

Final Report
MEF Ref 07-31

British Zhopu Expedition 2007

Zhopu Valley, Western Sichuan, China

29th April – 24th May 2007



Mani stones

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Lenny Chen



The famed “caterpillar fungus”

In springtime, this fungus grows from the infected body of caterpillars which inhabit burrows in hillsides above 4000m. Dried, they are used in Chinese medicine, to impart general health and vitality. Their value is such that Tibetans can earn a considerable proportion of their yearly income from collecting them, and an annual two month springtime holiday is a traditional time for families to return to the high pastures to hunt for the grub.

Unfortunately, this potential wealth can generate fierce rivalries in more bountiful areas. During the expedition, the cousin of Tse Ung, who drove us to the pasture, was fatally wounded in a territorial dispute in a neighbouring province

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Expedition Diary

			<u>Weather</u>
Sun	29-april	Evening flight Schiphol - Chengdu	
Mon	30-April	Arrive Chengdu 12:30. Picked up by Lenny. Meal, shopping, Traffic Hotel.	
Tues	1-May	10:00 bus to Kangding, 6 hours turns to 10, due to heavy traffic.	Sunny
Weds	2-May	Early bus to Yidun. Breakdown in Yajiang Jtn. Arrival Yidun 23:00.	Sunny
Thurs	3-May	Purchase last supplies and take jeep with Tseung to Zhopu. Camp near river ca. 4100m.	Cloudy
Fri	4-May	Gentle walk up to 4500m. Move camp to side valley, 4300m.	Fine
Sat	5-May	Walk up spur to ca. 5000m to view Hati.	Fine
Sun	6-May	Load carry to 5000m below Hati. Return to sleep in bc.	Fine
Mon	7-May	Move up to highcamp.	Fine
Tues	8-May	Early start (03:30) for Hati. On summit by 08:30. Descend for night at highcamp.	Fine
Weds	9-May	Return to bc.	Cloudy / light snowfall
Thurs	10-May	Horsemen arrive midday. Walk to Zhopu. Stay with TseUng's mother.	Broken clouds / showers
Fri	11-May	Decide to stay put. Walk to monastery.	Low visibility / light snowfall
Sat	12-May	Weather still grim. Walk to hot springs.	Low visibility / light snowfall
Sun	13-May	Tse-Ung arrives in the am and we move the camp up the valley to the base of Garapinsung.	Low visibility / light snowfall
Mon	14-May	Day of continued poor weather	Low visibility / light snowfall
Tues	15-May	Continued poor weather. Walks up the valley to view n. side of Garapinsung.	Heavier cloud / light snow cover
Weds	16-May	Weather still poor. Tse-Ung arrives and we leave for Yidun.	Heavy cloud / 20cms snow
Thurs	17-May	Bus to Batang. Arrive mid pm.	Broken weather
Fri	18-May	Return bus to Yidun. Go for walk in afternoon.	Showers
Sat	19-May	Midday bus, return to Kangding. Meal with gen sec.	Clear sky, cold
Sun	20-May	R&R in Kangding, arrange transport for next day to Tagong.	Sunny
Mon	21-May	Landcruiser to Tagong.	Sunny
Tues	22-May	Walk in to Haizi Shan. Camp on screes.	Sunny
Weds	23-May	Ascend scree to foot of HS.	Sunny – stormy
Thurs	24-May	Night of storm. Awake to snow and warm temps. Walk out to BC.	Overcast, full snow cover
Fri	25-May	Landcruiser to Chengdu.	
Sat	26-May	Return flight to Schiphol.	

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Expedition Report

Expedition Aims

The aims of the expeditions were first ascents, in alpine style, of mountains in the Zhopu valley area of western Sichuan: principally Hati and Garapinsung (previously known as Jarjinjabo).

Expedition Members

David Gerrard, 36 years, UK citizen, Engineer

19 years mountaineering experience: lead grades rock HVS, ice Scottish V.

Leader 3 expeditions to Kyrgyzstan, 2 MEF/BMC supported: total of 11 FAs. Member MEF supported expedition to Cord. Apolobamba, Bolivia; 2 FAs, 1 new route, 3 early repeats.

Further Greater Ranges experience in the Cordillera Blanca, (Artesonraju, Tocllraju, Ranrapalca).

David Sykes, 33 years, UK citizen, General Practitioner

17 years mountaineering experience, lead grades rock E2, ice Scottish VI.

Greater ranges experience:

Ascents of Condoriri, Illampu, Ancohumana and new route on Chachacumani. Cord. Real, Bolivia.

Cord. Blanca, Peru, ascents of Alpamayo, Quitaraju, Hualcán (new route).

Attempt on Hardeol (7161m), Bagini Glacier, Gharwal Himalaya.

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Summary of Activity

The first ascent of Hati (also known as Hadi or Nazdenka), 5584m, in the Zhopu valley, western Sichuan, was made on 8th May 2007 by David Gerrard and Dave Sykes. The ascent was made by an gully on the west face of the mountain, predominantly snow, with short sections of ice (Scottish III) and a pitch of rock (UIAA III), overall grade estimated at alpine AD, 500m. Descent was by the south-west ridge, ropeless, apart from a short abseil.

A bad weather period then prevented further climbing for a number of days and provoked relocation further east, for an attempt on the south-west face of Haizi Shan, also known as Ja Ra or Yala. Base camp was situated on the east edge of the Tagong grasslands, by foothills of an intervening ridge. The approach to Haizi was made, via a col, over this ridge, and into the next valley. An ascent up steep scree gained snow slopes at the bottom of the south face. A heavy storm during the only night available for the ascent, together with new snowfall and high temperatures created poor climbing conditions with high risk of avalanche, so no attempt was made.

Further Objectives in the areas

Garapinsung is the most obvious and attractive remaining unclimbed peak in the Zhopu valley. The SSE face has the easiest looking line, via a broad snow slope to the ridge. The NW face has a number of potentially interesting gully lines.

The SW of Haizi Shan has a number of interesting snow lines between impressive rock buttresses, to a very crenulated main ridge. Colder conditions essential. Approach from the north possibly better.

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Expedition Area

Sichuan Province



Expedition Notes

“Look: Zhopu Valley!” Lenny called to us, pointing toward the front of the bus.

Waking with surprise, I struggled to understand why, just out of Kangding, the Zhopu Valley, the destination of our trip, should be visible so soon. Then, bizarrely, I saw Lenny was pointing to the flickering tv screen above the driver, where for the backdrop of a Tibetan pop video, the camera team had chosen the wonderful panorama of the granite walls, pine forests and beautiful clear lake around the Zhopu monestary. How ironic, our “remote mountain destination” being on Chinese music television. Perhaps we should watch it more often?

Lenny had met us at Chengdu airport the previous day, where our direct flight from



Schiphol had landed. He re-energised us with a half a dozen dishes of Sichuan food as an introduction to the menu of the following weeks, spiced with plenty of chili and “wild pepper”. It was explained that we’d be catching the bus to Kangding at ten the following morning, where we would stay the night and continue the next day to the road junction hamlet of Yidun. The next morning a jeep would take us up to the Zhopu valley. In a whirlwind tour that afternoon, the necessary shopping was completed and we ended up handily in a hotel at the back of the bus station.

A combination of holiday traffic and repeated bus breakdowns, including a four hour halt to change major parts (see picture), doubled the length of the journey each day. On the last day, in an attempt to make up time, the driver attacked the final descent from Litang, driving over the potholed roads at speeds which sent passengers flying into the air. In the end we left the bus close to midnight at the hamlet of Yidun, for a night in Mr Leoh’s

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roadside motel of wooden shed accommodation, complete with electric blanket and satellite tv.

As Dave and I tried to doze through the early morning sound of our neighbours hawking and hurling early morning gobs of spit, Lenny busied himself with purchasing the fresh groceries and last minute things. Tse-Ung, a local Tibetan friend of Lenny's, arrived with his pop-riveted jeep, which we loaded with our goods and set off up the track to Zhopu. After an hour or so the steep sided valley opened out into wide pasture land, the granite towers of Jarjinjabo visible above the forest surrounding the renowned monastery and Garapinsung looking down on us through afternoon cloud. The pylons and electricity cables supplying the recently developed mine were an obtrusive site, but the associated track allowed us to make easy progress eastward, until we had to head across the valley floor toward our target of Hati, visible despite the gathering cloud. It was decided to leave our bags and us at a river crossing, where we made camp for the night.

The next day dawned cold and clear, with Hati standing majestically proud on the north side of the valley. Lenny had arranged horses to take us the last kilometres to our identified camp in a side valley. By the evening we had the tents pitched between juniper bushes and a stream which flowed from the snow melting on Hati.

After a second perfect dawn and our ritual breakfast of porridge, pancake and green tea, we headed up a ridge for a good look at Hati and some more acclimatisation. Three gentle hours of enjoying the walk up warm, sunny hillside took us to a hilltop around 5000m, and some shelter behind the summit rocks where we viewed Hati with her circling guardian vultures.

We were facing the south west aspect, which overlooked a small cirque of steep limestone buttresses forming the end of the valley where we were camped. Hati's easy angled summit snowfield narrowed to the south-west to form a ridge and areas of compact rock had started to show through the west face where the snow had melted. Two steep buttresses overlooked the ridge forming the north-south watershed, and between them a promising gully line started easily before narrowing to broken and unseen ground. This looked a likely challenge.

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We decided to give ourselves an easy time to allow more comfortable acclimatisation and thus a more enjoyable ascent by load carrying over two days. The first day we took up the bulk of the kit and left it with the tent. We noticed that with the cloudless days, the sun's energy was burning off the snow covering Hati and creating sloughs and avalanches which had not been visible a couple of days before. The diminishing snow cover was reducing the number of route options possible without having to resort to rock boots to climb the slabby rock. We knew we should get a move on.



Hati seen from close to the highcamp. Line of ascent: the gully to the right of the left skyline buttress.

The evening of the second day saw us luxuriously comfortable after two hours of hacking out a level site from moraine, a good feed of noodles, a warm pit and the knowledge that local shepherds should be delighted with their red sky. Sleep came easily.

The alarm went off at 2a.m. the next morning and we left the tent just before half three, gearing up a hundred yards away as we reached the snow-line. Temperatures just under freezing meant that every few steps we sank up to our thighs through the soft crust.

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The recent avalanche debris was a reminder of how dangerous these slopes became in the sun, but the morning was cool and calm and we were quietly confident. We gained height gradually, drawn toward the narrow start of the gully, only two arm spans wide at the bottom. Two short steps of water ice provided some interest in the first 100m, before the gully broadened obviously, providing us with a location in our mental map of the mountain.

We headed upward, toward the rearing left wall of the gully. From here the route had looked more tenuous, reliant on good conditions to be able to follow the remaining snow bands we had seen. There were few tricks in store as we continued up into a basin, where the gully became more broken. We made a choice here, to follow the snow rightwards as far as it went, rather than take an early exit to the ridge via a narrow chimney on the left. A short section of rock (III) led to continuation of the snow, where we started moving together again, reaching the summit plateau quickly, and in a further ten minutes, the summit.

The wind was cold, our mini-thermometer showing -8°C , with a clear sky: just to the north, the other twin summit of Hati was, thankfully, distinctly lower. Beyond this, rolling hills and green valleys fell away. Looking along the crest of the range, we could see the fine objective of Garapinsung, and between us the spires of the Jarjinjabo peaks.

To the south, around the fine form of Xiashe, lay other attractive summits and a high glacier, with possibilities for early season ski touring. The crisp, white, crenulated horizon of mountains was entrancing and we thought we could make out Genyen, Yangmalong and Xiannari rising head a shoulders above the rest.

Having snacked and enjoyed the view, we made a start on the descent. An easy snow slope brought us quickly 100m lower to a narrowing rocky ridge. We needed to descend off to the right and after locating some good anchors, we abseiled down a short rock step to the snow slopes. We were thankful to be descending so early, as everywhere around us were signs of the avalanches caused by the daytime sun. Traversing runnels, we came to a final set of slabs with only just enough snow to make the descent easy. Another couple of days of this weather and we thought it would be bare rock.

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Hati: line of ascent is the prominent facing gully plumb from the summit. Descent was made down the south (RH) ridge to the rock step before the notch. The snow slopes were reached by a short abseil and descended easily to the tent.

The final slopes of avalanche debris and a hundred yard stumble over boulders brought us to our tent door, in time for a late breakfast with paracetamol topping. We thought we'd savour the altitude for one more night, to boost our bloodcells, and settled into what shade we could find for an afternoon of snoozing and vulture spotting.

The next morning we woke to cold clamminess and a heavy mist in the air. Outside the door wet rocks glistened in the dull light and melting snow dripped from our tent. We were in no hurry to get down, to where it was probably raining, so we packed slowly and arrived at basecamp in time to order a couple of extra courses of lunch from Lenny. Congratulations were made and photos snapped in front of Hati, finally coming out from behind the clouds.

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Local children in the Zhopu valley.



The team: Dave S, Lenny, Am-Ping and Dave G.

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The next day we arranged horses to take us up the valley to the foot of Garapinsung. There was the usual lively steed, fighting against being saddled with a load, which finally bolted off suddenly, our packs bouncing around wildly. Fate played its usual trick of flicking the packs loose just as bronco ran across the stream.

All ponies under control we headed up the pastures under threatening skies. The wide valley was littered with old tent sites, centred around their turf hearths with scattered domestic debris all around.

The ponies' pace was slow, steady and extremely wearing. It was a relief to cross the last ridge of moraine and descend to the hamlet at the Zhopu lake, home to many pilgrims and a group of nuns. We were to stay the night with TseUng's mother, where she had a spare room in her hut.

Her living conditions would have tested a Spartan: her room was about three metres square, and shared with her chicken, a prayer wheel and photographs of many living buddhas. It was heated by a small wood stove and she slept on a mattress, even more ready for retirement than she was, despite having a pile of sponge cushions next door.

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Jarjinjabo rock peaks from the Zhopu lake.

Our eagerness, now we were fit and acclimatised, to have a crack at Garapinsung, was rapidly deflated when we woke the following morning to find a thick clag over the hills and an inch of damp snow over everything else, including the two horsemen who had slept outside the hut under yak hide blankets and a plastic tarpaulin. Safely ensconced under a roof, we decided to stay put, pay off the horsemen and await better weather.

We laboured the first days cheerfully enough, with a walk around the lake for tea with the Living Buddha on the first day and a dip in the local hot spring, the one bathtub in the valley, on the second. By the third day we felt eager to be in our next camp, ready to pounce when the mountain revealed itself. Some diligent driving by Tse-Ung set us on a comfortably flat site next to the river and not too close to the nearby village.

Our longing for a break in the weather was thwarted by more thick cloud and not a breath of wind to tempt thoughts of it blowing over. A walk up the valley to the north side of

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Garapinsung gave us faint views through the mist of a plethora of exciting looking gully lines, which only increased the frustration.

The following day's weather was a repeat of the previous six, finally wearing out our patience and we decided to escape for some R n R in nearby Batang. Tse-Ung arrived the next morning, despite six inches of new snow, with some very sad news. His cousin had been killed in a shooting during territorial fights over caterpillar fungus collecting areas. After dropping us off in Yidun, he had to leave to help the family recover the body.

We were finding travel very laborious in Sichuan: after being dropped off at midday in Yidun, it was a whole 24 hours interminable wait for the next bus, which took us down riverside roads, one minute perfect tarmac, the next potholed track, the three hours to Batang.

R n R was a brief affair in the Chinese dominated town and by midday the following day we were back at Yidun with a decision to make. Although the weather was definitely brighter, heavy clouds still deposited regular rain or snowfall. With one success in the bag, the possibility of an early flight back to waiting families was a strong lure and it required a strong incentive to head back up to the pastures to test slopes still heavy with recent snowfall. We decided to catch the next bus out.

As fate would have it our bus ride provided us with perfect weather and stunning views of the mountains, prompting a quick rethink over dinner with the General Secretary of the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Mountaineering Association, Lenny and Am-Ping. After a quick stock up of the necessaries and a successful search for transport, we were heading back for the hills, pulses racing.

We thought first of trying to find "The Lotus Tower Mountains" mentioned by Tom Nakamura in a recent Japanese Alpine Journal, but lack of information made the risk of spending days searching rather possible. On our return trip the southern Tibetan Highway provided a breathtaking view of Haizi Shan: a huge sharks fin of a mountain, head and shoulders above its neighbours and a entrancement to mountaineers. The first and presumed second ascent of the mountain had been made at the back end of 2006, but

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as far as we knew, the snow encrusted south face we had seen from the highway had not been climbed. The best approach was unknown to all of us, so we took a direct line over the Tagong grasslands to get as close as possible by jeep. Am Ping had left us to spend time with his family, but through contacts Lenny found Boké, who was local to the area and could accompany us to basecamp.



Haizi Shan from above basecamp, Tagong grasslands.

We had scouted out a route to the valley below Haizi on afternoon of our arrival and the next morning we set off, with our packs strapped to one of Boké's horses. He indicated he knew the best, direct way to the hill, but in our uncertainty we insisted in following the route we had identified. This took us up to a beautiful lake, which we had to circumnavigate clockwise, after Buddhist tradition. From here Boke then headed off in the opposite direction, but his confidence persuaded us to shut up and follow. He took us across a hillside, past groups of caterpillar hunters and toward a col, which we were delighted to see sported a flagged post and had a string of yaks winding their way toward

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it. Leaving us at the snow line to return to camp, we shouldered packs for the struggle to the top.

At the col we had a tremendous view of the mountain: with a whole aspect of steep buttresses split by ribbons of snow. There was only the matter of a 700m descent to the valley bottom and an enormous looking scree ascent. By the time we had started up the far hillside we were thoroughly goosed and ready to pitch the tent wherever possible.

Our plan was for a midnight or earlier start, the gully line we had chosen being hopefully easy to follow, with the intention to reach the top early the following morning and be back to the tent by afternoon. We would then have a mammoth walk out to basecamp in time to depart Friday morning for Chengdu. In readiness for this effort, we allowed ourselves a leisurely lie-in the next morning, before tottering up the final 500m of 45° scree to collapse near the bottom of our route.

We now had the time to view again the ravages of the sun on climbers' perfectly laid plans. Our awareness of the uncomfortably warm temperatures had been suppressed up to now by our greater awareness of uncomfortably large rucksacks and unpleasantly steep scree. Having been relieved of the latter two, we could now concentrate on what was left of our route. It began with a waterfall: a cascade flanked by shear walls which looked a wet and desperate way to start the day. To emphasise its reluctance to being climbed, a chute of wet snow was spat out of the gully in our direction. Having no option, we decided to enjoy the fine views and think happy thoughts about temperatures plummeting once the sun had set. Another thunderous avalanche had us tumbling out of our tent to watch the lower half of our route spread itself over the surrounding slopes, then shortly afterwards a neighbouring gully did likewise. We struggled to be optimistic as we went to bed.

Once darkness had fallen and temperatures were still very much in the plus, we decided to postpone a 10pm start to midnight. When the wind picked up, clouds rolled in and rain began to fall heavily we thought we'd leave it till the early hours. When we could still hear the cascade at two in the morning, despite sloughs of wet snow sliding off the tent walls, we decided to turn off the alarms and get some kip.

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We awoke to views reminiscent of wet spring days in Scotland: inches of damp snow on the ground, wet flakes falling from the sky, the gullies laden with heavy snow and ready to slide, and buttresses a dark, damp grey, swirling with cloud.

The irrefutable wisdom of not having set off in these conditions tempered our frustration somewhat and now we had run out of time we enjoyed our damp walk back: the ease of the scree descent; the views of the wild valleys; the wreaths of cloud around Haizi and the beauty of the mountains after a storm.

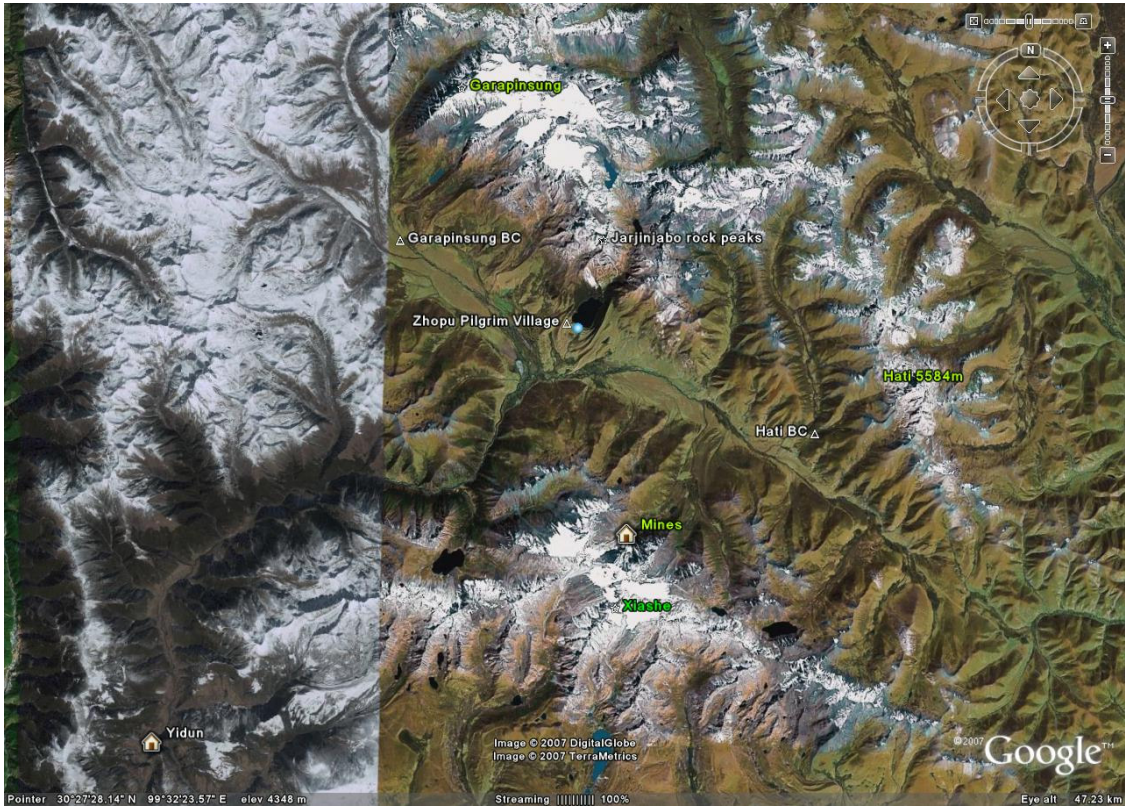


Haizi Shan on the approach. The scree below Haizi was ascended to the snow, where it was intended to make an ascent of the prominent gully just to the left of the summit. The long spur to the left again was climbed to within a couple of hundred metres of the summit by a party led by Jon Otto.

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Satellite pictures from Google Earth

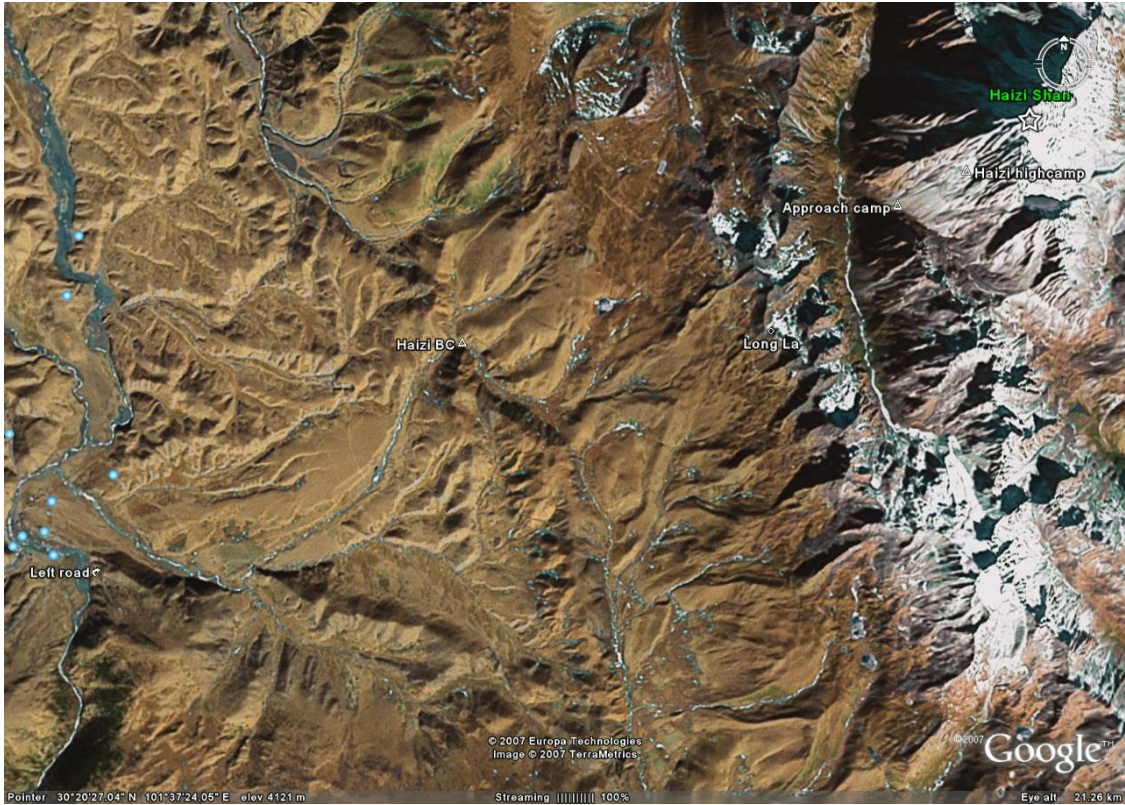
Zhopu Valley



Google Earth map showing key points in Zhopu Valley.

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Haizi Shan Region



Google Earth map showing key points in area around Haizi Shan.

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Research and Information

- Japanese Alpine Journals; in particular articles by Tamotsu Nakamura and Pat Deavoll.
- Reports from MEF and BMC supported expeditions, in particular British Xiashe 2005 (Ed Douglas).
- Correspondance with the following people regarding previous expeditions to Sichuan:
 - Angela Benham
 - Lenny Cheng
 - Tom Chamberlain
 - Patricia Deavoll
 - Ed Douglas
 - Martin Scott
 - Sean Waters

Maps

- Sketch maps of Tomatsu Nakamura from the Japanese Alpine Journal.
- Prints from Google Earth.

Travel and Logistics

Flights were direct to Chengdu from the UK via Schiphol, NL.

Local buses were taken from Chengdu to Kangding (overnight stay) and then on to Yidun (overnight stay). This was done to save the cost of Landcruiser transport, particularly high during the 10 days at the beginning of May (worker's holiday). Cost usually 100 USD and return journeys need to be paid for. Considering the discomfort and inflexibility of bus travel, a Landcruiser could be a worthwhile investment, as it would be possible to stop and take in the frequently impressive views.

A jeep ferried us from Yidun to close to basecamp in the pasture.

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Horses are available for transportation higher up the mountain or around the valley. We felt the horse drivers to be a cheeky bunch, both times we were charged more than agreed, which Lenny did not argue with (to keep the peace / we were paying). Alternatively Tse-Ung can be contacted to use his jeep in the valley, recommended.

There is a good track from Yidun to the mines in the pasture. The pasture is flat and suitable for jeep transport. There are rough tracks in the pasture, used by motorcycles and vehicles of the hamlets.

The rivers are passable in a number of areas, allowing a jeep transport to a good bc for Garapinsung.

Communication

Due to the presence of the mines at the foot of Xiashe, there is now mobile phone reception in most of the valley. Near the foot of Garapinsung there was no signal. It was necessary to walk an hour eastward for a signal. This made communication easy in the event of needing to call Tse-Ung for assistance with his jeep.

Local Agent

With good references from previous expeditions to the area we engaged the services of Zheng Ling (Lenny) Cheng, an independent “travel consultant” with a close cooperative relationship with the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Mountaineering Association. He proved to meet all expectations, being thoroughly cheerful, ready to attend to every need, well prepared and a great cook. He has a number of year’s experience of assisting foreign expeditions, including those of Tomatsu Nakamura, so has considerable personal knowledge of many areas of interest to climbers. He is astute and has a policy of involving people local to the area in some way. This benefits them, through paid work, and the expedition, by being able to make use of their knowledge of the area and assuring a degree of safety through the positive contact. He has a good local network from his trips. He speaks good English and Tibetan. His fee excluded travel (bus, jeep, horse) and accommodation other than at basecamp.

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Lenny was assisted by Am-Ping, a Tibetan employee of the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Mountaineering Association, who was likewise always helpful and cheerful, but spoke no English.

In Yidun, Lenny employed the services of Tse-Ung, who has assisted other expeditions to the pasture, to ferry us with his jeep. Tse-Ung is a very competent driver, honest, capable and aware of how keen climbers are on not having to walk any unnecessary distance. He lives in a village above Yidun.

Traditional Customs

Having heard many tales of how greatly personal habits in China vary from the west, we were glad to find that Lenny and Am-Ping were very tolerant of our occasionally lax behaviour and by the end there were even jokes about Dong Feng and Shui Feng (east wind and west wind).

Permits

Climbing permits are readily obtainable direct from Lenny, also at short notice, although it is recommended to propose the number of ascents likely to be attempted during a trip. The expedition travelled to the Zhopu valley with the intention of climbing Hati, so a commitment to pay for a permit was made and settled after the expedition. Following our ascent of Hati, our intention was to assess the possibilities of climbing Garapinsung and make a climbing attempt if conditions were favourable. This was unfortunately not the case, so no climbing permit fee was charged. There is no fee for trekking.

On return to Kangding, the Mountaineering Association was informed that we had intentions to climb Haizi Shan and we agreed to pay the climbing fee.

Emergency Assistance

A key concern of Lenny is the safety of the expedition. Rescue options or emergency assistance was not discussed directly, but it was clear that he would have a key role to play in the event of an accident: in raising the alarm and organising immediate assistance.

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Our feelings were that all efforts would be made by the authorities to arrange appropriate activity, as we had gone through the official channels to climb in the region. Whether this would involve helicopter rescue is not known.

Weather

The first week we had good weather: subzero nights at 4000m, daytime temperatures ca. 15°C in the shade / 25°C in the sun, clear skies. Daytime temps were too warm, though, causing sloughs and small avalanches on the mountain and heavily depleting the snow cover during the days.

We then had a period of 7 days poor weather, with freezing level oscillating around 4000m, light daily precipitation (rain/snow), no wind and low cloud level (no views).

The weather brightened, with broken cloud and showers, then clear skies, for our return journey to Kangding. The first two days near Haizi were warm and fine, before a heavy storm broke, with snow falling at ca. 4700m. Freezing levels at night were estimated to be around 5500m.

It was thought that temperatures for snow / ice routes would be better a month earlier: in April. As long as the unsettled weather was not an indication of the time of year, May would give good temperatures for rock climbing.

Equipment: climbing and general expedition

Other trips to the area (October) having been equipped with cold weather gear and fearing for our toes, we brought very warm boots (Vasque and Scarpa Omegas). Our fears proved to be unfounded: leather boots would have sufficed.

Clothing was standard alpine type attire, with a warm duvet jacket as extra. A pair of synthetic insulated pants was an enviable item of basecamp lounge-wear.

Our rack was standard: wires, cams, pegs, ice-screws, two 9mm ropes with a spare. Little gear was used in the event. For Haizi Shan we fashioned rudimentary snow stakes from

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aluminium angle bought from a window supplier and drilled in a roadside workshop. These were not used.

As Lenny was more or less providing base-camp, we were saved a lot of weight in cooking and camping gear. We took a small two person tent (Terra Nova Solar 2) and a bivvy tent (BD Firstlight). Although not used on a route, this bivvy tent was highly prized, being first of all very light (1,2kgs) and roomy. Having a small “footprint” we were able to construct a comfortable pitch with little effort.

Light sleeping bags were used (500g / 600g down).

BC catering was top quality Sichuan menu. At highcamps we used a Jetboil stove: light, efficient and convenient, but with a small volume (ca. 600ml). Polyline resealable “Pour n Store” bags were used to eat from.

The expedition received generous assistance with the provision of equipment from the following companies:

- First Ascent Limited, Derbyshire: axes, tent, sleeping mats, gloves, cooking equipment.
- The Mountain Boot Company: footwear.

Food

We only had to provide highcamp food, Lenny taking care of the rest (fresh meat and veg most meals).

We found the Chengdu supermarkets adequately stocked with all sorts of goodies: very tasty instant-noodles, preserved vegetables, dried meat snacks, sweets, chocolate bars, instant porridge... nothing was found wanting apart from the amount of bombproof packaging on everything.

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Roadside restaurants served delicious food. This is one destination where you are not likely to lose weight on a trip.

Water was generally boiled, due to the perceived risk of water contamination from yak herds. An MSR Miox battery operated water purifier, which generates a purifying solution from rock salt, was taken, appeared very useful, but was not used.

Photography

Both team members took digital cameras. In addition a traditional camera was taken to shoot slide film. Batteries lasted almost the whole trip.

Electronic Equipment

European two pin plugs were found to fit Chinese sockets well enough to charge devices. A “hairclip” type charger, which held the battery in place with a spring clip and could charge any battery via two adjustable contacts was purchased cheaply and worked well.

A Garmin Geko GPS was taken and used along with Suunto watch altimeters.

Health and Medical Provision

A comprehensive medical kit was taken.

Codeine and paracetamol was taken for altitude headaches.

Diamox was taken as prophylactic against HA symptoms in the early period.

Sunscreen was used.

There were no other ailments, apart from the odd case of mild diarrhoea.

Waste disposal

Having transport to basecamp meant that transporting out our rubbish to Yidun was no effort. Vegetable matter was disposed of locally, all other rubbish taken out. Lenny is

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aware of this approach to waste disposal and will do a good job at making sure a clean and tidy camp is left. The attitude of most local people to rubbish is to throw it out of sight in a river or bushes, so care must be taken!

Human waste was buried and toilet paper burnt.

Flora and Fauna

Being springtime, there was abundant birdlife and a vast variety of flowers. This was a real treat and tens of different species were spotted.

Further Mountaineering Activity

The first ascent of Garapinsung remains: possibly the most attractive peak in the valley. In addition there are a number of unclimbed 5000m+ peaks in the vicinity of Xiashe which could be climbed by technically "reasonable" routes.

The eastern aspect of Hati appears to have a number of rock buttresses. Other buttresses around Hati were of sound, compact, very rough weathered limestone.

The area of granite spires and walls around the Zhopu lake have received little attention, look very impressive and are reputedly of top quality rock.

The southern aspect of Haizi Shan should yield many good snow / ice lines in cold conditions. There should be a better approach, as a fungus hunter camp was spotted in the valley, but the 700m steep scree approach remains.

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Expedition Finances

<u>Expenditure</u>	GBP (equiv)
Flights	£ 1.000,00
Agent's Fee	£ 1.528,00
Peak fee Hati	£ 740,00
Peak fee Haizi Shan	£ 345,00
Landcruiser (4 days)	£ 213,00
Room fees 1.May (1night x 4pp)	£ 32,00
Accom Yidun (3 nights x 4pp)	£ 16,00
Accom Batang (1 night x 4pp)	£ 12,00
Accom 20th May (4pp)	£ 13,00
Jeep Transport (3 days)	£ 133,00
Bus travel	£ 49,00
Horses Zhopu Valley	£ 106,00
Total	£ 4.187,00

<u>Income</u>	
MEF Grant	£ 1.550,00
BMC Grant	£ 400,00
Personal Contribution	£ 2.237,00
Total	£ 4.187,00

Useful contacts

Lenny Chen : lenny9529@yahoo.com.cn

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Expedition Thanks

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- Mount Everest Foundation.
- British Mountaineering Council.
- UK Sports Council: grant award via the BMC.

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First Ascent Limited.

The Mountain Boot Company.

The Expedition would like to thank the following people for their time and effort in providing assistance and information to the expedition.

- Angela Benham
- Lenny Chen
- Tom Chamberlain
- Patricia Deavoll
- Ed Douglas
- Martin Scott
- Siobhan Sheridan
- Sean Waters

The Expedition members would be happy to be contacted by anyone planning a prospective trip to the area.

David Gerrard: gerrardd@hotmail.com

David Sykes: davethebeastsykes@yahoo.com



Dave S relishing a gravity assisted descent from Haizi Shan.

The members of the expedition agree that any or all of this report may be copied for the purposes of private research.

HAPPY CLIMBING