a rather sharp ridge stretching up to around the middle height at the center of the wall. At least it should be safe to follow it and you could find how is the condition only when you put your nose on the rock.

On November 12, 2 sherpas and I went up around the glacier stretching at the far right hand of the wall, and from there looked up the prominently shaped ridge lying ahead, which seemed to assure safety for climbers to expose themselves. We started to tackle it by going up 3 rope pitches on the rock and then a snow slope slanting up to right hand. We covered 6 rope pitches on that day and returned with some confident feeling on this route.

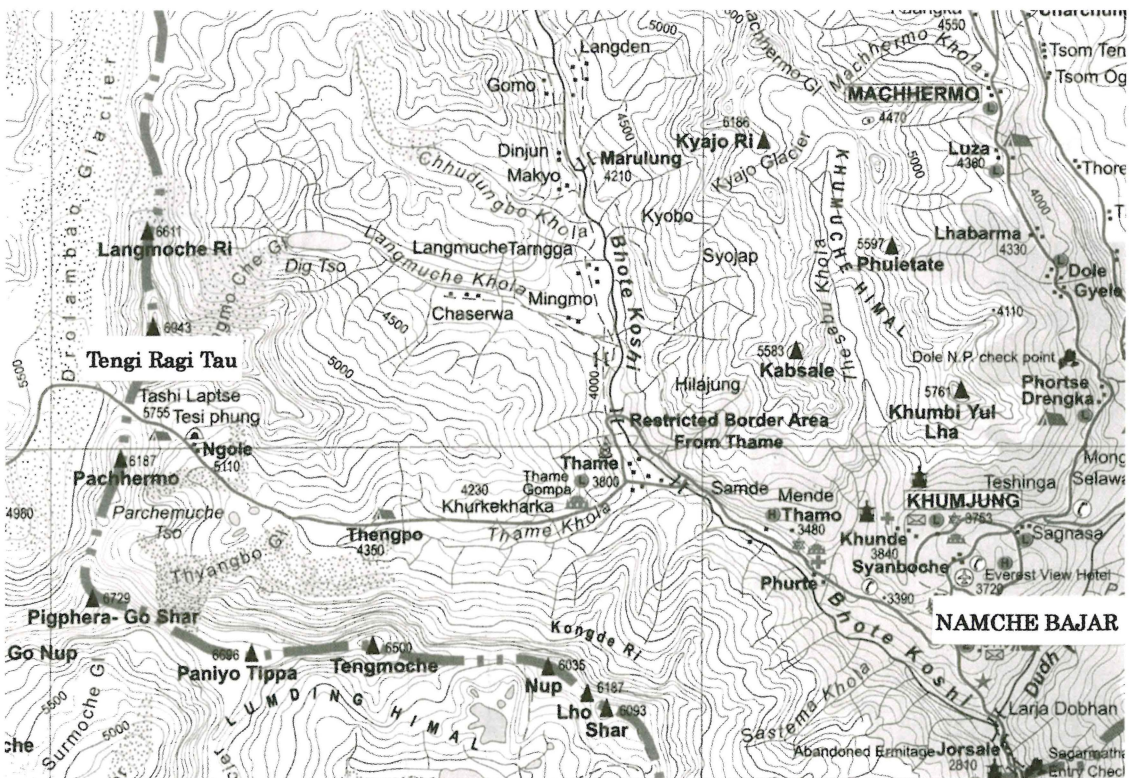
As having decided to follow this way further, we built ABC (5300m) on the glacier and intended to set C1 up on the ridge. On 15th, Ezaki, Onda and 2 sherpas extended the route through the snow slope which gradually turned steeper, and then finally reached the rock ridge. Luckily snow conditions were not bad and the weather was fine. On 17th, we pitched C1 (6050m) after taking a half day to cut 45-degree snow surface into a flat space for a tent. Hard ice at the bottom took us much toil to shave off.

Thereafter Takahashi and 2 sherpas continued to fix the route up the ridge to 6400m point spending 2 full days, then all retreated to BC for taking a rest. On 23rd, the summit-bout team consisted of Ezaki, Takahashi and 2 sherpas started BC. We left C1 at 3:00a.m. next day and

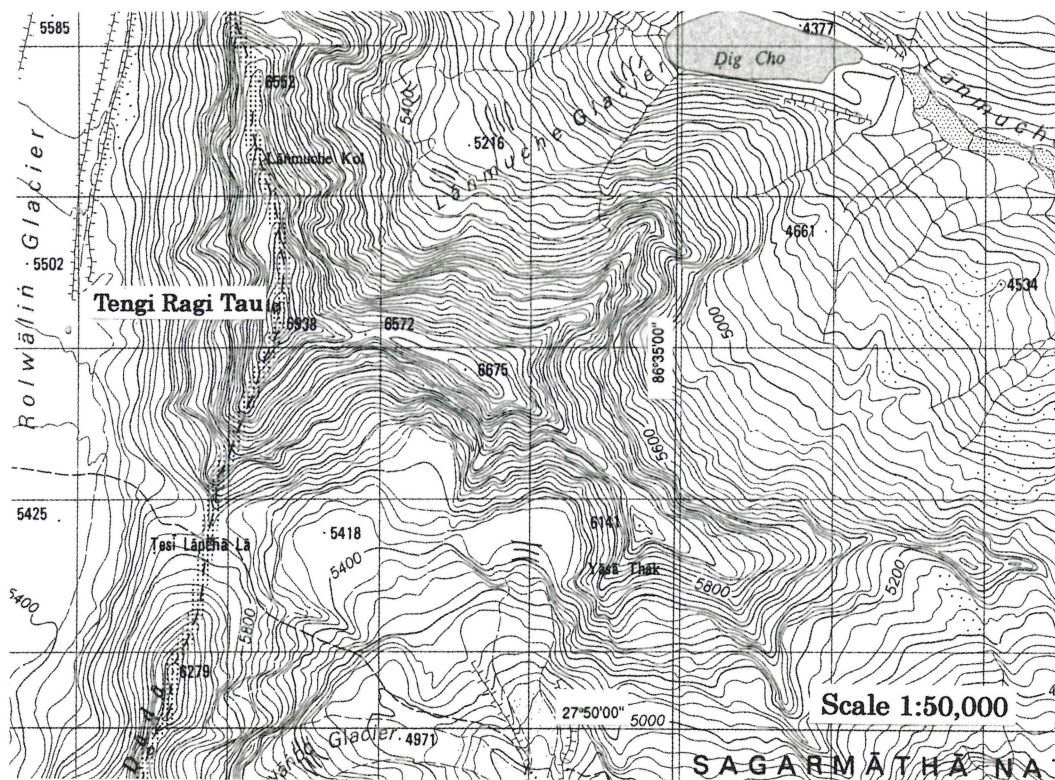
climbed up through fluted ice wall, but the face was so complicated that we were forced to lead ourselves into a critical place impossible to go through. It was at the height of 6750m or so, still 200m remained up to the top. There was no choice other than going down once and trying another route. We rappelled down 200m and then tackled a gully directing to left upward. After climbed it to some distance up, we stopped to go up further that day, but felt it promising and decided to follow it when we would make another attempt. Then, we left all gears there and got down to BC.

Strong wind blew during the following 3 days, and it was on 28th when we returned C1. This time, Onda, Morishita and 2 sherpas departed C1 at 3:00a.m. on the next day. Huge mushroom-shaped cornices hanging down from the main ridge down to the wall. The climb through the ice face in the gully led them beneath the cornices but it was not easy to get through the mushroom to reach the main ridge. Thanks God, however, there found one place where a slit between cornices was narrowly opened and now they broke out on the ridge. It was such a thin ridge that they looked down Drolambau Glacier right below their feet to the opposite side. The summit was seen just 250m ahead, but the time was already late and not enough to trace the ridge but only to go down to C1.

Again strong wind continued to blow during the following few days and at last the summit day has come. On December 4th, Ezaki, Takahashi and 2 sherpas started C1 at 3:00 a.m. Jumaring up to the main ridge, we stood on the main ridge. Hard wind from the west was howling there. We could not stop shivering even wearing down-filled jacket and anorak. We were afraid to be blown off but this might be our last chance. Determined to reach the top by all means, we attacked one cornice after another and 2 hours 30 minutes later got to the top. Looking back over the ridge



Maps of Tengri Ragi Tau



Maps of Tengri Ragi Tau

coming, there seen Parchamo, such a small hill! And of course we enjoyed an enormous panoramic view of Gaurisankar, Tibetan frontier ranges, Everest, Makalu, etc.

We climbed down the wall of 1600m high to BC within that day, and on the following day (Dec. 5th) Onoda, Morishita and 1 sherpa made the second ascent from C1 and returned BC on 6th. It must have been the last chance from seasonal viewpoint, as it was just before the desperate winter gale was starting to blow. Our luck of success may considerably depend on this good timing. (Translation by Kei Kurachi)