



AAC Publications

Gangga and Kwarorori massifs, reconnaissance

China, Sichuan, Shaluli Shan

With the political situation sensitive and uncertain in East Tibet, my preferred field of research, I organized a survey team from the Hengduan Mountain Club to visit the West Sichuan Highlands from late September to late October. While there are only about 10 unclimbed summits over 6,000m in this region, countless challenging lower peaks exist. The main objective for Tsuyoshi Nagai, Tadao Shintani, and I was to identify and photograph the little-known peaks of the Gangga and Kwarorori massifs. The Gangga group lies just south of the town of Ganzi, and forms the northernmost extension of the Shaluli Shan. Kwarorori lies ca 30km southeast of Ganzi and is a sacred mountain in the Gongkala Shan, guarded by Tibetan monks and villagers.

As in the past, we arranged our trip through Zhang Jiyue of Sichuan Earth Expeditions, and he accompanied us. We had unusually bad weather, with only one and a half days of fine conditions during two weeks' travel. The other unusual problem was the restriction imposed on foreigners due to political uncertainty in the region, where intermittent suicides by Tibetan monks have occurred since the spring of 2012. We were only able to travel through officially restricted areas thanks to Jiyue's organizational abilities. I also found the acceleration of highway construction in western China truly amazing.

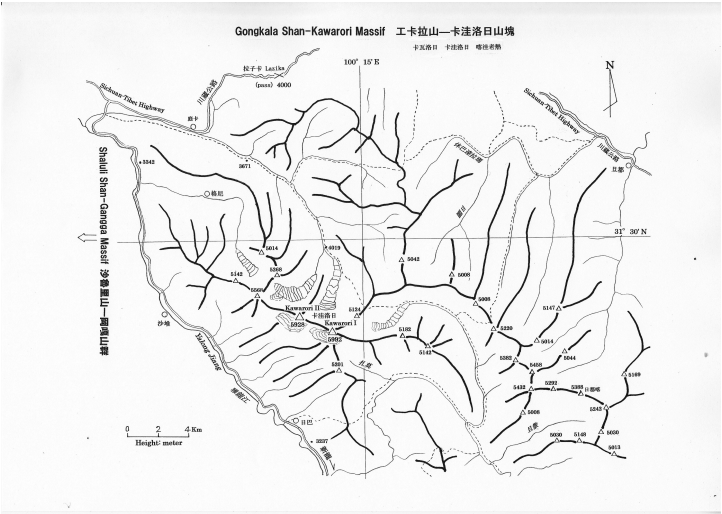
Only one previous reconnaissance has been made of the Gangga Massif, in 2005 by a Japanese party. However, it did not bring back much useful information. While the mountains are not high (Gangga I is 5,688m, and most summits in the massif lie between 5,300m and 5,500m), there are impressive rock peaks. On September 30 we reached Lazika pass at 4,000m on the Sichuan- Tibet Highway, from where we were able to photograph both Gangga and Kwarorori. It was from this pass that British consular officer Eric Teichmann first identified Kwarorori in 1918.

On October 1 we entered the Zhouda Qu, a valley south of Ganzi, and ascended to Zhuodana Pass (4,820m), from where we could study the central and southern sections of the Gangga Group.

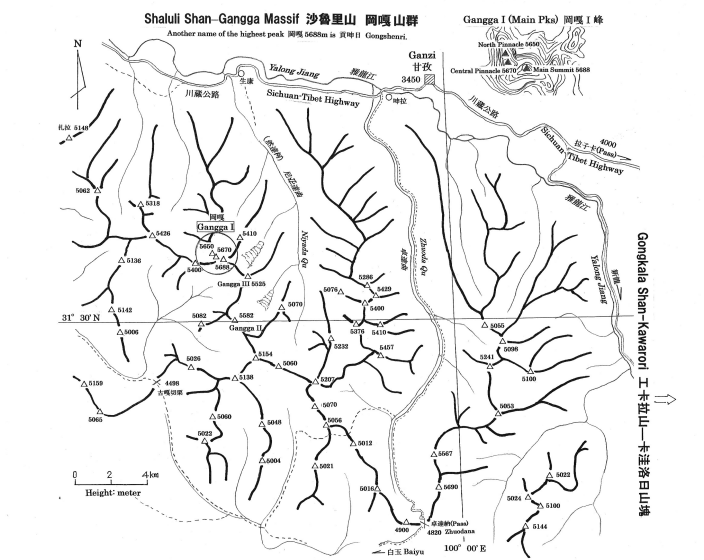
While peaks in the Gangga remain unattempted, three expeditions have planned to climb Kwarorori: a British team in 2005, which approached from the south with a permit from the Sichuan Mountaineering Association (SMA), but was forcibly ejected by local monks; another British team in 2007, which in the end failed to obtain a permit; and a Japanese team in 2011, which gained an official permit from the SMA but was then blocked by a senior official in Kangding. There are two principal peaks, Kwarorori I (5,992m) and II (5,928m), each impressive from the north.

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Images



Kawarori Map



Gangga Map



The central (and eastern) Gangga Massif seen from the north-northeast. From left to right: Peaks 5,429m, 5,400m, and 5,286m.



East side of the highest peaks of the Gangga, which lie in the northern part of the massif. The highest summit visible is Gangga I (5,688m). The two summits immediately right are Gangga Central (5,670m) and Gangga North (5,650m). Other summits are unnamed.



Kawarori seen from the northwest, close to Ganzi. The twin-summited Kawarori I (5,922m) is to the left; Kawarori II (5,928m) right.



The north face of Peak 5,241m, east of the Zhouda Qu (valley). This peak has a height of 5,641m on the Russian map.

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