



AAC Publications

The Plateau, rare photographic coverage

India, Sikkim

Harish Kapadia, former editor of the *Himalayan Journal*, had made four trips to Sikkim before May 2012. One prize had escaped him: a visit to the most northerly valley in the state, adjacent to the Tibet border, and known as the Plateau. After the Kangchenjunga Massif, it contains the highest and most beautiful peaks in Sikkim, and was explored by British mountaineers in the early days of Himalayan travel. The latter were generally members of teams returning from Everest, in those days normally accessed from “British India” across the high passes of Naku La or Karpo La, just west of the Plateau. Dr. Alexander Kellas, Wilfred Noyce, Eric Shipton, and Bill Tilman all left their mark. But after the 1962 Indo-China conflict, this area became highly restricted.

The Plateau now holds military installations and is patrolled by the Indian Army. Kapadia, a civilian, was able to gain a rare permit to visit this region, and took even rarer photos of the northern sides of the great peaks.

Lindsay Griffin, Mountain INFO

Images



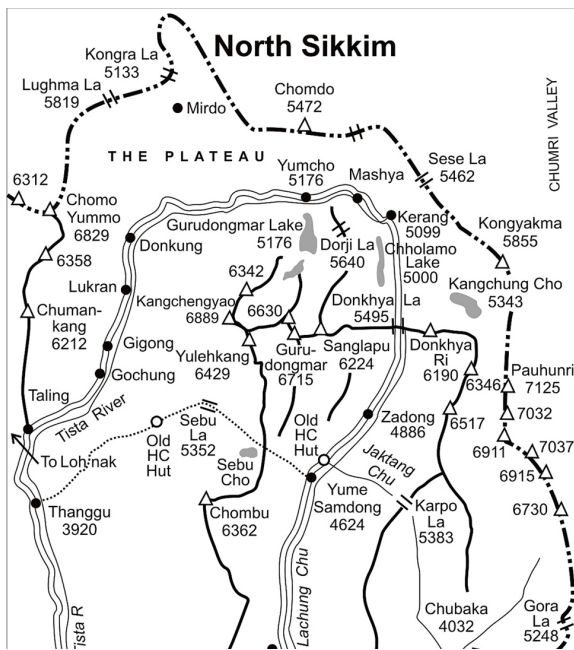
East face of Chomoyummo (Chomiomo, 6,829m) from the Plateau. Kellas made the first ascent in 1910 via easy snow slopes on the Tibetan flanks of the northeast ridge (close to, or behind the right skyline), a route repeated in 1945 by British, and again in 1986 by Indian military (Assam Rifles). While making an attempt on this route in 2005 several well-known Indian mountaineers, including the then vice-president of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation and two Everest summiteers, were avalanched and killed.



The Gurudongmar peaks from the Plateau to the north: main summit (6,715m) left, and west summit (6,630m). In 1936 Kempson and Shipton reported climbing Gurudongmar via the west ridge, but it seems likely they just reached Gurudongmar West, considering the east summit as something else entirely. The main (east) summit was climbed from the northeast in 1991 by Indians.



Kanchengyao (6,889m) from the east. Although Kellas gained the summit plateau in 1912 he only reached an easterly top, and not the highest point. The first true ascent of the flat-topped main (east) summit was not likely made until 1982 when an Indian military expedition climbed it from the north.



Sikkim Map



Pauhunri (7,125m) seen from Chholamo Lake (ca 5,000m) on the Plateau. When Dr Alexander Kellas made the first ascent in June 1910 via the obvious snowslopes (possibly behind the left skyline), Pauhunri was the highest mountain yet climbed, a record that would stand until the ascent of

Jongsang in 1930. The summit to the right is 7,032m and unclimbed. Further south of this summit lie the high tops, 6,911m, 7,037m, 6,915m, and 6,730m, all unclimbed. Harish KapadiaPauhunri (7,125m) seen from Chholamo Lake (ca 5,000m) on the Plateau. When Dr Alexander Kellas made the first ascent in June 1910 via the obvious snowslopes (possibly behind the left

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