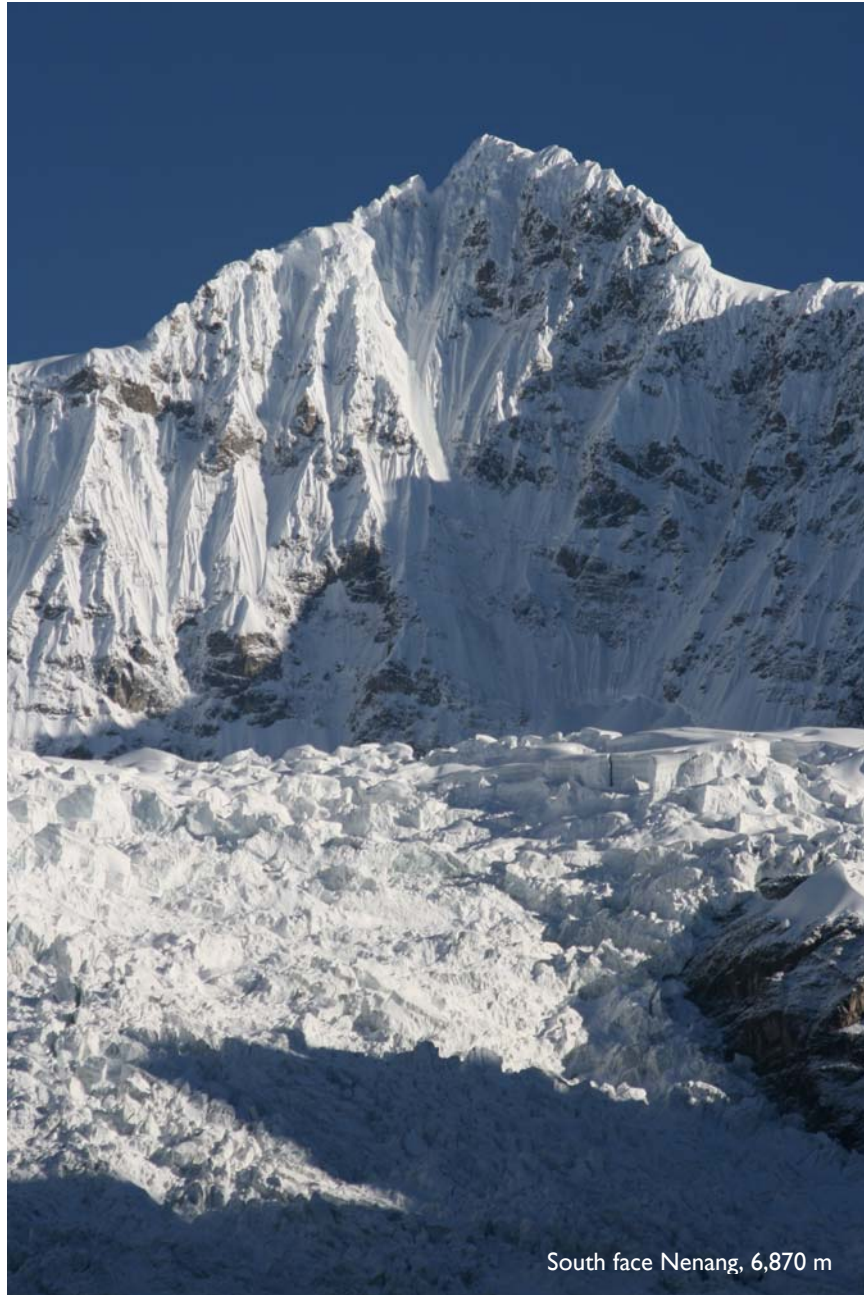


**THE HOLY MOUNTAIN NENANG 6,870M
NYAINQENTANGLHA EAST, TIBET**



South face Nenang, 6,870 m

The first attempt by

**Mark Richey (USA)
Mark Wilford (USA)
Jim Lowther (UK)**

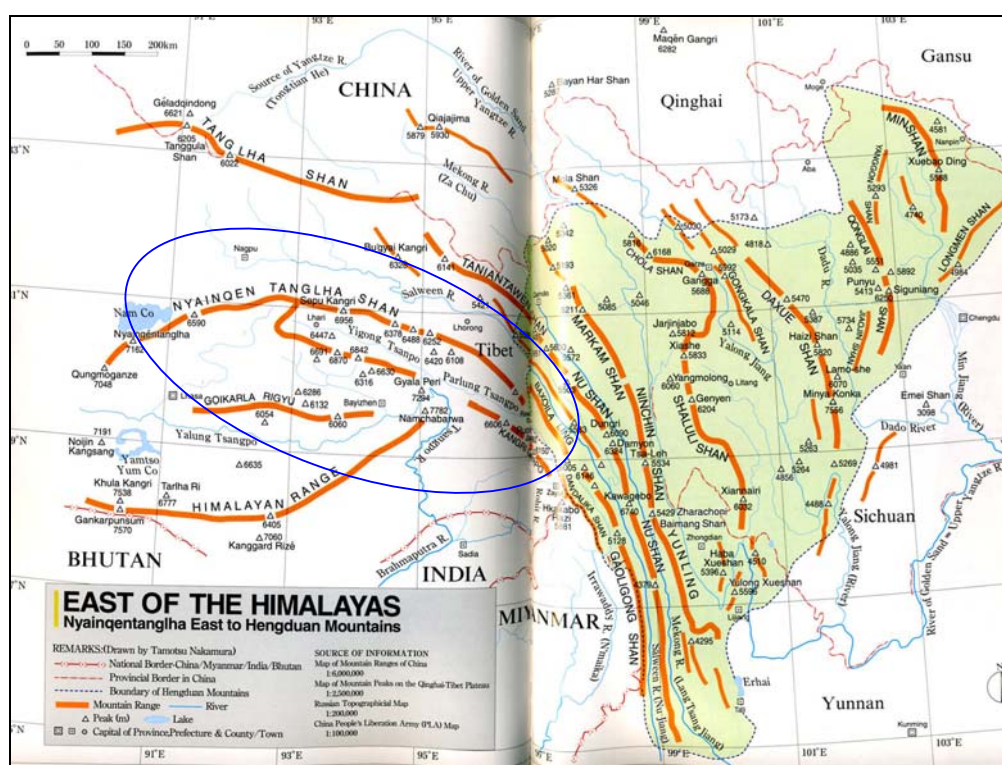
October / November 2006

The American / British Alps of Tibet Expedition 2007

At the Alpine Club symposium on the Alps of Tibet, chaired by AC President Stephen Venables in December 2005, the true potential of one of the largest unexplored, unclimbed mountain regions of the world was described in detail by some of the few people to have visited it. The main speakers included Tamotsu Nakamura – of the Japanese Alpine Club with some 22 visits to the Nyainqentangha East mountains, Mick Fowler – recently returned from a successful trip to climb Kajaqiao, and Mark Jenkins among others.

Mark Richey came to the event as a guest of the AC in his capacity as President of the American Alpine Club and stayed with Jim Lowther. The event was held at Rheged in Cumbria, north England, near to where Jim lives. The two had shared two previous trips – one to the Indian Karakoram and the other to South Greenland, both with Chris Bonington and Mark Wilford, so the idea of a Tibetan trip flowed naturally from that, and of course the stimulation of Tamotsu's pictures of enormous beautiful unclimbed peaks in a hidden, intriguing part of the world.

Mark's long time climbing partner Mark Wilford quickly came on board but Jim's regular partners couldn't commit, so the trip was to be a threesome. Planning for the trip was surprisingly – suspiciously – easy. Tamotsu and Mick Fowler provided some useful tips and the rest was down to the Chinese Tibetan Mountaineering Agency (CTMA).



Tibet, showing Nyainqentangha East mountains

Like kids in a toyshop, we found it hard to choose a mountain to go for, such was the available choice. The Nyainqentangha East range is some 600 kms long by 200 kms wide and only a handful of the peaks there have been climbed. But we had a precedent. Jim Lowther had been with Chris Bonington, Jim Fotheringham, Charlie Clark and John Porter in 1997, when they had attempted the highest peak in the range, Sepu Kangri, 6,950 m high. They failed on that attempt and Clark and Bonington's follow up a year later also failed, but eventually it was climbed by Carlos Buhler in 2002.

Richey chose Nenang as the team's objective because, after Sepu Kangri, it is the second highest peak in the range, and now the highest one still unclimbed. Looking at the picture Tamotsu took of the peak – being the first person to get close enough to photograph it in 2002 – it wasn't the most inviting looking mountain of any of the hundreds of peaks that Tamotsu has seen and photographed elsewhere in the range. But it is the highest and, to boot, a holy mountain, so we chose it.

Tamotsu supplied us with a map and Mick Fowler with the single best piece of advice that was to prove essential for our trip, which was to take snowshoes. The CTMA took care of the peak permission, but also the rest of the logistics in Tibet. For peaks above 5,500 m, all climbers must employ the services of the CTMA, which means hiring staff, jeeps, trucks, porters, base camp equipment etc. through that organisation. There is no one else to go to for a competitive quote, there is no room for negotiation and the service that one gets is to be taken as given.

The weather in this part of Tibet is as surprising as it is unpredictable. From Tamotsu's experiences we thought that an autumn trip was likely to get the most settled weather though we knew it would be cold. Previous trips to Sepu Kangri – some 150 kms to the north – had encountered heavy snowfall in both June and September and most of Tamotsu's recent trips, which showed photographs of beautiful brightly-lit mountain scenes with blue skies, were made in October/November, therefore we chose the latter.



ITINERARY 2006

Tues	17 th Oct	Arrive Beijing airport, hotel in city
Wed	18 th Oct	Fly Beijing to Lhasa; met by Norpu
Thurs	19 th Oct	In Lhasa: meeting with TMA; shopping
Fri	20 th Oct	From Lhasa to Kongpo Gyamda
Sat	21 st Oct	From Kongpo Gyamda to Changchu village via Jula & Sebu
Sun	22 nd Oct	From Changchu village to Pama in Renbu valley
Mon	23 rd Oct	From Pama to Base Camp (via Zhonggo pasture)
Tues	24 th Oct	Recce to ABC
Wed	25 th Oct	Base Camp – sorting and preparations
Thurs	26 th Oct	Base Camp to ABC; construct ABC
Fri	27 th Oct	Snowing: ABC back down to Base Camp
Sat	28 th Oct	Base Camp
Sun	29 th Oct	BC → ABC via Gombagang valley & prayer cairns (fine, then snowy)
Mon	30 th Oct	ABC → to stash at top of 1 st icefall (fine, then snowy)
Tues	31 st Oct	ABC → Camp I (5,300m) below 2 nd icefall (fine)
Wed	1 st Nov	Camp I up through 2 nd icefall to 5,530m, way barred (fine)
Thur	2 nd Nov	Camp I to Camp II (5,500m) via the Niche (fine)
Fri	3 rd Nov	Camp II to Camp III (Bomb Hole) at 5,990m (snowing → stormy)
Sat	4 th Nov	Camp III – stormbound (snowing → v. stormy)
Sun	5 th Nov	Camp III → Camp IV (Ridge Camp) 6,230m (fine all day)
Mon	6 th Nov	First summit attempt, windy then fine all day – reached 6,565m
Tues	7 th Nov	Camp IV – rest day pending 2 nd attempt (?) (misty & hot)
Wed	8 th Nov	Camp IV – waiting for a break (white out then windy)
Thurs	9 th Nov	Camp IV → Camp I (cold, cloudy, snow flurries, patchy sun)
Fri	10 th Nov	Camp I → Base Camp (cloudy)
Sat	11 th Nov	Base Camp – packing for departure (snow flurries)
Sun	12 th Nov	Departure to Changchu (fine) → Basong Lake
Mon	13 th Nov	Basong Lake to Hot Springs (night) – (fine all day)
Tues	14 th Nov	Hot Springs to Lhasa (Himalaya Hotel) – (fine)
Wed	15 th Nov	Lhasa: shopping
Thurs	16 th Nov	Lhasa → Beijing
Fri	17 th Nov	Beijing → UK
Sat	18 th Nov	Arrive UK

Mark Wilford, Mark Richey & Jim Lowther



Text extract from Jim's diary:

Tuesday 17th October Beijing

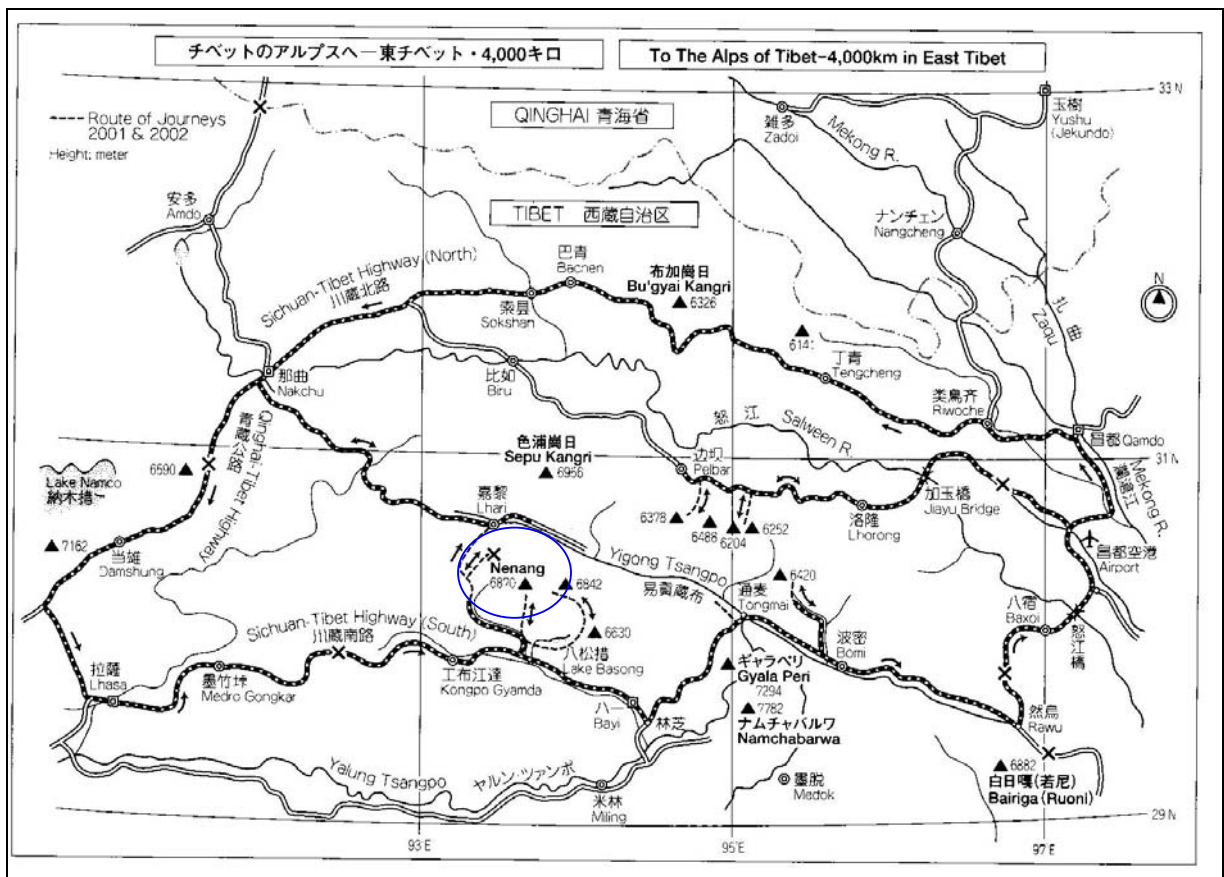
My flight arrived at 10am, MR's at 2pm and MW's at 5pm. Someone from CMA met us and took us to a restaurant, where we met Xu Hong and Mr Huang. The latter is Vice President of the CMA and a previous acquaintance of MR's; the former is his highly efficient PA/interpreter. Mr Huang re-affirmed his offer to help should anything be remiss in the coming weeks.

Wednesday 18th October Lhasa Fine

After a night in a clean mid-range Beijing hotel we got an early start and were back at Beijing airport for the 9.30am flight to Lhasa. Excess baggage cost us about \$600 – something to beware of for the future given the general abundance of available provisions at reasonable prices in Lhasa.

The flight stopped over in Chengdu and continued to Lhasa, which was in bright sunshine.

Norpu of the CTMA met us and drove us in a jeep the 60kms to Lhasa, via a brand new tunnel which the Chinese have constructed.

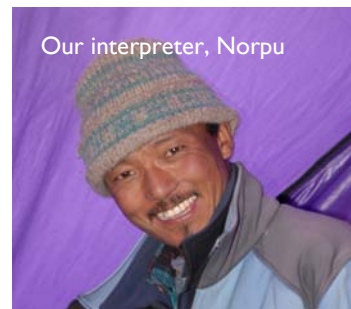


Nyainqentangha East mountains, showing route from Lhasa to Nenang

We checked into the Himalaya Hotel, on East Linkhor Road, being next door to the CTMA offices. Norpu took us out to dinner in a westernized/climbing restaurant, also next door. Everything seems very empty. Also cold!

Thursday 19th October Lhasa Fine → Snowing

Norpu took us around the corner to the CTMA offices at 10am, where we met a breezily efficient Yang Zhen (Chief of Sales Dept, CTMA). MR took the lead in clarifying the arrangements for the expedition, whereby the CTMA is simultaneously acting as grantor of permission, and agent.



We'd already paid \$700 for the peak permit – the discussion today centered around what would be included in the agency fee. We finally reached agreement – with let's face it, little negotiation – on an all-inclusive fee for the next month of \$13,400, to include hotel in Lhasa, meals in Lhasa,

same in Kongpo Gyamda, porters or yaks to BC, interpreter, liaison officer, cook, cooking and base camp equipment, and return. The money was paid.

Afterwards we checked over the stores etc. for Base Camp; these were housed in some lock up sheds at the back of the CTMA offices. The rest of the day was spent shopping for food (at an open air covered market), other provisions (at an adjacent small supermarket) and gas canisters (at a climbing shop). Then we toured the city, walking the streets around the Jokhang monastery, the Potala and a couple of beer shops.



Friday 20th October Lhasa to Kongpo Gyamda Fine

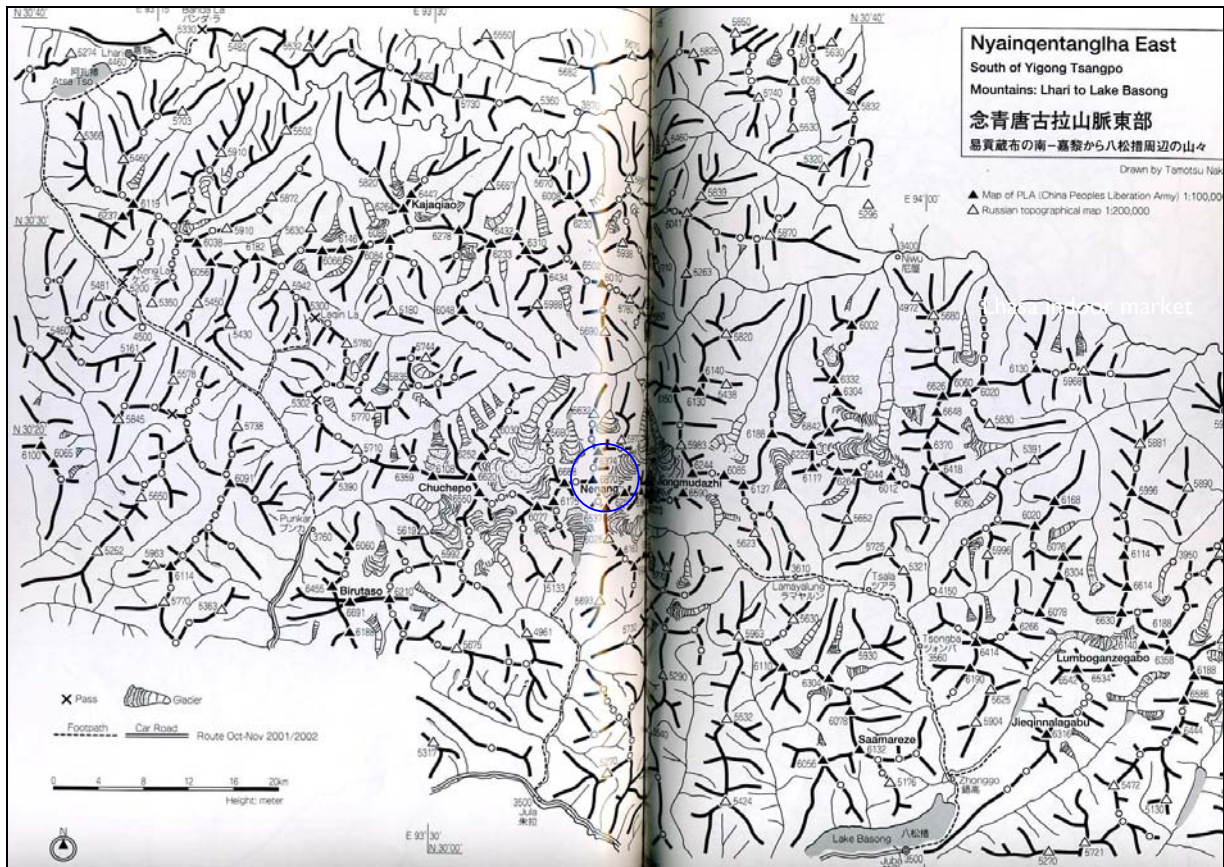
The full squad assembled at our hotel at 9am. This comprised Appi, the liaison officer; Norpu, the interpreter; Shéthe cook; the driver of a small truck and the driver of a Toyota Landcruiser. On the way out of Lhasa we stopped at a gas station to buy petrol for the MSR stove (and tested it – it worked) and piled on towards Kongpo Gyamda. The drive took a total of 5/6 hours, with a very good lunch stop on the way at Medro Gongkar and the whole of the road was paved with tarmac, two lanes, and fast.



Outdoor pool in Kongpo Gyamda

The general feel of the countryside that we passed through is one heavily influenced by the Chinese (i.e more like China with a few Tibetans rather than the other way around), pretty lush with conifer trees, dense shrubbery and juniper bushes, and rolling hillsides.

Kongpo Gyamda is a one street town. We stayed in a plain, cold uninspiring hotel with us as its only guests. It being Friday and pay day, the town was drunk and in partying mood, but a sleeping pill from MR and a skinful of beer made it possible to sleep; the other two didn't!



Nyainqentanglha East, showing Nenang – highest unclimbed mountain in the range

Saturday 21st October Kongpo Gyamda to Changchu Village Fine

Up and off early. The village of Jula was about an hour's drive further east. It comprises a planned square of two storey housing with pool/snooker tables arrayed around the sides of the square (as elsewhere in Tibet, this outdoor sport is ubiquitous).

The trail from Jula to Changchu village was an unpaved, very bumpy track through stunning scenery. The valley became steep sided with vertical cliff faces, conifers and a glittering clear river.

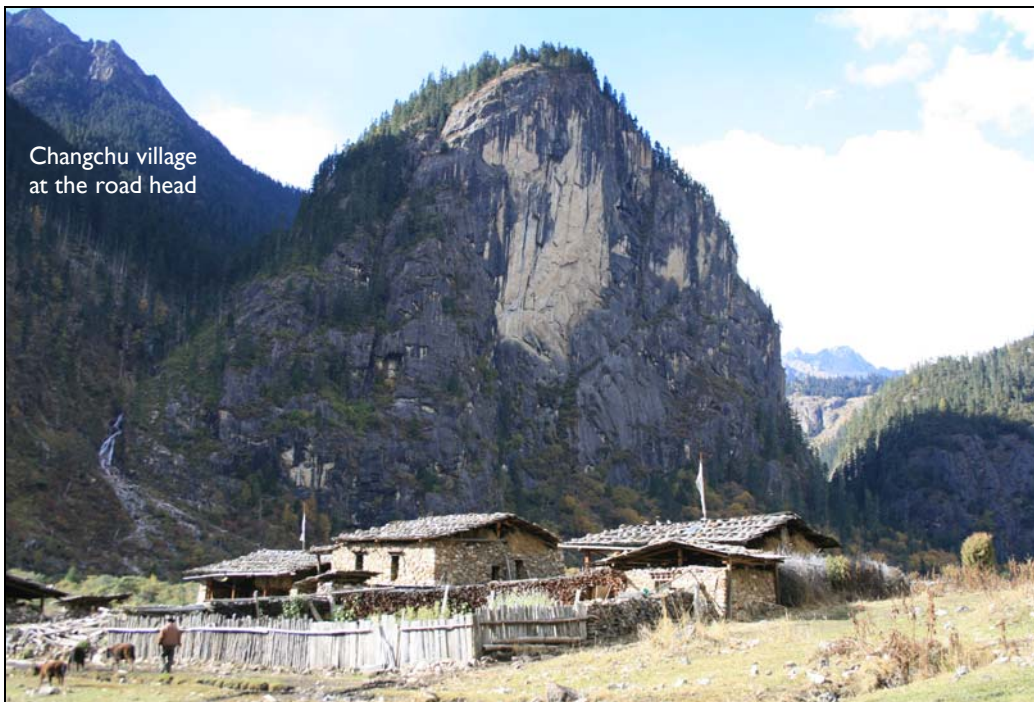


Our truck on the way to the road head

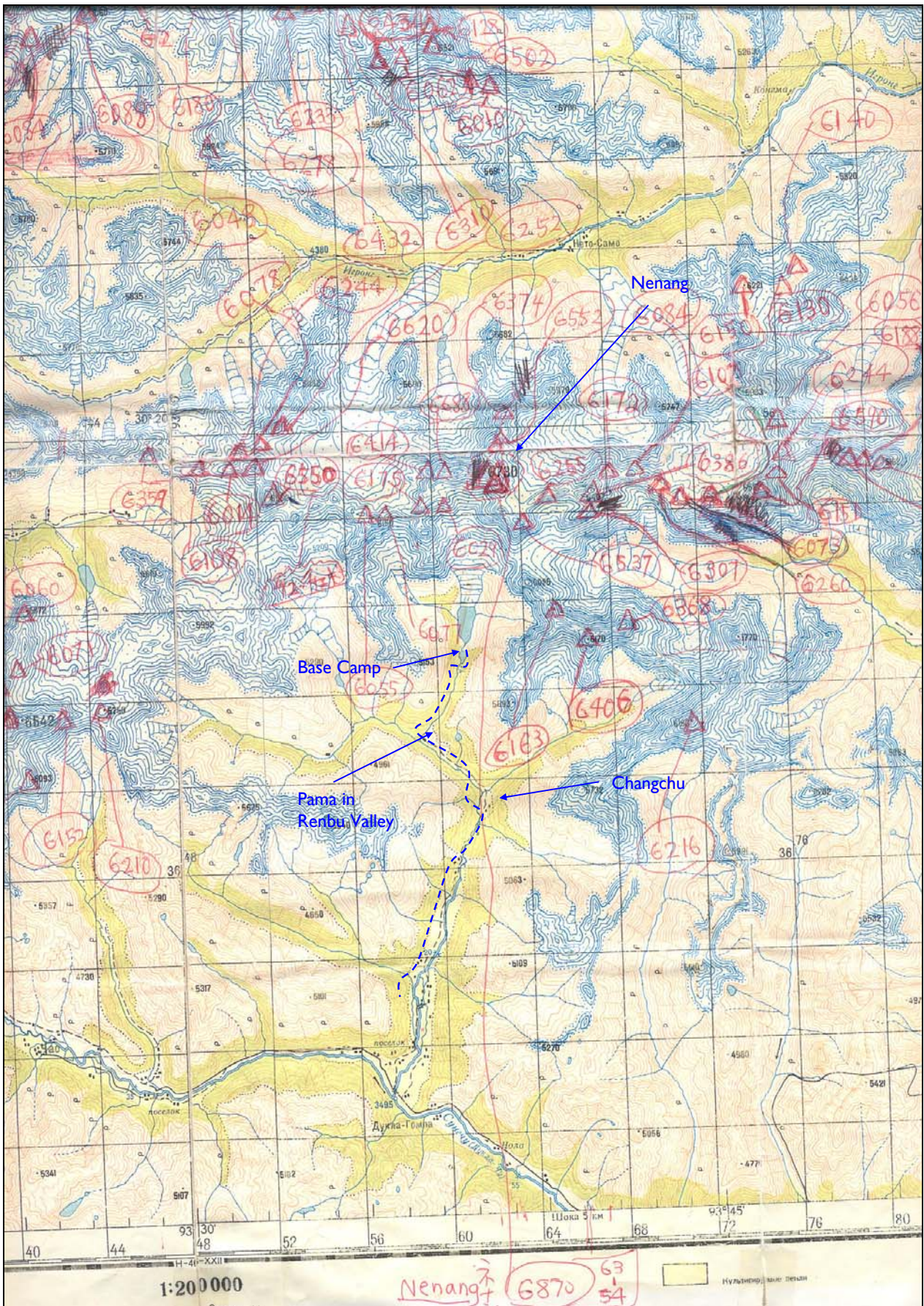
Changchu village – the road head – consists of just two houses and associated outbuildings for cattle – inhabited by traditional Tibetan families. We stayed in the principle room of one house and our staff outside in tents.

A lengthy discussion ensued with the village elder as to whether we could obtain, by tomorrow morning, enough yaks to transport us to the Renbu valley.

He had 5 yaks of his own and it was felt that about 12 would be needed. So in the end, owing to the days that would be needed to get the required amount of yaks to Sebu, we opted for 25 porters who were immediately available in nearby Jula.



Changchu village at the road head



Sunday 22nd October From Changchu Village to Pama in the Renbu Valley Fine → Cloudy

All 25 porters appeared on motorbikes in the morning. The division of loads took a couple of hours and the drawing of lots between them resulted in the two girls getting the heaviest.



As we drew out of Changchu we turned our backs on a broad and deep valley into a very narrow gorge-like one entirely covered in tall conifer forest. Both the Marks are keen bird watchers and they had plenty to keep them occupied.

In the main valley, particularly around Changchu, there was evidence of some pretty haphazard logging. Not so in the Renbu valley, which is completely unspoilt and – by common consensus between us – one of the most beautiful places any of us had ever been to.

We camped at a natural pasture clearing in the forest at Pama; the porters split themselves into 3 groups, each with their own fire.



Monday 23rd October From Pama to Base Camp Cloudy BASE CAMP = 4,140m alt

The porters obviously had a cold night, with heavyish frost, so they were off before any of us had got out of our tents; they intended to return for further loads later.

Although the weather was cloudy and cold, it was gorgeous and we all soaked up the arboreal delights as we climbed out of the Renbu valley, over a bridge into the narrow defile which hid Nenang (our objective) from view. On passing across a small pasture at Zhonggo (with a wooden shelter) we then passed a waterfall which drained the Nenang basin. But we didn't get a view of the mountain until we'd surmounted a pass which overlooks the two lakes at the foot of the Nenang glacier. If it hadn't been cloudy, the view would have been stunning.

We wound our way down and around the southernmost, smaller of the two lakes, passing it on its eastern side. After bushwhacking through the undergrowth for a couple of hours, we decided upon base camp beside another wooden shack west of the river connecting the two lakes.

We paid the porters a 50 renminbi tip each and they all departed in high spirits. We subsequently found out that we'd given them each the equivalent of three days pay as a tip – that was our fault for not knowing the exchange rate. The cook, Shé got lost and arrived at dusk.



Our route up Nenang takes the left hand side of the formidable ice fall descending from the south face



Tuesday 24th October Recce to Advance Base Camp (ABC) Cloudy

We chose the western side of the big lake, and therefore the western side of the huge fall glacier, as our approach to Nenang. A good track ran the whole way along the lake's western side to a wooden bridge, which then took us to a pasture. From there we bushwhacked through rhododendron, scrub and juniper until we reached the end of the crest of the lateral moraine at a smooth rock step overlooking the serac-ed glacier. MR spotted and then lead an easy crack line which meant we connected to a large pasture above. There was a tumbled down shack of ancient vintage, and on the skyline far above to the west, very tall prayer cairns. From that point we could see a dry route on grass and over rocks all the way up to the glacier at about 5,000m.



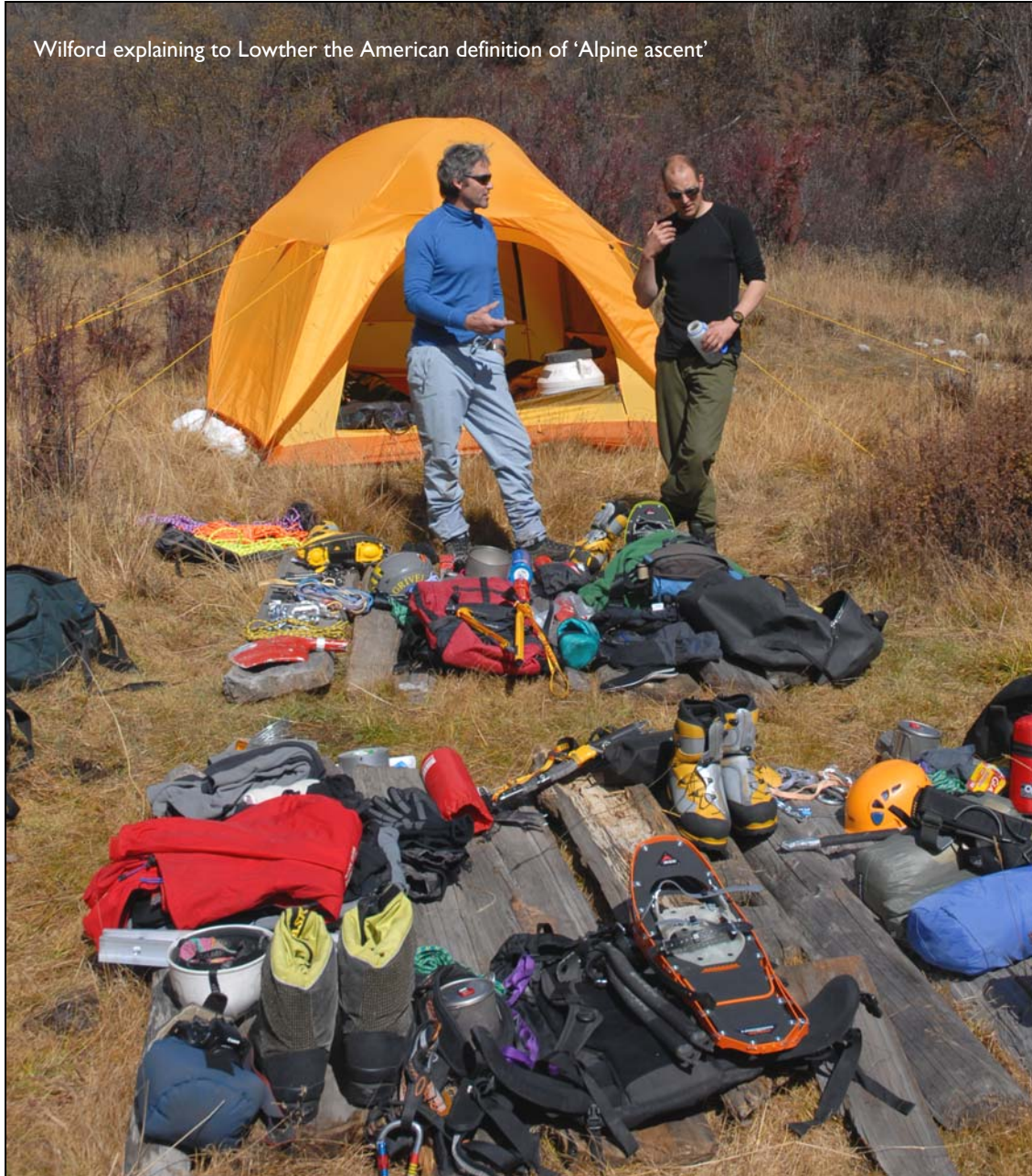
Wilford in rhododendron at the foot of the glacier

Wednesday 25th October Base Camp Sunny & Hot

We got our first clear view of Nenang and its surrounding mountains today. Spirits were high. MR's solar panel was used to charge all batteries but the satellite phone doesn't work at all due to lack of network.

We divided up the food, gear etc. and checked all the climbing equipment, ropes, snow shoes etc. preparatory to a load up to ABC tomorrow.

The cook is a star and, by general agreement, the best any of us have ever had.



Thursday 26th October BC → ABC Cloudy → Snowing 4,865m

This was the most agonizing load carry I've ever done, made infinitely worse because MR and MW were way ahead most of the time. Maybe I'm unfit, or the altitude is getting me badly or I've got a slight cold, I don't know, but it was a bad experience.



Once at ABC we spent a couple of hours constructing a tent platform out of rocks and mud. Thereafter I cooked whilst it snowed. Very knackered. Slept well.

Friday 27th October ABC → BC Snowing

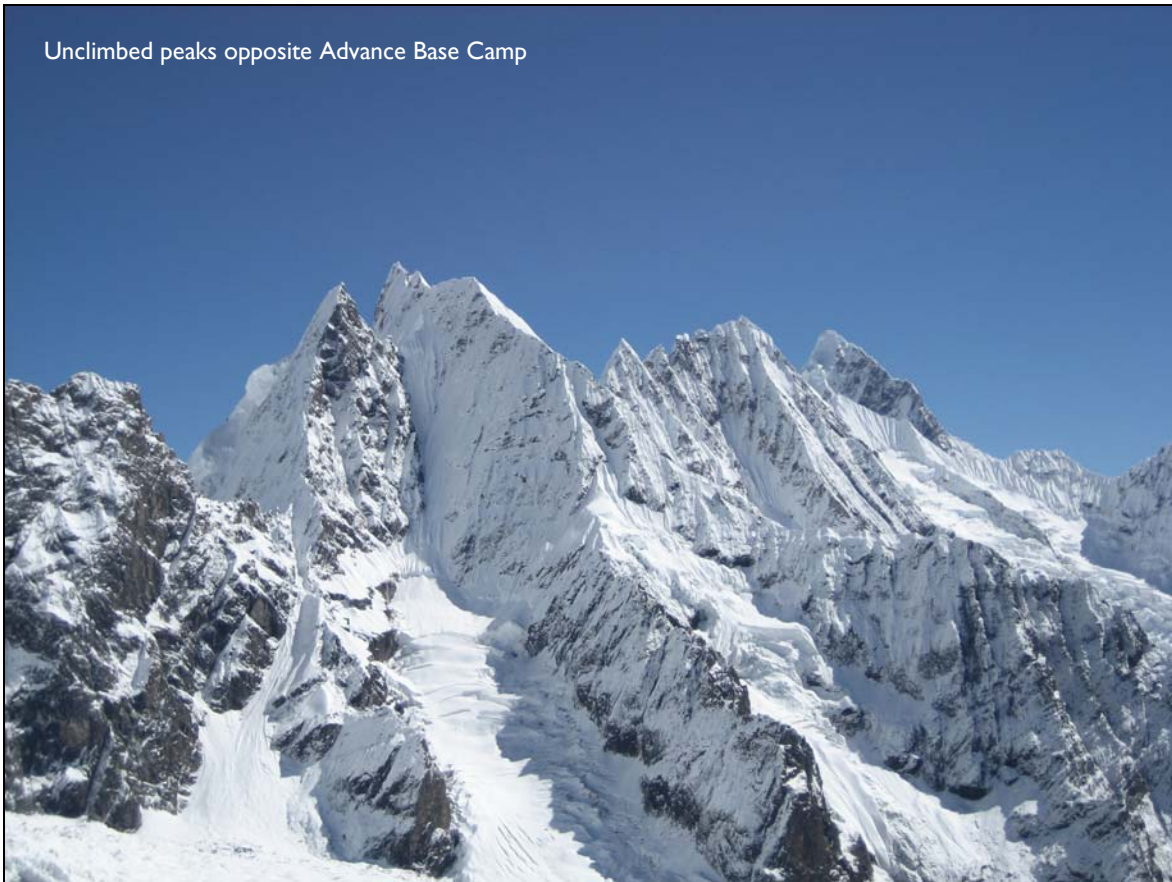
Lots of snow fell in the night. We returned to BC through snow covered rocks and the 1km bushwhack section which was really unpleasant, leaving everything we'd carried at ABC. Bonfire and two bottles of wine.

Saturday 28th October Base Camp Preparation for Climb Fine

That highly nervous feeling that precedes the final act: today spent preparing for a continuous uninterrupted Alpine ascent of Nenang, the only proviso being that we have already stocked ABC with some food and gear. Nonetheless, what is being proposed is entirely Alpine by nature since we have the icefalls to contend with, the mountain itself, and no support staff.

So we parceled out the gear for an early start in the morning, and briefed the BC staff (Norpu [interpreter], Appi [L.O.] and Shé[cook] & camp assistant) that we'd be gone 7 days.

Unclimbed peaks opposite Advance Base Camp



Sunday 29th October Base Camp to Advanced Base Camp 4,865m

Off by 7am and along the lakeside track. None of us could stand the thought of the bushwhack up to the glacier edge, so when we got to the bridge we took a path alongside the river, heading westwards. At the top of this we had an open view into an 'untouched' valley (precipitating instant nicknames such as Shangri-la etc.) surrounded by beautiful peaks. The valley is carpeted by meadow and a small supraglacial lake in its NW corner. Into this arrives a braided river which drains a high glacier, now receded behind a high polished rock step. To the north, and the reason for coming here in the first place, stands the ridge line we called the 'prayer cairn ridge', which we knew would give a high route to ABC.

Two shepherd's shelters overlook this valley – called Gombagang valley – and from these we found (eventually, after much bushwhacking) a trail leading up to the 'prayer cairn ridge'. Arrived at ABC after 7 hours, and made an impeccable tent platform. Snowy and windy on arrival.

Monday 30th October ABC → Stash at 5,300m Fine then Snowy

We gained the glacier about 100m above ABC. Quickly this lead into complex ground which would continue more or less for the remainder of the ascent to the base of the mountain. At this point the icefall is at its most confused and route finding was difficult. Moreover, the snow was deep and unconsolidated.



We climbed alpine style from ABC, reaching Camp I in two days and Camp II in a further two

MR executed a fantastic piece of route finding, which took in crevasse bottoms, short ice steps, and culminated in the 'tenuous crest' which gained the top of the 1st icefall. There we made a stash at 5,300m and returned to ABC, remaining roped-up for most of the duration. Eight hour round trip and the weather remained fine for most of the day but with snow flurries at the end.

Tuesday 31st October ABC to Camp I (5,300m) Fine all day



Complex territory on the way to Camp I

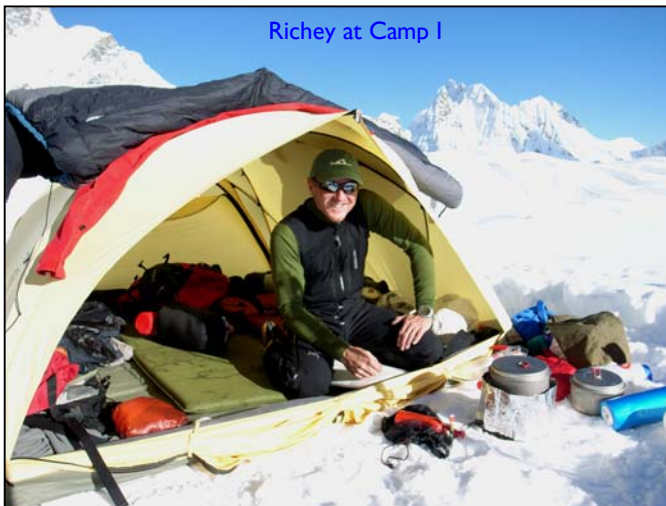
Carrying the remainder of the loads and making use of the snow trail left yesterday, we quickly reached the stash at the top of the 1st icefall in 2½ hours and then proceeded across the plateau underneath the 2nd icefall – on level ground, but avoiding big crevasses – to Camp I directly in line of fire of the 2nd icefall. MV and I went back to retrieve the stash whilst MR pitched the tent, which had suffered some damage at ABC, and some holes needed taping.

Richey found this linking rib which was crucial in unlocking the route to Camp I



Wednesday 1st November Camp I to stash in 2nd icefall (5,530m) Fine all day

Another brilliant, fine day. The weather is definitely blessing us this time (compared to Sepu Kangri in 1997), making the passage up through the icefalls considerably easier than would have been the case in a white out (if not impossible).



Camp I is situated on a 'benign' plateau between the 1st icefall (which really comprises the great mass of the total icefall glacier descending from the south face of Nenang) and the 2nd icefall. The two are quite different in character; the 2nd characterises the layering of snow/ice and looks a bit like a wedding cake, with smooth folds and grand structure, but the first is a confused morass of jumbled blocks.

We ascended a 'valley' between the major folds of ice, aiming for a 'niche' which looked like it would yield a breach to the top of the 2nd icefall. Whilst there, a large pinnacle of ice collapsed near us; the whole area seemed unstable and blue from fresh movement and ice exposure. We decided to concentrate our efforts elsewhere – to the west. This was a 'V' notch I'd noticed from Camp I, so we surmounted this –

requiring a small amount of climbing – only to find ourselves atop a ‘table’ of ice fringed on all sides by crevasses.

So, we decided upon the ‘niche’. Would attempt it tomorrow, and made a convenient stash underneath it to be picked up then.

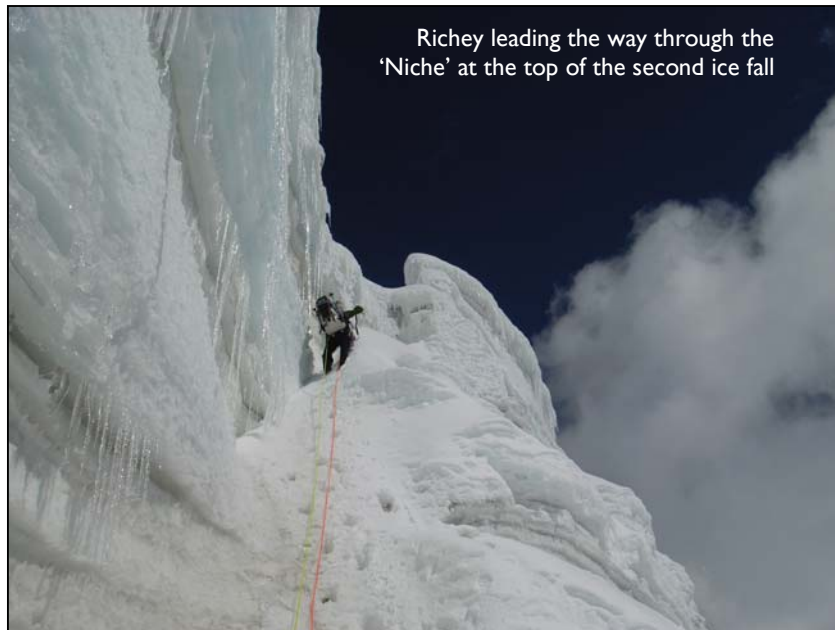


**Thursday 2nd
November Camp II to
Camp III (5,500m)
Fine all day**

Up to the stash, collected that, then up the ‘niche’ quite easily. From that vantage point the ‘plateau’ behind the 2nd icefall looked very complex with major crevasse systems, although probably easier than hitherto up the 1st icefall. Aiming for the lowest point in the middle, leading directly to the centre of the south face, we slowly made our

way forward. Here we encountered some amazing glacial features, including the ‘ridiculous bridge’ which MR chose as a linking point.

A good day in blisteringly hot sunshine.



Richey leading the way through the ‘Niche’ at the top of the second ice fall

Friday 3rd November Camp II to Camp III (5,990m) Snowing → Stormy

I forgot to mention that the satellite phone is now working well; despite my misgivings about having one in the first place, speaking to loved ones was a real morale booster!

It wasn't long before we were out of the crevasses proper. We'd already decided to rule out a direct ascent of the south face (on the grounds of being too technical for an over-stretched Alpine-style ascent such as this one) but we'd have a closer look around the back of the mountain instead. This idea was facilitated by a large, easily accessible col at the foot of the east ridge. This looked, in all probability, as if it would link the south-facing basin with the northeastern-facing basin which would also give access to the northeast face.

In deteriorating weather we made it to the top of the col and there we sought refuge – in the strengthening wind – in a wind scoop that was probably a filled-in crevasse. We named it the 'Bomb Hole'.



Camp II at the top of the second ice fall

Saturday 4th November Camp III Stormbound Snowing → V Stormy

The 3-man Black Diamond single-skin bivvi tent held up manfully for the duration of today's storm. Travel was out of the question. Winds reached about 30mph in the 'Bomb Hole' – presumably somewhat more outside on the col.



Sunday 5th November Camp III → Camp IV (Ridge Camp) [6,230m] Fine all day

The col area seemed to have been wind-pressed by the storm, although once beyond that zone, through the pass and into the top of the northeastern basin the pack reverted to deep unconsolidated powder snow again...very wearing!



As expected, this northeastern face of the mountain presented a different prospect to the south face. The triangular tower at the end of the SE ridge was bypassed and we looked instead at a small ridge which projected out from the SE ridge, in an easterly direction. We aimed for this.

On the subsidiary E ridge we found a broad, level platform for the tent, and then turned our attention to the range of options for the ascent. These were twofold: the first was to gain the ridge above the triangular tower and the large 'cauliflower' ridge features, and; the second was to climb the northeast face directly, probably to the summit. The face had five or six grayish ribbons running up it, which suggested ice. The only problem was the amount of – apparently large – unprotected snowfields below the bergschrund; these might be avalanche-prone.

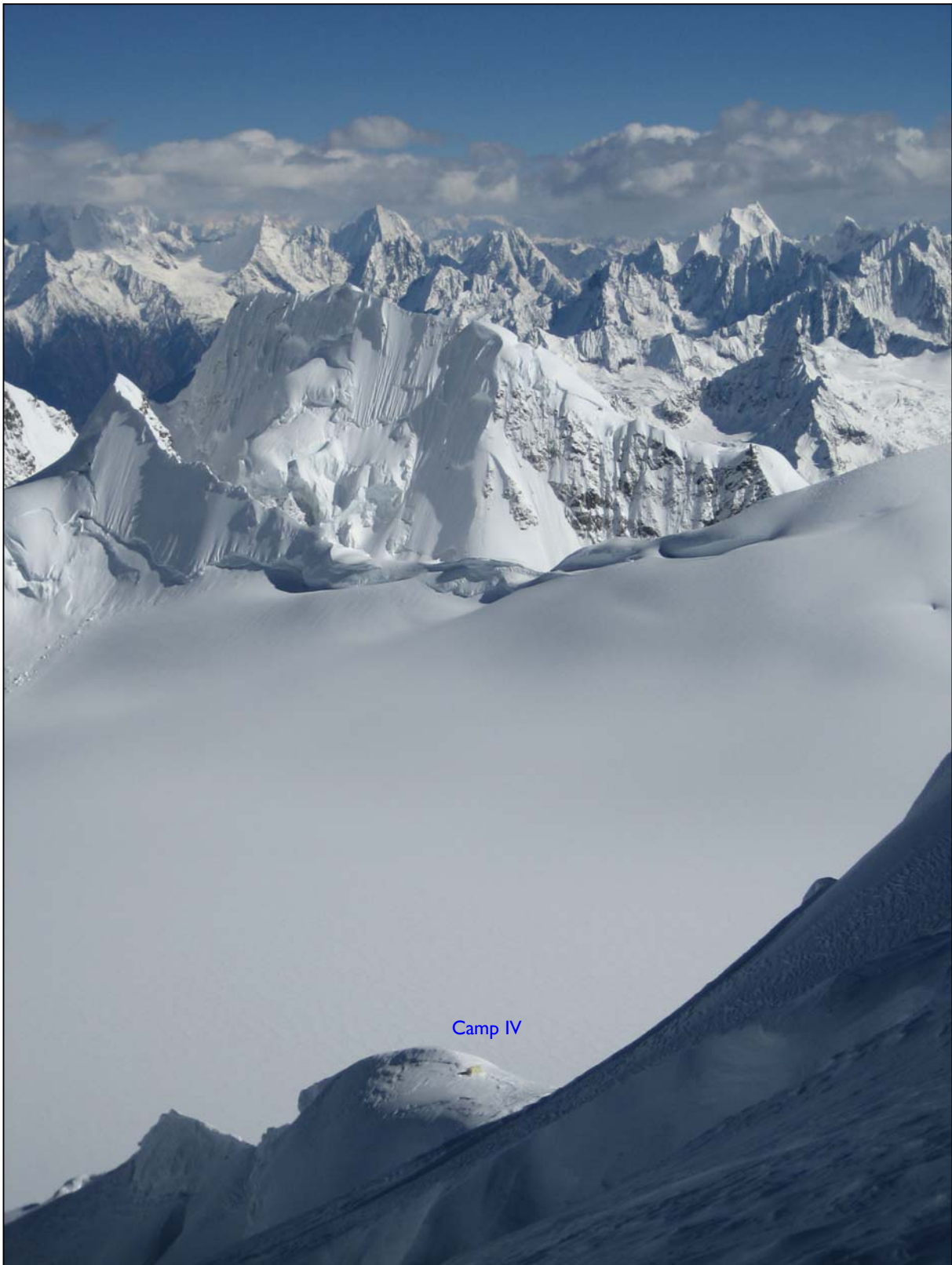
In the evening the wind blew up a bit; we brewed up mightily for the morrow.



Monday 6th November Camp IV First summit attempt Windy → fine

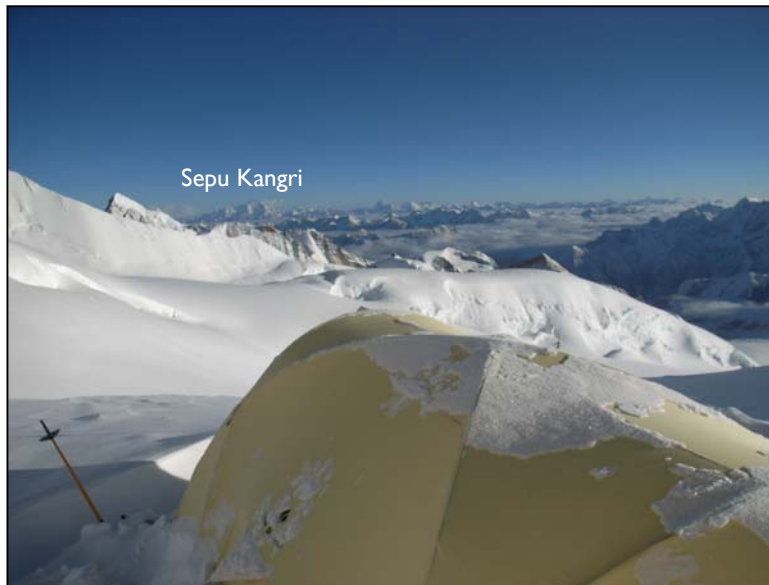
Having woken at 4am to melt snow and brew etc. we were off by 6am – still in the dark.

With the wind, it was bitterly cold and despite moving as fast as we could, we were all so cold that we hacked out a ledge after an hour and sat there to await the sunrise. The sun touched the top of Nenang at 8.05am and immediately warmed us up, improving our morale and prospects.

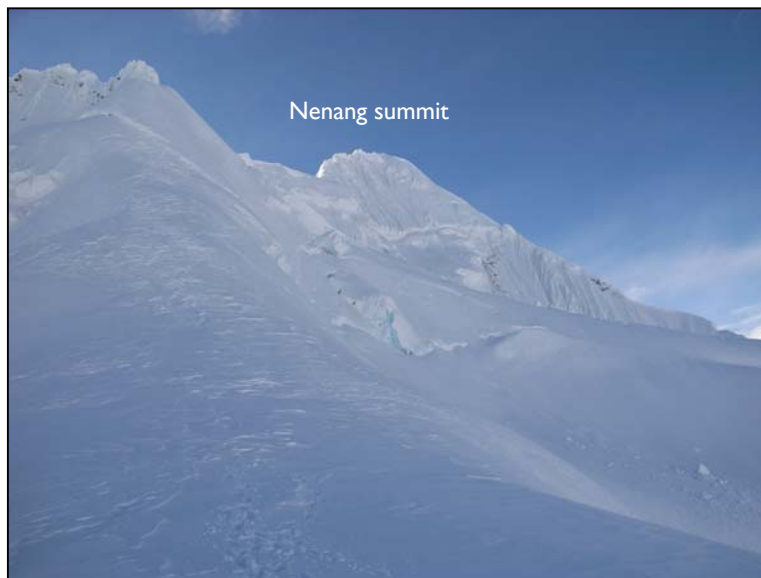


Firstly, according to the agreed plan, we cut out across to the foot of the northeast face, our intended objective. Once underneath the start of this – with snow flurries up and down the face and the wind still pretty sharp – MW noticed some wind slab shear fracture lines; he discussed this with MR and both changed tack on the spot. I wasn't consulted and just followed the change of direction. It seemed one of those subjective matters – that of perceived avalanche danger – that

didn't brook disagreement, so I went along with the change of plan without demur. The changed plan was to go for the upper section of the southeast ridge instead of the northeast face.



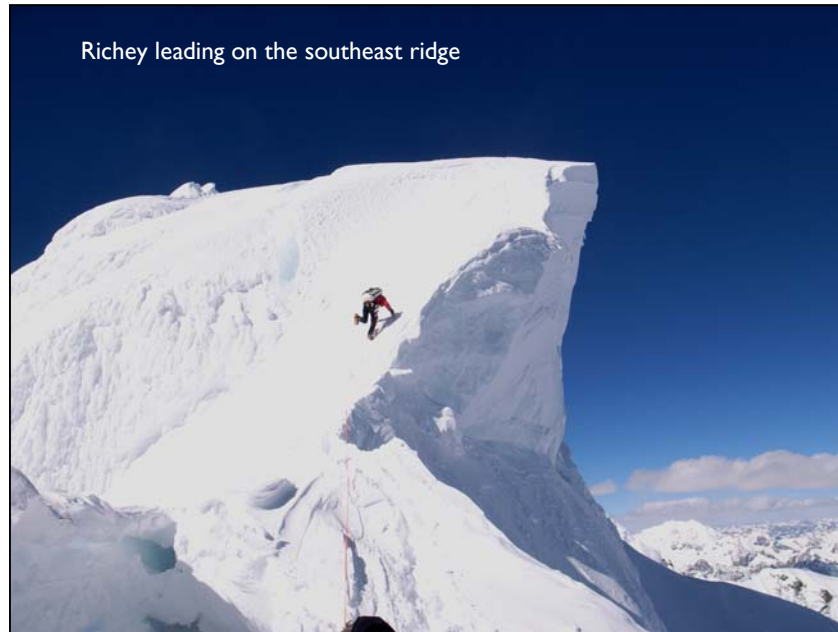
Progress was slow in the extreme, with MR breaking trail the whole way and MW and I being sucked along in his wake. Once on the ridge, it seemed the summit block wasn't far away at all and it seemed we really did have a sporting chance of making it to the top. MR lead the next two pitches up the ridge, choosing to take the right side of a crevasse at its start. The result was that we were blocked off on a table on the ridge with no means of progressing other than down climbing and repeating the process again on the other side of the crevasse. As that point we realized we were beat. We were at 6,565m on the summit ridge, within sight of the top, but with plenty of time being required to finish the job and the increasing likeliness of an open bivvi on route. This latter we didn't fancy without sleeping bags, pads or food, so we reversed all the way down to Camp IV, exhausted and thoroughly deflated.



The post mortem continued over the next few days, but I am convinced we did the right thing in retreating; after all, the decision was unanimous and we were stretched thin after nine days continuously on the go. The only doubt was whether or not the northeast face was, in fact,

climbable. Given the subjectivity of the perceived slab avalanche danger, the jury will have to stay out on that one, but we're all convinced that that route, had it been taken, would have given us the best chance of reaching the summit and back in one day from Camp IV.

Somewhat deflated, we decided to stay at Camp IV and make another attempt.



Tuesday 7th November Camp IV Rest day Misty & hot

Did nothing all day except look outside the tent at the weather. Despite it being hot, we had snow showers all day.





Lowther at the high point on the southeast ridge

Wednesday 8th November Camp IV (waiting for a break) White out/windy

Same as yesterday. Perhaps another day of waiting was pointless given that we'd already shot our bolt on the main attempt and that staying up here at this altitude is not, in fact, doing us any good at all in terms of rest and recuperation.

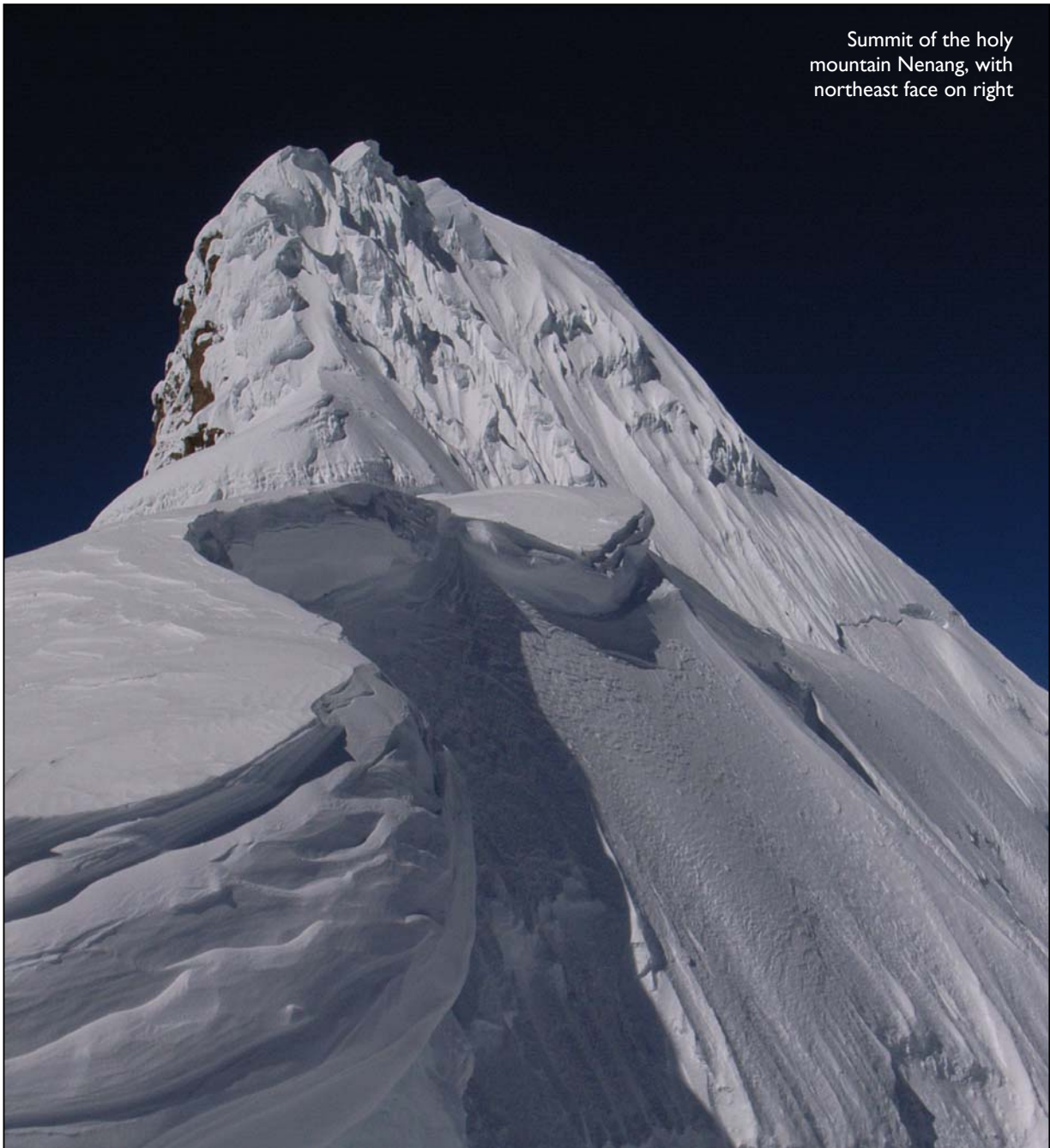
Thursday 9th November Camp IV → Camp I Cold, cloudy, snowing, patchy sun

Finally we gave up hope of having another attempt at the mountain. Given our reasons for not attempting the northeast face (slab avalanche danger), we could hardly reverse that decision when, in fact, nothing whatsoever had improved over the intervening two days. That, therefore, left the ridge, which we felt was more than a two day effort. And, in any case, we are all exhausted and our food has completely run out (we shared a packet of peanuts for breakfast), so it's definitely time to go down and extra snow has fallen and it feels like the winter has well and truly arrived.



Accordingly we descended carefully, stripping stashes at Camp III and II, and the bamboo fluorescent wands through the 2nd icefall, and arrived at Camp I, quite tired.



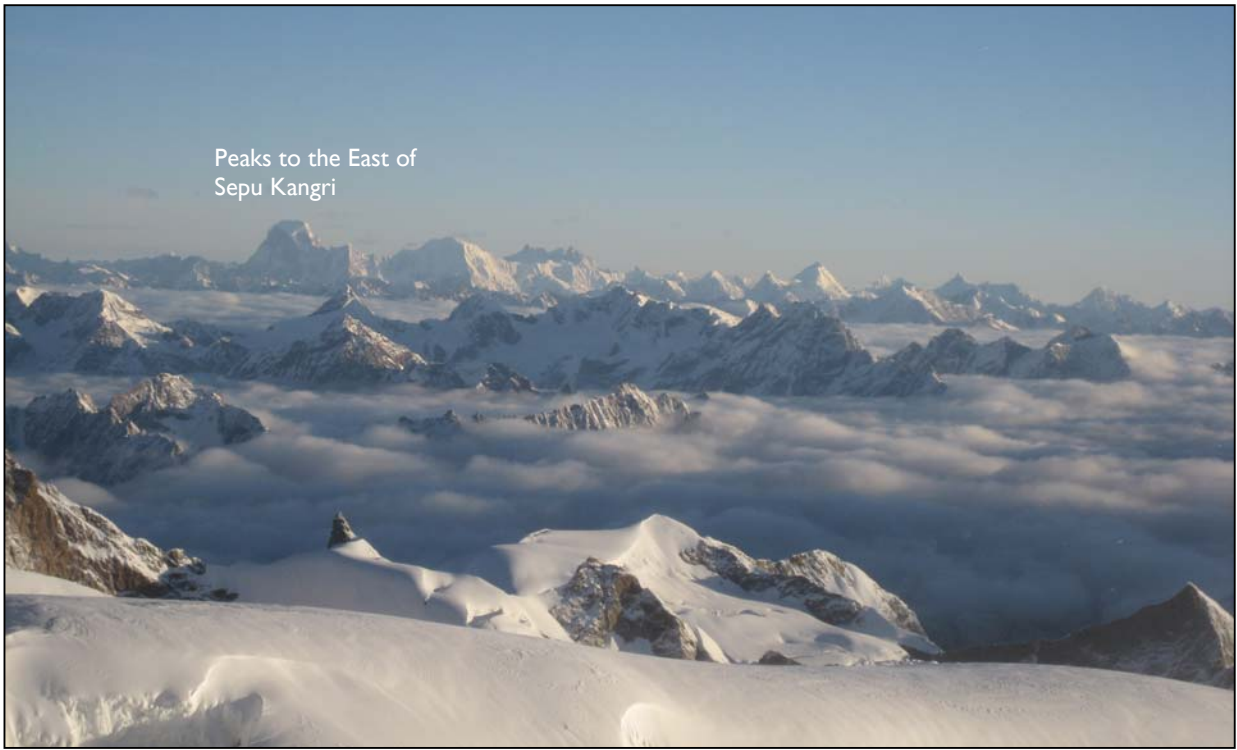


Summit of the holy mountain Nenang, with northeast face on right

Friday 10th November Camp I → Base Camp Cloudy

The descent through the 1st icefall was improved because we could just see the remnants of our up-bound tracks. It was still, nonetheless, a convoluted route and tiring too, as we were especially careful in descending through it with heavy packs. At ABC we picked up the last part of the stashed gear and carried on down into Gombagang via the prayer cairn ridge.

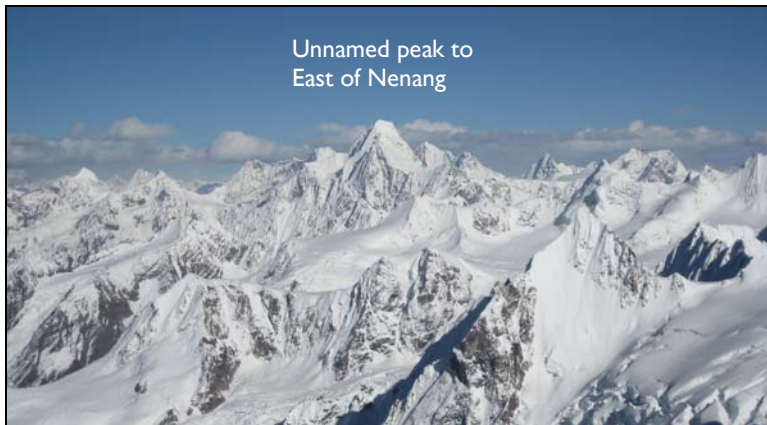
At Base Camp there was general relief from Shé Norpu and the porter at our return. Having been away for 13 days, there was some concern for us! We drank beer and ate like kings by the bonfire!



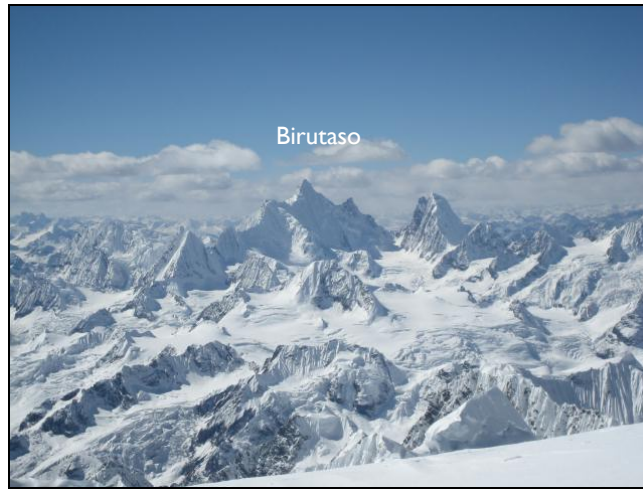
Peaks to the East of
Sepu Kangri

Saturday 11th November Base Camp Snow flurries

The camp assistant was packed off to Jula to get porters up tomorrow; we spent the day packing and drying kit and wandering about, photographing.



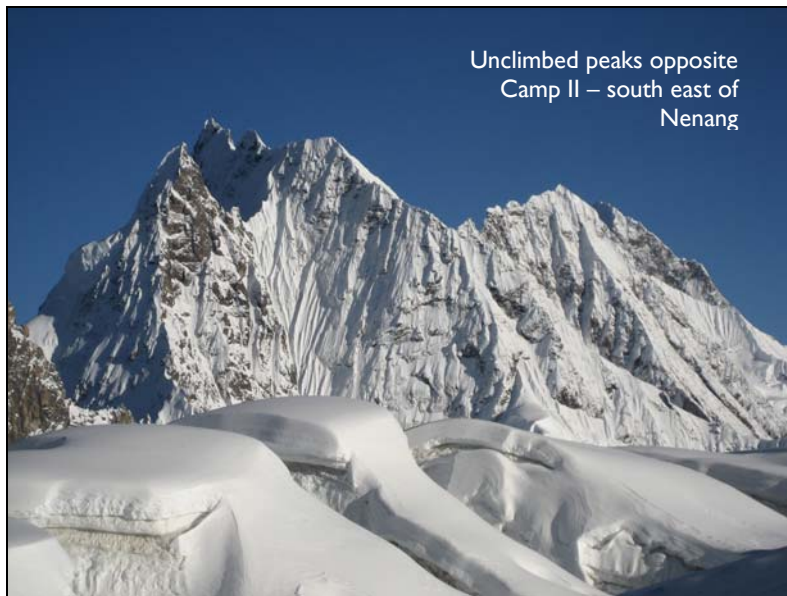
Unnamed peak to
East of Nenang



Sunday 12th November Base Camp → Changchu → Basong Fine

Some porters arrived last night, the rest today. The weather was fantastic and for one of the first times we had an unobscured view of Nenang and the two lakes from the prayer flag at the entrance to the valley.

I took off ahead of the pack to photograph the mountain, leaving the two Marks to conclude packing up and clearing BC. By the time they had done this and caught up with me, all the porters had descended past me, leaving only our own staff. The Marks were far from impressed by the performance of our own staff – Norpu in particular – who were prepared to leave BC with all the rubbish left in situ in black bin liners. This type of approach has, unfortunately, typified the way the TMA (Tibetan Mountaineering Association – our agent) runs things; seemingly very interested in the money and short on experience in how to deliver a first class service. Considering the \$12,000 fee for logistics, we've all experienced far better service in both India and Pakistan than here. Nonetheless, the Marks – MR in particular – gave Norpu short shrift and BC was left immaculate in the end, but only because of his intervention.



The weather was glorious for the descent. Some of the porters were sullen and cheeky. It therefore didn't surprise us that some items (food and an 8mm climbing rope) were stolen during the day (this fact only became known when we got to Lhasa).

At Changchu we stopped; all the porters had ridden up on their respective motorbikes. This fitted the description of the area given by Yang Zhen a month ago, when she said that portage fees were competing against a background of economic prosperity. Certainly these are the most prosperous porters any of us had ever come across.



The jeep and truck were late to arrive. The LO was initially resistant to us going back to Lhasa via Lake Basong, but in the end relented and so that's where we ended up; a flea-ridden and neglected hotel overlooking the lake, where we were the only guests in a scene reminiscent of *The Shining*.

Monday 13th November Basong Lake → Hot Springs Fine

The monastery on the island in Basong lake was a major disappointment. It had received a thorough going-over from the Chinese and so had little of its original charm left. So we set straight off, aiming for the communist-designed hotel and spa at the Hot Springs. On the way we looked around a Chinese-designed Tibetan new village, which was not all it sounded – in fact, it was a model of how things can be done and the needs of the locals accommodated. We all thought that the Free Tibet movement would have its work cut out to reverse the irreversible; this example questions what actual harm could be meant by the Chinese pumping untold sums of money into the Tibetan economy.



The Hot Springs were bizarre; classic communist-inspired architecture producing a hot springs spa of truly monumental proportions. The main pool was Olympic, the reception area good enough for a large corporation.



Tuesday 14th November Hot Springs to Lhasa Fine

At the CTMA nobody was there to debrief us (Yang Zhen thought it unnecessary to have a meeting) so we dried out our kit in their compound instead. The LO, who owns the adjoining Summit Bar/Restaurant, appeared to try to sting us out of more money for extra portering cost, but a stalemate resulted from MR's intransigence.

Wednesday 15th November in Lhasa, 16th to Beijing, 17th back home

Beware of excess baggage! About \$900 back to Beijing and about the same back to the UK.

Finances

<u>Costs</u>	\$
Flights (US & UK to Beijing return)	3,600
Flights (Beijing to Lhasa return)	1,800
Excess baggage (US & UK to Beijing, Beijing to Lhasa, return)	2,150
Peak fee (CTMA)	7,000
Agent fee (CTMA) – incl. all costs Lhasa to Lhasa (jeep, truck, interpreter, cook, LO, hotels, porters, base camp tents & cooking gear, base camp food)	12,800
Staff tips	1,200
Misc.	100
	<hr/>
	28,650
 <u>Income</u>	
Grants (MEF and BMC)	3,050
Members' contributions	25,600
	<hr/>
	28,650

[The exchange rate in October 2006 was £1.00 = \$1.95]

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Mick Fowler
Chris Bonington

