

# First Ascent of Hungchi 7036m

## *Osaka Eiho Alpine Club*

At 12:10 P.M., April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2003, members of our party, consisting of three Japanese and four Nepalese, stood on top of Mt. Hungchi. The time was almost due as we had anticipated it to be. We exchanged a few words with the leader at the BC, transceivers on both sides having been turned on. This was our fourth challenge and this time we were successfully rewarded.

### Gokyo ~ ABC March 31 ~ April 3

A three hour walk northward from Gokyo along the right bench of the Ngonjumba Glacier took us to the edge of the cliff where we descended to the bottom of the glacier. The sandy wall is about 25 meters and almost perpendicular. It took us one whole day to bring down 30 packages of our load, each weighing approximately 30 kilograms, with scree frequently tumbling down. Crossing for 2 hours along the moraines of the glacier approximately 2 kilometers wide and going up above the slower left bank, we came to a flat plateau commanding a good view of Everest, Cho Oyu, Gyachung Kang and Hungchi, whence we proceeded to the BC site.

The site was on the right side of the bench with a glacial lake to the east with an entire view of Hungchi beyond and, on the south side, a grassy plateau bounded by craggy slopes of a 5,465-meter peak. After about a 40-minute walk farther onto the bench, we came down to a lovely grassland below. Studded with rocks, it was a meadow-like place and we called it "the Japanese Garden." Past it and after another 100 meter uphill walk, we came to a lakeside. Another 15-minute walk along the left side of the lake took us to a fairly level place, with the south-western ridge of Hungchi visible nearby. Here we pitched our ABC and everyone engaged in carrying up the load from BC several times, each going back and forth for about 3 hours.

### ABC ~ C1(6,100 m) April 3 ~ April 11

In five minutes' walk from the ABC the snow-covered slope gets gradually steeper and we had ropes fixed along the route. There was a crevasse in our way, and with special care we crossed it by means of a snow bridge. Ascending for thirty minutes we reached the bottom of our first target, one of the side ridges of about 40 degrees of inclination and 80 meters in length. We set about climbing the ridge with a massive rock on our right side. Up to this time it took us one hour and forty minutes from ABC. Then we turned left towards another mass of rocks ahead. There we were able to rest on a small bulge of rock at its base. Having traversed the base, we came to a second side ridge about 50 meters long, which we climbed, and again made a traverse below a rock mass. Then we came to the foot of a long side ridge that directly reaches up to the main line of the South West Ridge. The average inclination of it is about 50 degrees and the length about 400 meters, and it took us one hour to scale it. In this way we arrived at the uppermost ramparts of rocks which would seem to require grade 3 climbing techniques. We used the main rope (150 meters long) and came out of it to the final snow-covered slopes of 60 degree-inclination. We had ropes fixed for 30 meters and attained the main ridge.

We further made our way across the loose rock pile on the eastern side of the ridge, and, after passing a small pinnacle, we followed the eastern side of the snow-covered ridge for two hours until we came to the base of a massive rock where we were to pitch C1. It took seven and a half hours from ABC.

### C1 ~ C2(6,200 m) April 11 ~ April 15

From C1, we headed for the right side of the massive rock across the adjoining snow wall that was

approximately 50 degrees. We found a couloir on the rock face and, fixing the main rope along the left side of it, continued our ascent; the right side being solid ice with small pebbles mixed. Bit by bit we gained altitude clearing snow off the rock face. Although it was technically 3-4 grade climbing, perhaps due to the altitude, hammering a rock piton in its place was a difficult task. After climbing approximately 150 meters, we came out of the couloir onto the west side of the ridge. There monstrous ice blocks and snow were intermingling in a confused way so as to form a kind of maze, and we had a difficult time in finding our way. Such was the other side of the ridge. The slope as a whole is 50-60 degrees' inclination and at two places we had to descend by rappeling ice walls of 30 meters and 50 meters, respectively.

After threading through the labyrinth of ice blocks, we finally found ourselves on the open ridge and took turns in plowing through the snow half a meter deep looking for C2 site.

The snow field on the west side of the ridge that we had in mind to be our C2 site turned out to be impossible to approach because of a 10-meter wide crevasse running parallel with the ridge. We ended up pitching the C2 right on the narrow ridge.

#### C2~C3( 6,600m) April 15 ~ April 18

After following the snow ridge for some time, we took our route on the eastern slope approximately 20 meters below the ridge and continued traversing the 50-60 degree ice face with snow 10 centimeters deep. Ice screws were driven in every 30 meters for the ropes to be fixed. Often obstructed by huge ice blocks, we had to change our route and went up and down trying to find a better one. Thus little by little, we gained altitude on the ice face, which was too solid for us to even worry about it giving way.

We had a tough time here on this slope of ice blocks. A monotonous repetition of kicking steps and hammering the ice axe was all there was to it, yet it was so exhausting that one would ignore the duty to communicate on the transceiver at the arranged time.

When we finally found our way out of the ice block zone, we confronted a sheer ice wall approximately 30 meters high on the west side. Having scaled this almost perpendicular face and driven the snow bar up onto the top, no one would have wanted to move any more but to stoop down and pant for a while.

Before us there was a gentle snow slope, and after 30 minutes' walk up the slope we came to a level patch of snow which we chose to be our C3 site. After the wind-blown ridge, this was like a heaven with a view, far below on the west, of the glacier lake and our tiny BC, and farther beyond a wide range of peaks extending as far as Rolwaling Himal.

#### C3~The Highest Point( 7,036 m) April 18~ April 19

Up until this time we worked under the system of 'division of labor', the four Nepalese members engaged in breaking trail and the three Japanese members carrying up the loads. Yet from this day, we were to work together.

Right beside the tent is a steep snow wall 65 meters high and 60 degrees of inclination. Having scaled this wall with the help of two main ropes, we came to a patch of snow field that we used to call 'the triangle plateau.' This was the place we had intended to pitch C3 before we discovered that violent and gusty winds prevailed all the time up there.

Snow was knee-deep there and we plowed through it towards the northwest. Facing us on the east side was a sheer black rock cliff with a narrow snow ridge on the top, and, farther beyond, another ridge

was visible that seemed to lead to the summit.

From the snow field the route descends approximately 20 meters down to the snow ridge on the black cliff. With utmost care, we traced the ridge which was much narrower than we had expected and was a series of continual ups and downs. Finally we came to the foot of a snow wall to our right. Up to this point the route had been opened up the previous day by Shimizu and two Nepalese members. Also, this point was the place where we had to retreat in 2001 because of soft snow.

The sirdar and Shimizu hung onto the snow wall which seemed to be 50 degrees inclined and began fixing the rope. The other five followed and climbed up. Above this wall is a huge mass of rock which looks somewhat like a claw of a crab as seen from below.

Having traversed the foot of the rock about 10 meters to the left, we came to a gully and scaled up the narrow groove of ice and rock. Above the gully was another snow wall about 20 meters high. We climbed it to the top and saw before us a long stretch of a snowy ridge leading to the summit. We were deeply moved at this impressive sight.

The snow ridge, comparatively wide on the west side but sharply cut on the other side, looked level at first sight but turned out to be a series of small ups and downs.

Taking a detour to the left to avoid a small crevasse right below the peak, we ascended the last 100 meters of the slope and finally stood on the summit, the seven of us: viz., Shimizu, Morita, Fukuhara, Tul Bahadur, Ram Kaji, Hitman and Durga Rai. It was 12:10.

The summit was unexpectedly narrow, so all of us anchored ourselves to a rock pin. Then we exchanged messages with Leader Shiro at BC, and took our pictures with the two national flags and an O.E.A.C. banner tied to a rope. Half an hour passed all too soon. Fog was creeping in.

We buried the national flags of both countries under the snow and left the summit. Having driven in an ice axe as a pivot and using a rope, we methodically descended the slope.

It was 16:00 that all the members returned to C3. Everyone slept like a log after all the activities of the past 11-hours, with a great sense of fulfillment.

## C1~ABC

The following day, the 4 Nepalese members went straight down to ABC, while the 3 Japanese members spent the night at C2 and came down to ABC the following day.

### Gears used

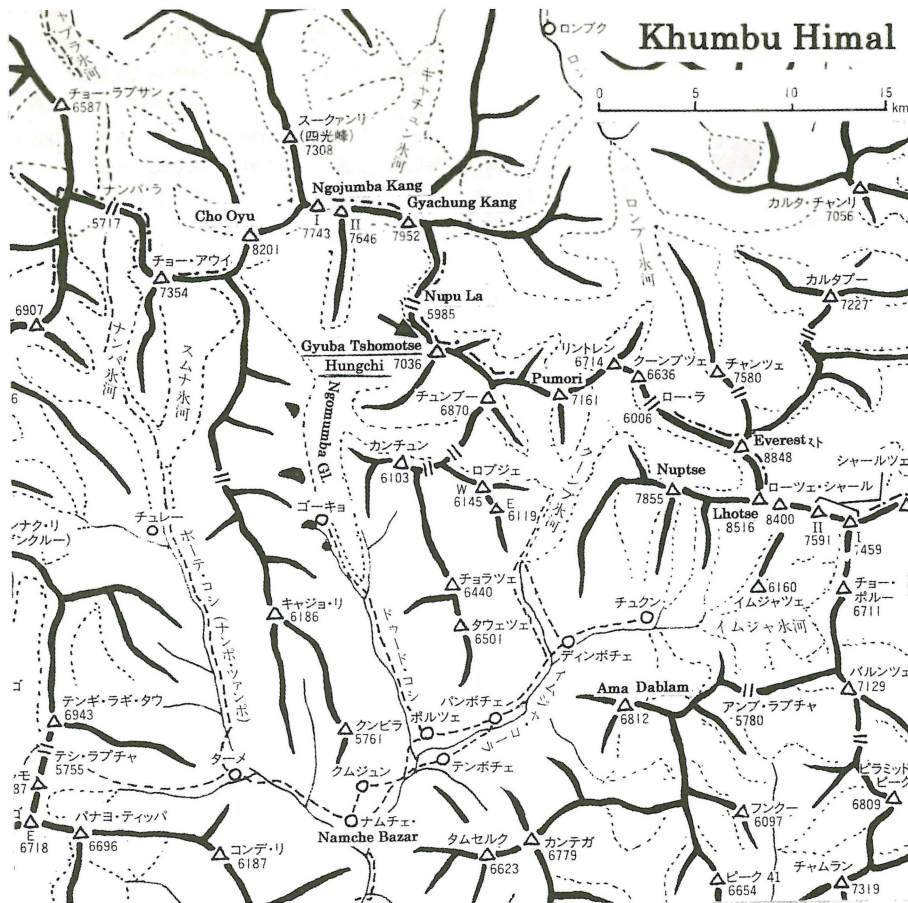
	Fix-rope	Main-rope	Snow-bars	Ice-screws	Rock-pitons
ABC~CI	1000m	150m	21	15	20
CI~CII	1400m	50m	35	25	21
CII~CIII	1000m		25	30	4
CIII~TOP	600m	300m	26	14	13
TOTAL	4000m	500m	84	84	58

### Party Constituents:

Japanese Leader: SHIRO Takashi  
 Members: SHIMIZU Kanji  
 MORITA Tadashi  
 FUKUHARA Katsuo

### Nepalese

Sirdar: Tul Bahadur Tamang  
 H.A.P.: Ram Kaji Tamang  
 Hitman Tamang  
 Santaman Tamang  
 Cook: Nar Bahadur Tamang  
 Kitchen Boys: Durga Rai Tamang  
 Chakra Bahadur  
 Mail Runner: Dambar Gurung  
 Liaison Officer: Sagar Achary



A View to Everest from the top of Hungchi

