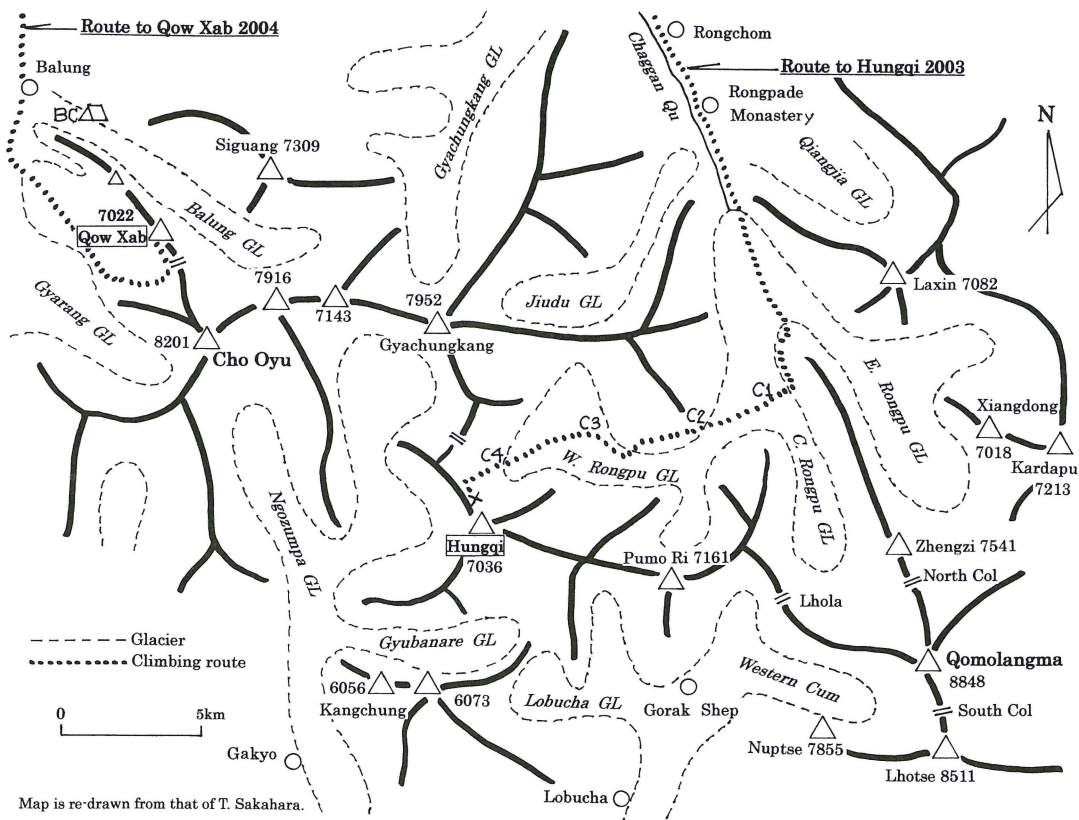


First Ascent of Qow Xab and Attempt on Hungchi

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Two ascents from Tibet in Cho Oyu – Qomolangma area

Qow Xab 7,022m 2004 and Hungqi 7,036m 2003



1. Qow Xab 7,022m – 2004

Tadakiyo Sakahara

I was successful in attaining a quick ascent of unclimbed Qow Xab via the northeast ridge in nine days from BC (4915m) set on the Balung Glacier, which was accomplished by crawling up through innumerable treacherous hidden crevasses and wading waist-deep snow. It was a miraculous luck that our party could eventually find a feasible route up the crest of this ridge.

The peak was regarded as a satellite peak of Cho Oyu by reason of a big difference in height between them, but in reality it is an independent peak isolated from the other. Our party consisted of my colleague Murakami, a high porter Pinzo and myself, but unfortunately Murakami had to give up reaching the top as he was exhausted after being trapped in a hidden crevasse on the way of our summit bid.

Outline of our climbing records is as follows:

- July 27: Set up BC.
 29: Looked for possible route on the north wall but in vain.
 30: Moved up to the wide BC plat (5640m) for Cho Oyu.
- August 1: Reconnoitered the northwest ridge, which appeared to provide some, if not great, possibilities.
 3: Established C1 (5960m) beside a lake at the edge of a glacier.
 4: Reached a col (6350m) on the northwest ridge by trudging along the side of the flank wall of a 6596m peak.
 5: Sakahara, Murakami and Pinzo built C2 on the col. Snow on the ridge was so soft that the only place possible for pitching the tent was just close to the rock wall nearby. It continued to snow every night so far and the snow had already heavily piled up.
 6: Three of us left C2 for the summit and went on wading snow strenuously all the way. At a steep snow wall around 6700m, Murakami fell into a hidden crevasse. Struggling himself out of a tight place, he lost his zeal and energy to continue with the climb and decided to return from there. The remaining two of us continued a laborious fight with snow further on, and amid a furious blizzard at 16:00 p.m., reached the top. We had to wait for about 30 minutes on the top in order to confirm our position under a clear view. Murakami joined us on the way back.
 7: Descended to C1.
 9: All returned to BC.

Hungchi 7,036m from Tibet Side 2003

Masakatsu Nakamura

Hungchi (Hungqi) 7,036m was first climbed from the southern side (Nepal side) by a party of Osaka Eiho Alpine Club in April, 2003. Their record already appeared on the Japanese Alpine News Vol. 5 May 2004. In the same year a party of the Nagano Mountaineering Association tried to ascend the same peak via north face from Tibet side in October. Though their attempt was not successful, it would be worthwhile to introduce their climb to overseas readers. The following is a summary of the expedition. Their challenge to open a route on the untouched north face of Hungchi had started with a reconnaissance in 2000.

2003 Attempt

Members: Leader Masakatsu Nakamura plus four members

- Oct 14: Japan - Chengdu
 Oct 15: Chengdu - Lhasa
 Oct 21: Arrived at BC (Qomolangma BC)
 Oct 24: BC - C1 at 5450m on the Central Longbuk Glacier
 Oct 29: C1 - Transit C2a at 5600m on the right bank of the confluence with the West Longbuk Glacier
 Oct 30: Transit C2a - Transit C2b at 5650m
 Oct 31: Transit C2b - C2 at 5700m

- Nov 1: C2 - C3 (ABC) at 5800m on the West Longbuk Glacier
- Nov 2: Reconnaissance of the north face
- Nov 3: Set up C4 at 6100m
- Nov 4 - 7: Route paving to a col on the northwest ridge, ropes were fixed for 650m.
- Nov 8 - 9: Remaining at C3
- Nov 10: Set up C4 at 6600m on the col for assaulting the summit
- Nov 11: Final assault
First detoured the Nepal side from the col and then ascended the ridge toward the summit, but too much time was spent on a snow wall about 200m below the summit and no time was left to continue the climb. Returned from that point.
- Nov 13: Left BC
- Nov 15: Arrived at Lhasa

The most serious concern on the north face is the danger of avalanches. The members judged that avalanches would be most unlikely to occur from late October to November, just before the winter. In fact, during 24 days when they were at BC and above, it snowed only five days and good weather continued. Nevertheless, they were forced to give up further assaults as they were short of time. It was most unfortunate that snowfalls concentrated on the days for carrying loads from BC to ABC. The loss of time was a fatal blow. (Edited from a report to The Himalayan Association of Japan)