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GANKARPUNZUM & FIRST ASCENT OF LIANKANG KANGRI Mountain in dispute on China-Bhutan Border

On the 5th of May 1999 the first climbing party of 5 members headed by Kiyohiko Suzuki left the final camp (C3) at 6920m before dawn and ascended the north ridge. When they climbed the last snow wall leading to the summit, suddenly the grandeur of unclimbed Gankarpunzum (7570m) on the border of China and Bhutan came into their sights to the south. They were on the top of Liankang Kangri (7535m), the second highest unclimbed peak in the world, for the first time. Magnificent Khula Kangri massif proudly ranged to the northeast. In front the glorious Gankarpunzum remaining as the highest unclimbed peak but now a forbidding mountain because of a political barrier pertaining to a border problem was glittering immaculate. The eastern face precipitously falls down to a glacier. A climbing route from Liankang Kangri to Gankarpunzum seemed viable although difficult knife edged ridge with unstable snow and ice continued and finally spiky pinnacles guarded the summit. Unless the border problem took place, the party could have traced the ridge toward the summit.

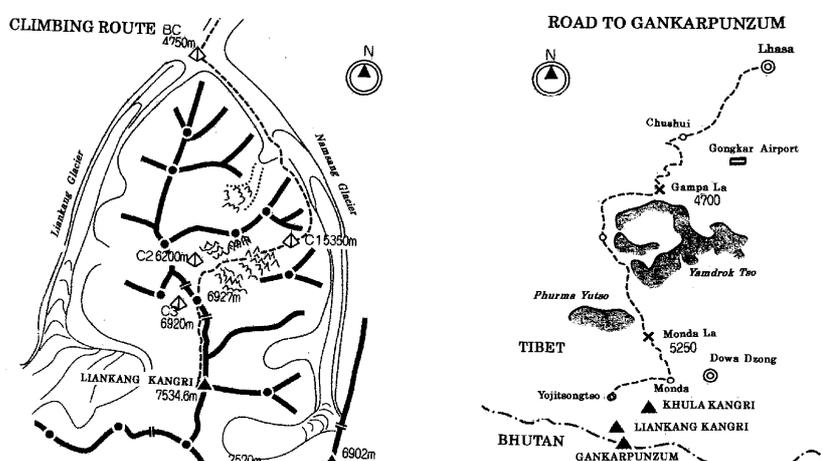


Fig 1 . Route Maps

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On the occasion of the 40th celebration of Chinese Mountaineering Association (CMA) on May 1998 held at Beijing, JAC sounded a possibility of a permit for mountaineering in the vicinity of the borderland of China and Bhutan. Shortly after JAC secured the permit from CMA to climb Gankarpunsum, the highest peak of Bhutan, from Tibetan side in 1999. Consequently JAC took immediate steps for the expedition and sent a

rece party in October 1998. The party brought back an information sufficient for the climbing expedition in the next year and then JAC accelerated a preparation in full swing. To their surprise, however, JAC received an unexpected notice from CMA that the climbing permit to Gankarpunsum must be postponed due to a certain political issue as the mountain locates in a very sensitive borderland between China and Bhutan.

The situation was such. Liankang Kangri was targeted as an alternative and the second best as well. The climbing team of 11 members led by T. Itami (49) was organized chiefly with younger generation. They accomplished a speedy ascent in only 17 days from BC at 4750m to the summit of 7535m. The following is an itinerary of the expedition 1999:-



Pic.1- Gankarpunzum (7570m), the highest unclimbed mountain in the world on the border of China and Bhutan.

A view from the summit of Liankang Kangri (7535 meters).

Copy right: Liankang Kangri Expedition.

April 12 – From Japan to Beijing.

“ 14 – Arrived at Lhasa via Chengdu.

“ 18 – Started Lhasa and drove to the last village, Yojitsongtso at 4500m where they organized a caravan with 75 horses to BC in 2 days.

April 21 – Set up BC at 4750m, a confluence of Liankang Glacier and Namsang Glacier.

“ 25 – Set up C1 at 5350m.

“ 30 –Forwarded to C2 at 6200m having put fixed ropes of 11 pitches in the hazardous glacier and opened a route to a wide ice plateau.

May 1 – Put fixed ropes over large hidden crevasses and ascended to C3 site at 6920m.

“ 8 – Set up C3, the final camp, near 6727m peak.

“ 9 – 4 members stood on the summit at 11:15am. Succeeded in the first ascent.

“ 10 – The second party of 6 members reached the top. The weather was terrible.

“ 12 –Camping gears, ropes and garbage in the upper camps were gathered to BC.

“ 15 – From BC to Lhasa.

“ 23 – Returned to Japan.