

The First Ascent of Lopchin Feng (KG-2) 6,805m
Autumn 2009 Expedition to the Kangri Garpo East Mountains, Tibet
Unknown Peaks in the Range

By Tim (Tatsuo) Inoue



Lopchin Feng (6,805m), the White Hawk from the road to Dema La

“The White Hawk” Lopchin Feng (KG-2) was climbed by two Tibetan students, Deqing Ouzhu and Ciren Danda, on 5th November 2009, and two Japanese, Masanori Yazaki and Koichiro Kondo (student), on 7th November 2009. The Joint Scientific and Mountaineering Expedition organized by ACKU (the Alpine Club of Kobe University) and CUG (the Mountaineering Association of Chinese University of Geosciences, Wuhan) was led by co-leaders Tim Inoue and Dong Fan. 17 members, including 9 students, established the Base Camp (BC 4,320m) on the east side moraine valley of the Ata Glacier on 18th October, and returned to BC on 10th November.

Even though there are more than 47 unclimbed 6,000m-peaks in the Kangri Garpo Mountains, it is remarkable that no 6,000m-peak had been climbed until the first ascent of Lopchin Feng. Since this area is very close to the disputed border between China and India, foreigner’s entry is severely restricted. Only Kobe University received the official climbing permit. In 2003, the Kobe University party had tried to climb Ruoni Feng 6,882m, the highest peak in this mountain range, but failed because of bad weather with difficult and dangerous conditions of hanging ice collapse. In autumn 2007, ACKU and CUG sent a reconnaissance party to the Ata Glacier led by Takeru Yamada. They recognized 3 major peaks, KG-1 (Ruoni), KG-2(Lopchin) and KG-3 on the main ridge. They could not find a safe and passable route to the summit of Ruoni, but were impressed by KG-2, which has a beautiful skyline and a possible route to the summit. The altitude of KG-2 was



Moon set and Sun rising at C1 ; Morgen rot on Lopchin (KG-2 ,left) and KG-3

We enjoyed the view of Ata 3-Sisters (KG-1, 2 and 3) in the deep glacier origin. They showed their flanks to the sunrise that presented to us a dramatic festival of light in the morning.

Camp-1 (C1 4,890m) was placed in the middle basin of the glacier on 29th October, where we could provide good coaching to the summit attackers. 600m of fixed rope work and cutting ice /snow in the seracs led us to the Camp-2 (C2 5,680m) on the scree of Insel Ridge.

After opening the route to the Camp-3 (C3 5,910m), all members assembled at C1 on 3rd November to form an attack operation. In any event, we were ready to ascend Lopchin Feng.



The route to C2 through seracs in the 2nd ice fall



Kondo carried heavy stuff.

The First Ascent of Lopchin Feng

On the morning of 4th November, 5 CUG members and 4 ACKU members started from C1 with climbing gear and 5 days food. They moved to C2 in the evening. The weather was perfect, but cold

wind blew over the main ridge.

On 5th November, 5 CUG attack members started from C2 at 4:00 AM in the dark with the moon light and were opening a route to the southeast ridge of Lopchin Feng. They fixed a 200m of rope on the way to the middle of the summit ridge. Three of them abandoned their attempt to the summit at 6,450m on the steep slope of the snow ridged face. Deqing and Ciren had continued to climb the ridge in deep soft snow and reached the summit at 1:18PM in hazy and windy weather. They made the first ascent of Tibetan virgin peak by Tibetans.

While this drama was going on, the ACKU Team established C3 (5,910m) on the edge of Ruoni Terrace near the northwest Col of Ruoni Feng. Yazaki and Kondo stayed at C3. Shigeaki Yamamoto, the climbing leader, and Shoji Ishimaru returned to C2 in the evening.

Deqing and Ciren had descended the ridge carefully to C3 where they took a rest and returned to C2 after 14 hours of work.

On 6th November, it was windy and the route was veiled with clouds. All of us stayed at camps.



Watching attempt , C1



Deqing on the summit 1:18PM

On 7th November, the weather turned favorable. The ACKU team started C3 at 8:00AM. Yazaki had led Kondo and had made smooth progress to the middle of the summit ridge about 6,600m around 1:00PM. A walkie-talkie at C1 received a message from Kondo, "We made the summit." It was 3:36PM. Kondo was surprised with his GPS receiver that indicated 6,805m.

Their descending was critical. Dizziness had overcome Yazaki and slow descending consumed time. They met darkness on the foot of the ridge where the large Ruoni Terrace expands ahead and they lost their way back to C3 in the dark. They come back to C3 at 8:00PM.

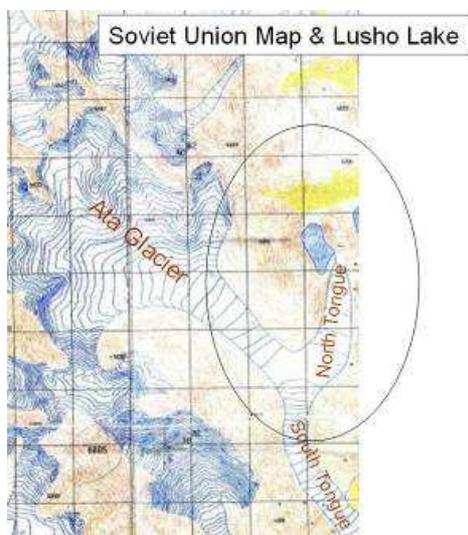
On 8th November, All attack members had come back to C1 and our first ascent drama come to the end.

Climate Change

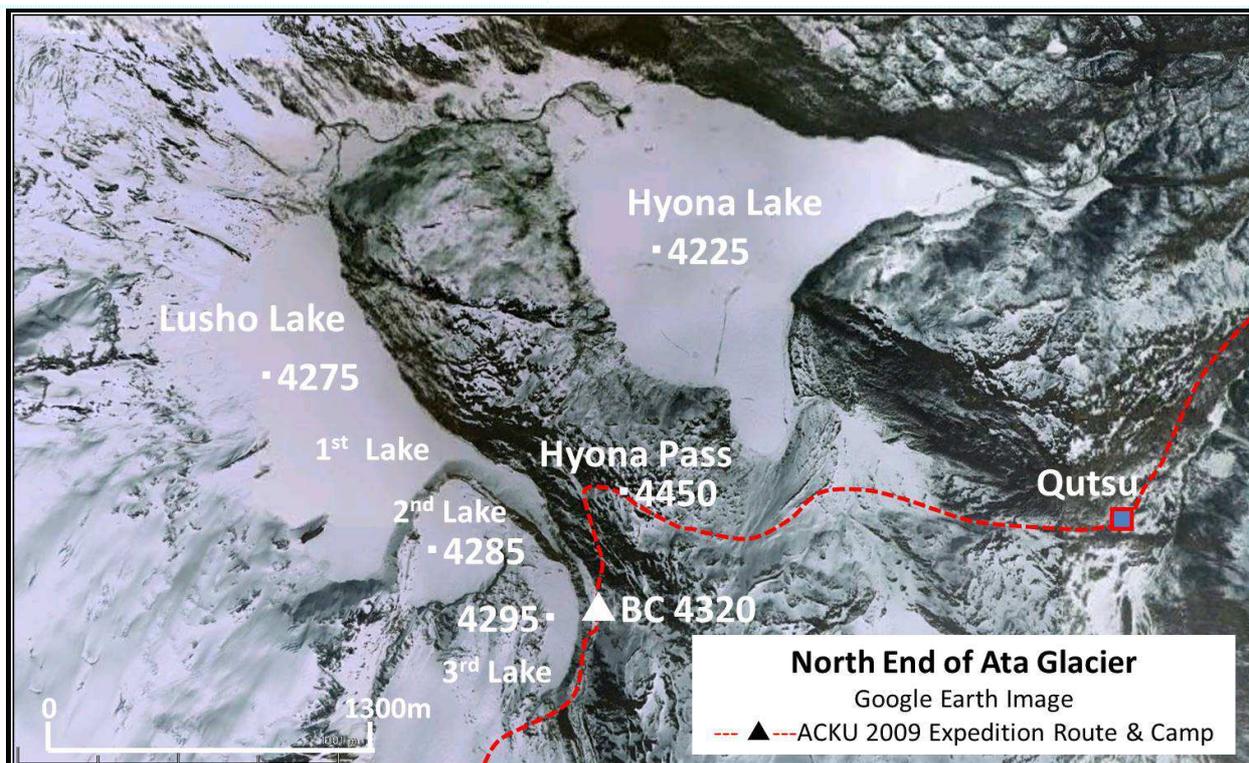
Through our 4 visits to the Ata Glacier area in 2002, 2003, 2007 and 2009, we experienced climate change. One change is the Shrinkage of the Ata Glacier. We compared two pictures, the map of the Soviet Union and Google Earth. Two additional lakes were created in the past half century.



Newly born glacier lakes photo taken from Hiyona Pass



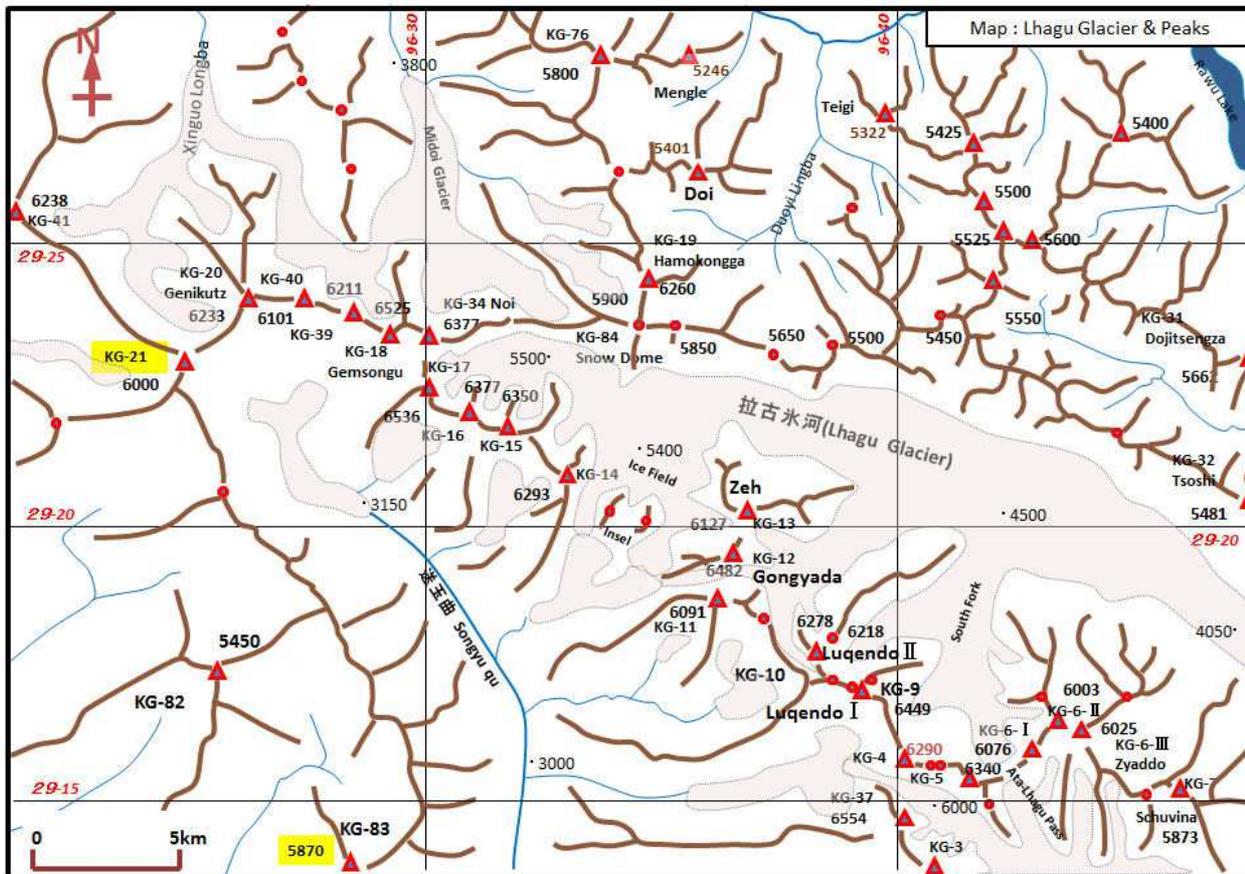
Another change was snowfall. We had predicted heavy snowfall in 2002, 2003 and 2007. The results were as expected. In the case of 2009, we did not experience such heavy snowfall. At DPC (4,440m), we had daily snowfall, but no cumulative snow on the glacier. We put tents on the bare ice. At ABC (4,660m), we measured 130 cm snow pile up on the glacier ice. But, At C1 (4,890m), we met the same conditions as at DPC. We felt hanging ice cornices on the flanks of the 3-Sisters had shrunk compared with the past years. We suppose a drier climate is increasing in southeast Tibet recently.



The latest glacier condition of the Ata North tongue

Unknown Peaks in the Southeast Area of the Kangri Garpo Mountains

The first ascent of Lopchin Feng provided us with many discoveries of peaks. We put numbers on the peaks in order to discuss and identify peaks. Heights of peaks are put by our presumption.



Lhagu Glacier and surrounding peaks

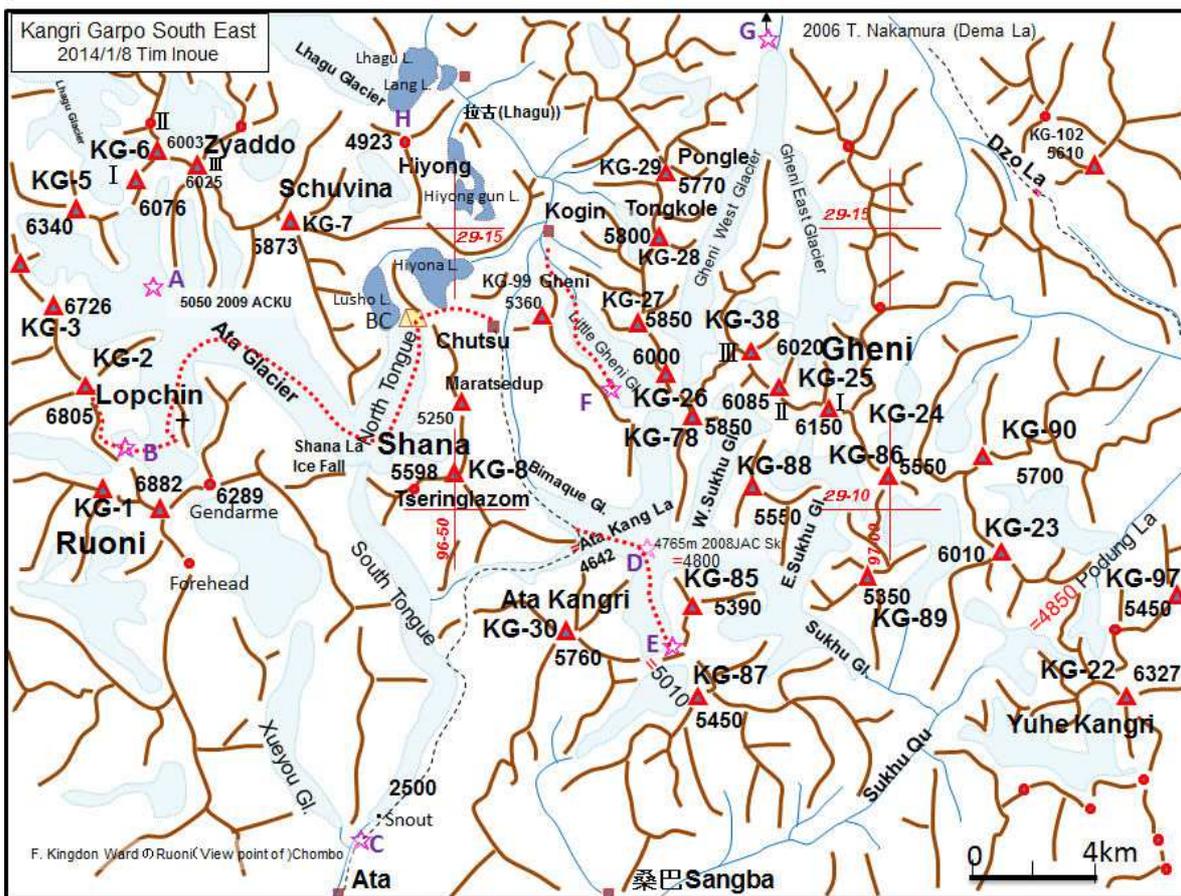
I have picked up almost all pictures of numbered peaks in this article. I will be happy if the readers of this book become interested in those new shots of the mountains.

KG-1 6,882m : Ruoni / Chombo / Bairiga

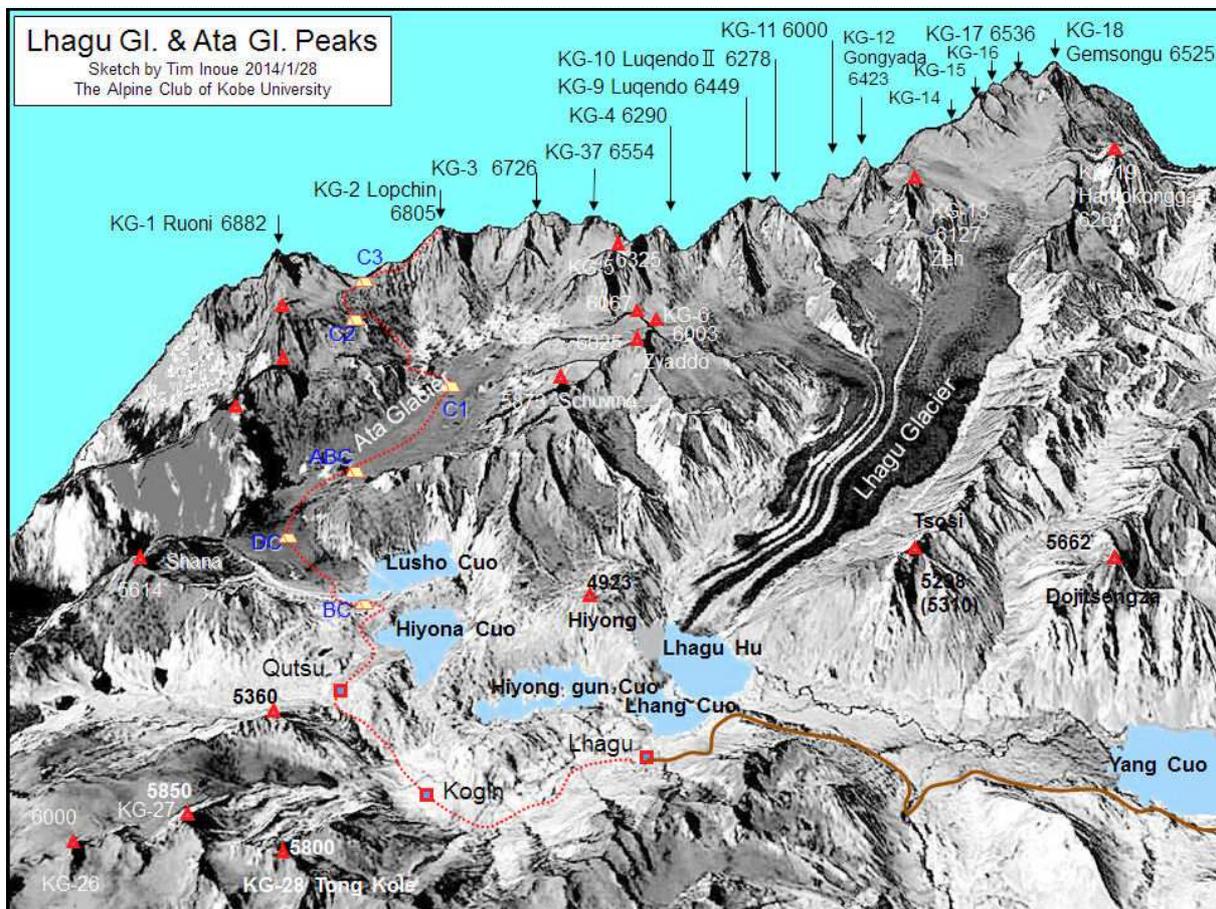
It has 3 names and different heights, 6,805m (Soviet Union map), 6,882m (Chinese map), 6,900m (estimated) and others. The local people call her “Ruoni”, but we suspect the 2003 ACKU expedition members called her “Ruoni”, and influenced the locals. A recent Chinese map has the name “Bairiga”.

The ACKU 2003 expedition had reached 5,900m on Ruoni Terrace just in front of the steep wall. We heard news from a student of Tibet Mountaineering School that a Swiss party accessed 3 different routes to Ruoni in 2005, but we did not get any information about this attempt from the Chinese Tibet Mountaineering Association. They said they gave a permit only to ACKU.

We could not find a safe and passable route to the summit of Ruoni despite 3 reconnaissance trips that were done over the past several years. There are 3 considered routes to the top. But we were too overwhelmed by hanging seracs and steep saw-tooth rocks and snow ridges.



South-east range of the Kangri Garpo Mountains



Sketch of the peaks and Glaciers in the South-east Kangri Garpo Mountains



KG-1 Ruoni 6,882m from the road to Dema La



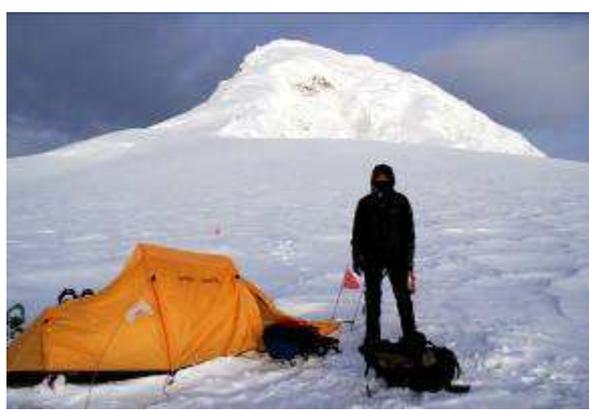
KG-1 Ridges and flanks are guarded by huge seracs.
From 5,050m point in the upper Ata Glacier

KG-2 6,805m Lopchin Feng

Since the peak had no name, we expected to get a local name. We asked Lhagu village people and got several answers. One person said, “White bird’s peak” but it was not confirmed and we asked the Village leader to research the name. Finally we got a proposition from them. “Lopchin” (Chinese “Lou bu qin”) is the Tibetan pronunciation written in English. It means; male hawk, brave, intelligence and university. Another alternative was “University Peak”, but CUG and ACKU preferred to choose the local pronunciation of “Lopchin”.



KG-2 Lopchin Feng 6,805m
Gold shine in the morning at C1(4,890m)



KG-2 at C3: Left skyline was the route.

The Soviet Union map shows the height of KG-2 as 6,703m. The GPS indicated 6,805m when Kondo measured the height on the top. The difference of about 100m was a big surprise.

KG-3 6,726m

KG-3 was a missing peak in the Ata Glacier before ACKU identified it in 2003. Since KG-3, KG-37 and KG-5 overlap each other when viewing them from the road to Dema La; it was difficult to distinguish them individually. Only P 6,443m (KG-37 6,554m) is printed on the Soviet Union map.



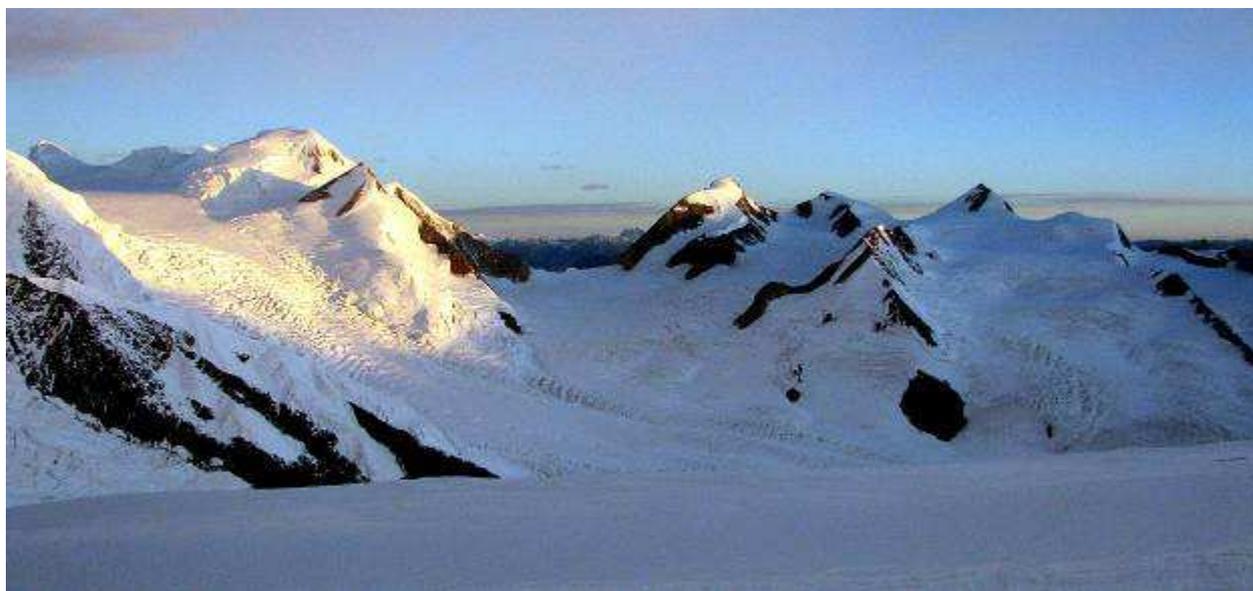
KG-3 6,726m and KG-37(6,554m ;right back)



Twins and KG-4 6,290m



KG-1, KG-2, KG-3 and KG-5 on the main ridge of the Kangri Garpo Mountains from the road to Dema La



Peaks on the divide of the Ata and Lhagu Glacier
KG-4, Twins, KG-5, Ata-Lhagu Pass (5,500m) and KG-6- I , II , III

KG-4 6,290m

The main ridge of the Kangri Garpo Mountains runs from KG-4 to KG-5 via Twins (This is not an official naming, but just a nickname for identification.). The upper plateau cut the main ridge off near KG-5. The main ridge starts again from KG-37(P 6,443m) and continues to KG-2 and KG-1. KG-4 stands on the edge of the upper plateau and is visible from Ruoni Terrace.

KG-5 6,325m

KG-5 is visible from the point on the road to Dema La, but many observers could not recognize it because KG-5, KG-37 (P6443m), KG-6- I and II have overlapped on a line. ACKU 2007 reconnaissance party identified this peak.



KG-4 (6290m left end) ,KG-5 (6325m)
from C2



KG-5 Morgen rot from C1

KG-6

- I 6,067m
- II 6,003m (Zyaddo 5,903m on the Soviet Union map)
- III 6,025m

On the Soviet Union map , Zyaddo has just one peak. But in reality, she has 3 peaks. The Lhagu Glacier side has a steep rock wall and the Ata Glacier side is covered with gentle slopes of glacier fingers. The Ata-Lhagu Glacier Pass (5,500m) is located between KG-5 and KG-6- I

KG-7 5,699m :Schuvina

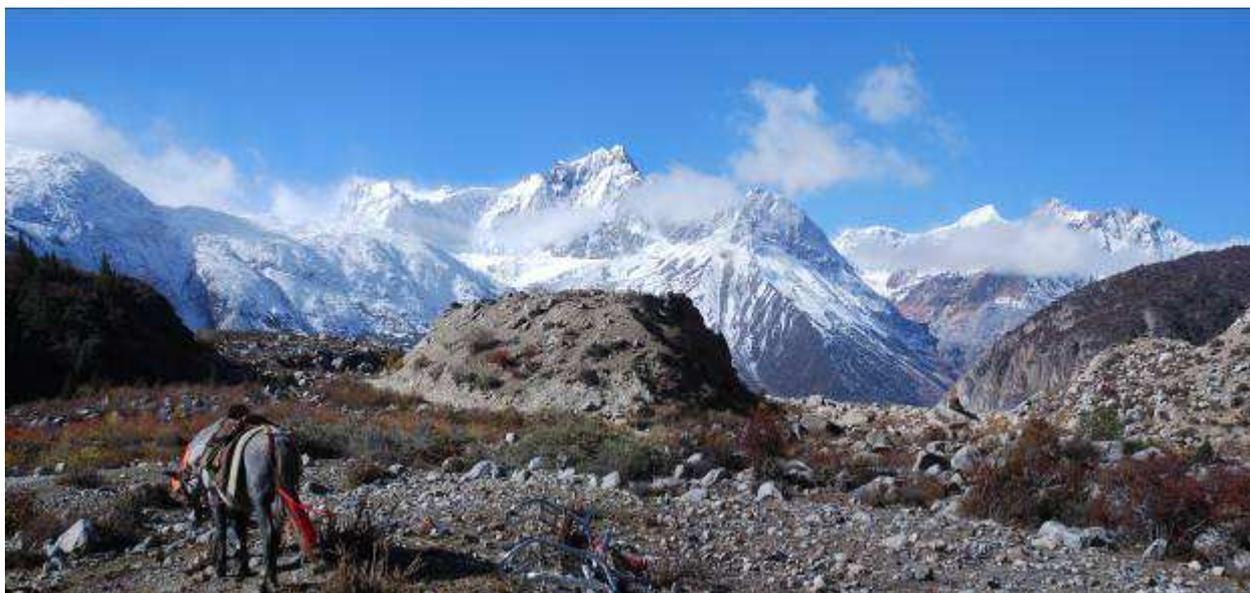


KG-7 Schuvina from ABC(Ata Glacier)



KG-7 Minor Peak (5,699m)
from the Lhagu Glacier Lake

While the bumpy 4-wheel drive vehicle was approaching the Lhagu Glacier Lake in the U-shaped valley leaving from the main road to Zayul, the jagged peaks in front of the main ridge of the Kangri Garpo Mountains, KG-7 and KG-6 pressed ahead. It is supposedly said that a monk at Shugden Gompa, the old Buddhist monastery near Yang Lake, named KG-6 Zyaddo, KG-7 Schuvina, KG-8 Shana, KG-31 Dojitsengza and KG-32 Tsoshi as sacred mountains. The 5,699m height on the Soviet Union map may correspond to KG-7 Minor Peak seen from Lhagu village. The highest point of KG-7 is not visible from the village.



KG-7(left) and KG-6-III Photo taken from the gate of Lhagu Village

KG-8 5,598m :Shana

KG-8 Shana is visible from the road near Yang Lake. She stands on the divide of the Kangri Garpo main ridge, but looks isolated by the Ata Glacier and the glacier of Ata Kang La. Those two glaciers have a unique topography, that both of them flow into two legs surrounding Shana.



KG-8 Shana (5,598m) from ABC



KG-8 Shana (5,598m) from ABC

KG-12 6,423m: Gongyada and KG-13 6,127m :Zeh

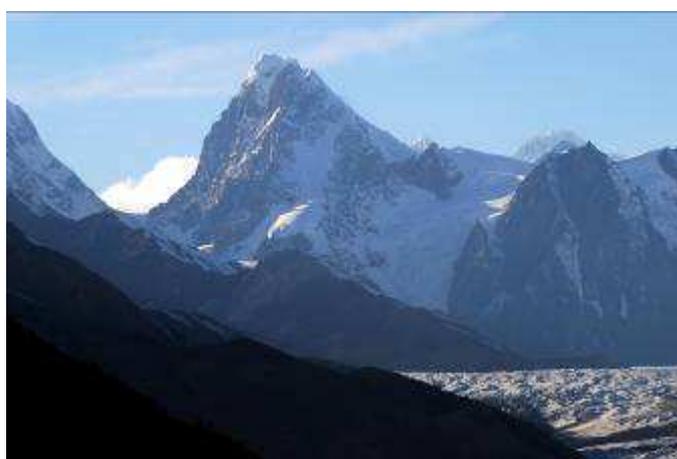
The glacier view from Lhagu village is one of the best places to see the glacier and needle peaks. Even though it is far and remote from cities and has a high altitude (about 4,200m above sea level), many tourists visit there nowadays.



Lhagu Glacier from Lhagu village



KG-12 Gongyada (6,423m)



KG-13 Zeh (6,127m)

KG-22 Yuhe Kangri 6,327m and KG-23 6,010m

KG-23 (P 6,327m) is seen on the Soviet Union map, but KG-23 (6,010m) is not seen on it. KG-23 was discovered by ACKU in 2009. A picture taken from Camp 3 (5,910m) clearly shows the peak.



KG-23 (6,010m)

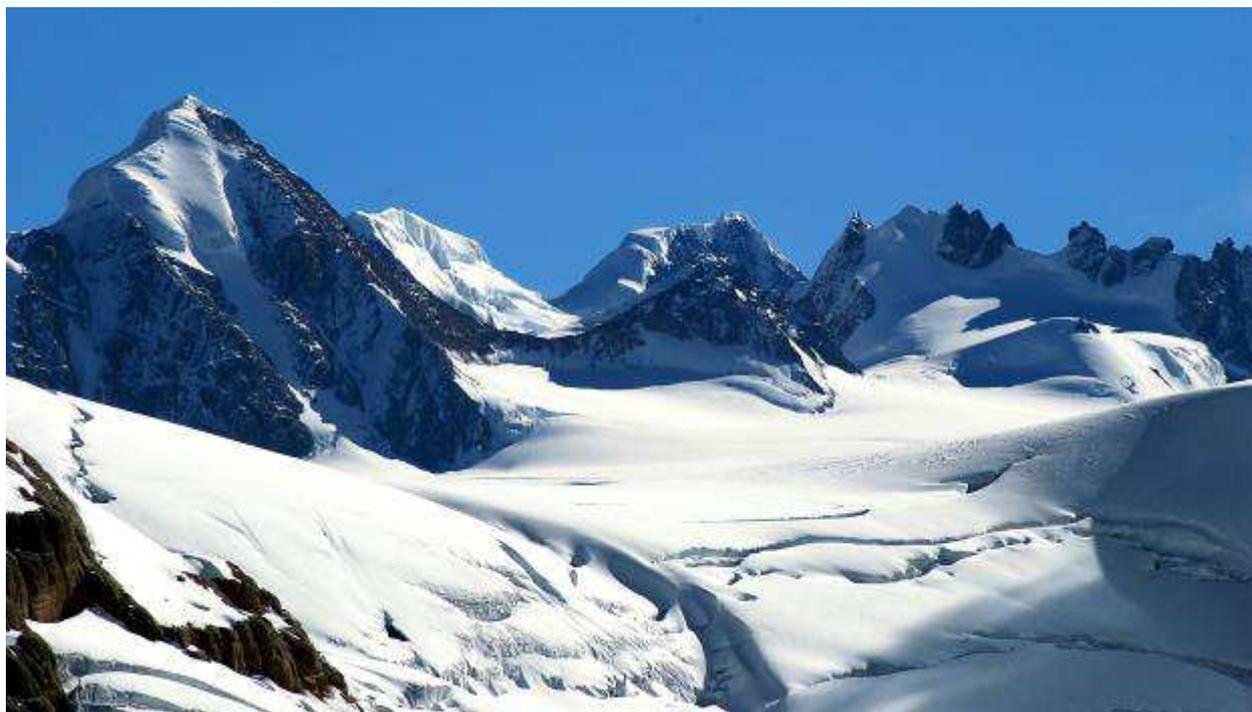


KG-22 (P6,327m)

KG-22 Yuhe Kangri and KG-23 were seen from the Ata Glacier. Two zoom shots were not identified when it was taken. We could identify these peaks through our check on the map and direction analysis. Mr. Tom Nakamura took a picture of KG-22 near Zayul. The new shot is on the opposite side of his picture. The picture of KG-23 is the first shot of her.

KG-24 6,150m Gheni-1 and KG-25 6,050m Gheni-2

KG-24 Gheni and KG-25 Gheni-2 are visible from the road to Dema La. We could see them from C3 and the 5,050m point on Ata Glacier.



KG-26 (6,000m; left sharp peak) and linking rocky ridge. KG-25(white trapezoid peak) and KG-24 (Gheni, a half black trapezoid peak behind the rocky ridge) are seen. from the 5,050m point of Ata Glacier

KG-26 6,000m and KG-27 5,850m

KG-26 and KG-27 were not recognized in past years. These peaks are newly identified. The skyline ridge of KG-26 and KG-27 connects to KG-28 (Tongkole).



KG-27 (5,850m; left end rocky pyramid) and KG-26 (6,000m; center triangular peak of the picture) from the 5,100m point on the route to C2

KG-28 5,800m:Tongkole and KG-29 5,770m : Pongle



KG-29 (5,770m Pongle , left) and KG-28 (5,800m Tongkole) from Lhagu Village

From the playground of Lhagu Elementary School, pupils can see sharp and rocky triangular Tongkole and the white dome of Pongle. Water from the white dome grows wheat in the village. More than 500 yaks graze on the foothills pasture.

KG-30 5,760m: Ata Kangri



KG-30 (5,760m) Ata Kangri from ABC in the Ata Glacier



KG-30 (5,760m Ata Kangri; left) and KG-8 (5,598m Shana) from Yang Lake

KG-31 5,662m Dojitsengza and KG-32 5,298m Tsoshi



KG-1(Ruoni), KG-2(Lopchin), KG-3, KG-37 and KG-5 (from left to right)

From 4,700m in the Ata Glacier



KG-32 (5,298m) Tsoshi
from Yang Lake



KG-31 (5,662m) Dojitsengza
from Yang Lake

The sacred mountains, KG-31 Dojitsengza and KG-32 Tsoshi, stand on the left bank of Parlung Zangbo's U-shaped valley. These rock pinnacles are visible from Shugden Gompa (Buddhist Temple). These names are also supposedly the names of ancient gods.

KG-33 6,380m

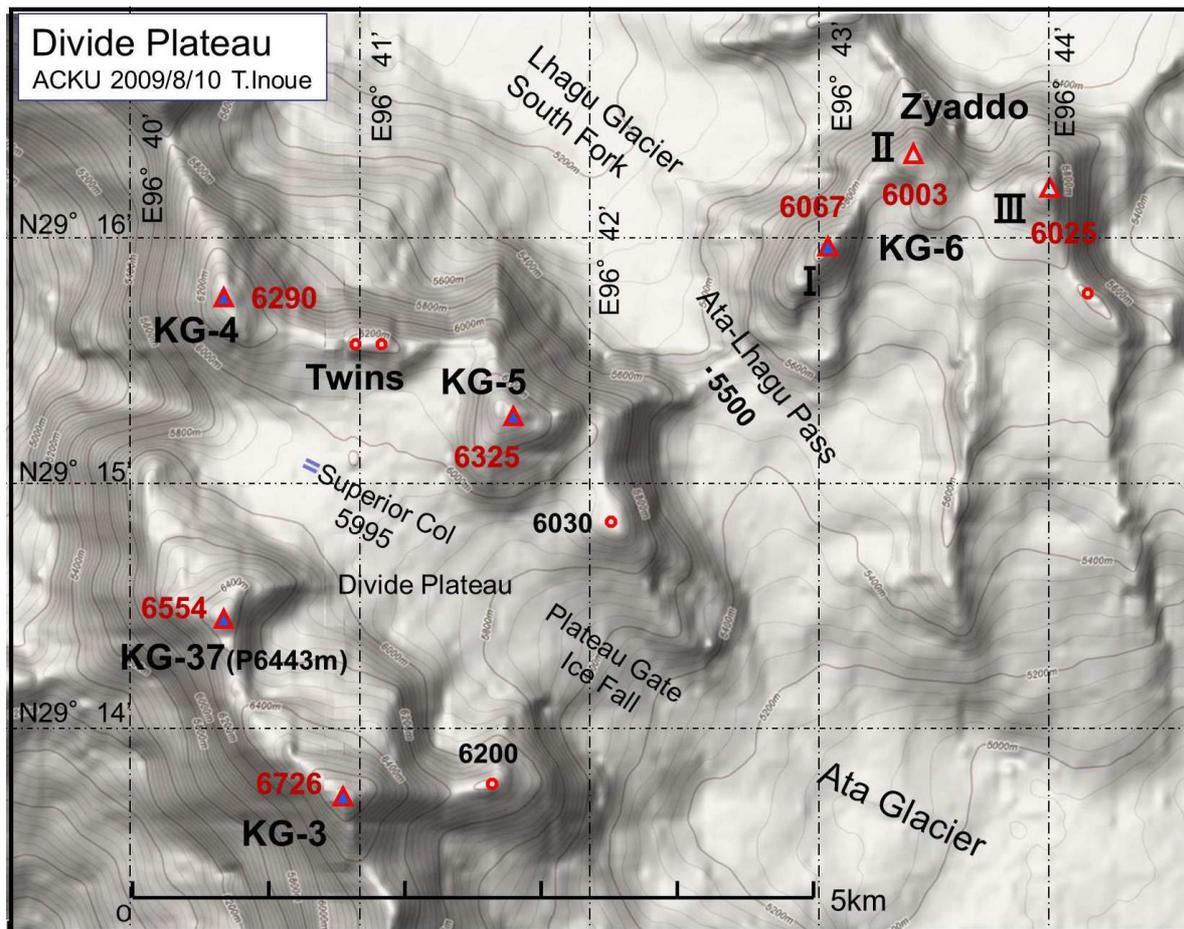
We expected an outstanding peak set off from the main ridge of the range. We found KG-33 and took the first picture of her from the 6,450m point on the southeast ridge of Lopchin (KG-2).



KG-1 Ruoni (6,882m) and KG-33 (6,380m, right)
Photo taken from 6,450m on the southeast ridge of Lopchin (KG-2)
The flat snow field on the lower left is Ruoni Terrace (a 5,900m).

KG-37 6,554m (P 6,443m on the Soviet Union map)

A small top part of KG-37 is visible from the road to Dema La, but it looks like a part of KG-5. Many observers misunderstand that KG-5 is KG-37 (known as Peak 6,443m on the Soviet Union map.)



Upper Plateau of the Ata Glacier



KG-37 6,554m (P 6,443m) photo taken at 4,600m in the Ata Glacier