

## FIRST ASCENT OF NORBU KANG (6085m) OF DOLPO IN 2003.

In the summer of 2003, we sent another expedition to Dolpo for carrying out more extensive survey than 1999. We left Jomsom on the 2nd of June and reached Chharka on the 10th via Dangar, Sangda, Geba La (GPS 5136m N28 54 895, E83 36 363) and Kiraphuk La (GPS 5580m, N28 59 075 E83 35 598). After two days rest at Chharka, the climbing party to Norbu Kang (6085m, N29 07 02 E83 03 34) separated from the main party and headed for the mountain range between Tarap and Phoksumdo. Norbu Kang is the highest peak this range, which had been reconnoitered from the west by the Kitazato University expedition in 1973 on their way back from the successful ascent of Selkhu Dolma in the north-eastern Kanjiroba Himal. Norbu Kang is one of the newly opened peaks by the H.M. Government of Nepal in the fall of the previous year together with neighboring Kang Tega (Kangfu Gia, 5916m, N29 06 13 E82 59 45) in the same area. From Chharka, we proceeded to Tinkyu by Mo La (GPS 5027m). Beyond the pass, the river water flows down northward and the scenery comes to resemble Tibetan high plateau. Then we entered another tributary to the west and crossed Charku La (Jhyakoi Bhanjyang, GPS 5453m) on the 5th of June. On the pass spotted by remaining snow, a distant view of Norbu Kang was in sight beyond the gorges of Tarap Khola to the WSW. We entered Do/Tarap division of Dolpo. From Do, we went northwestward passing through the village of Tokkyu and crossed Numla South (GPS 5333m). Num Ri (5547m), a rock peak just north of the pass is a splendid lookout point toward the mountain groups of Kanjiroba Himal. The pass was covered with abundant snow. Fluttering prayer flags of the Laptse and freezing cold wind let us feel we are in Tibetan high plateau.

Now in June, a band of Maobati's was prevalent in Do/Tarap and menacing the villagers and travelers. They requested us to pay US\$100 per person. Tenacious protest and negotiations made them to unwillingly reduce the amount to R/S2000. and to issue a receipt mentioning an oath to require additional donation in no way. They usually carry a carbine and a survival knife with them. In June, most of villagers all over Dolpo go to grassy hills of Tarap to collect "Caterpillar Fungus", which is also called Vegetable Wasps or Plant Worms (*cordyceps sinensis (berk) sacc*), Yachagumba in Nepalese. The name of this plant or insect is written 冬虫夏草 in Chinese and Japanese. The meaning is "Insect in winter, grass in summer". It commonly grows in all over Dolpo district, but "Tarap Yachagumba" collected in June is of the best quality and is sold at a higher price. Usually it is classified by color (black, brown, gold) and its length (3 to 8cm). The big and golden color is the most expensive. At Num La south (GPS 5333m), we entered the area of Shey Phoksumdo National Park. At the broad river bed of Chuchun Khola, coming down straightly from the north side of Norbu Kang group, we camped near by the stream. Here too, we met many young Nepalese to collect Yachagunba. On the next morning we crossed Baga La (GPS 5199m). Some of the collectors were near the pass. A loud and ear-splitting sound of Nepal's New Music was flowing out of a cassette. Young generation is suffering also in Nepal. "For what do you do so?" An answer returned swiftly "Money! Money! Money is the first." They earn much money from this job. However, a part of their money would be targeted by Maoist's fund making. We encountered here a band of a few hundreds of Yaks. From the junction we entered a tributary Chhoitai khola. Nurbu Kang was not yet visible due to dense haze. This stream is dammed up at the point of 400m above the junction and we had to climb a steep slope

of the right bank to Chhoitai Tal (lake). Another score of young people were working for Yachagumba near a lake.

On the 20th of June, we set up a base camp (GPS 4805m, N29 07 877 E83 01 666) above the Chhoitai Tal. After reconnaissance for the following two days, we pitched a high camp at the end of a glacier (GPS 5041m N29 07 508 E83 02 958). On the 23rd of June, we proceeded to a col near a small glacier and crossed two crevasses en route. On the following day, a storm with heavy rain prevented us from climbing to the summit. On the 25th, we left the camp at 5.00 am and reached a foot of the north face of Norbu Kang at 6.00 am. From there we started climb through ice crusted chute of avalanches at an angle of 40 degrees and the climb got steeper on an ice face of 60 degrees. We ascended the summit ridge and stood atop at 10.30 am. Rappelling down the same route and returned to the high camp at 15.30 pm. It was a wonderful climb of 15 pitches in all and the route grade 4, pitch grade 5.8 respectively. The weather was cloudy. In the following morning, we started a trek toward Phoksumdo, where we stayed two nights at the beautiful lake side. The mountains at the northeastern corner of Kanjiroba Himal were well known to us since we had first succeeded in scaling the highest peak, Tso Karpo Kang in 1971. We visited our old base camp just above Lake Tso Karpo, one and half days trek from Ringmo. Unfortunately the weather was so bad that we could make no attempt on a lovely virgin peak of Shey Shikar (6139m). On the 4th of July, as originally scheduled, all the party members assembled at Shey Gompa after one month.



North side of Norbu Kang seen from campsite of Panklanga Khola(GPS4479m N29 10 384 E83 03 177)