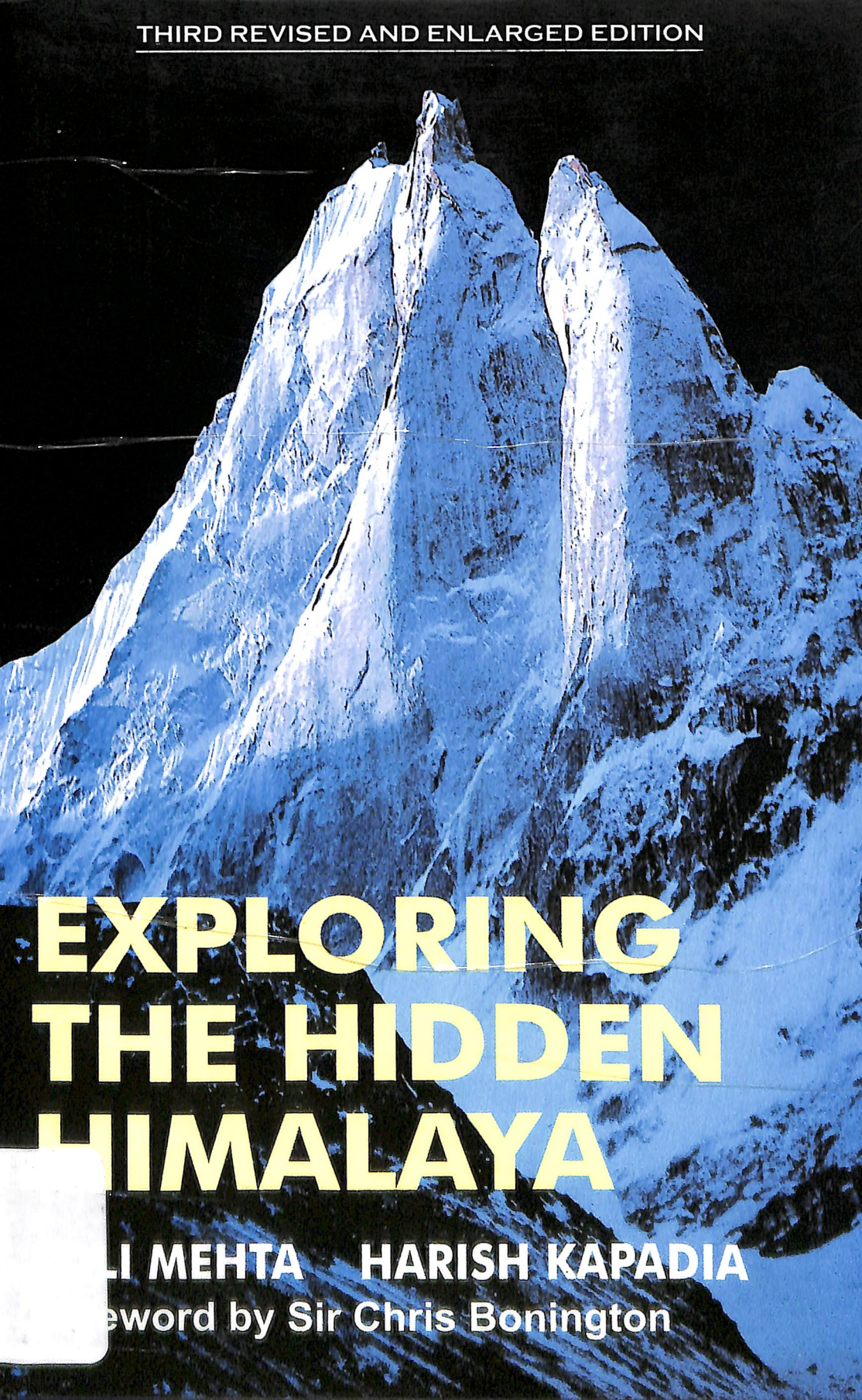


THIRD REVISED AND ENLARGED EDITION



EXPLORING THE HIDDEN HIMALAYA

LI MEHTA HARISH KAPADIA

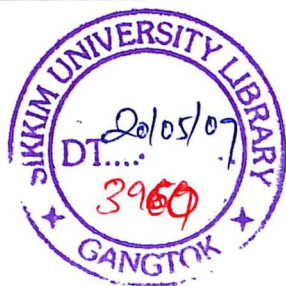
Foreword by Sir Chris Bonington

EXPLORING THE HIDDEN HIMALAYA

THIRD REVISED AND ENLARGED EDITION

SOLI MEHTA
AND
HARISH KAPADIA

FOREWORD BY
SIR CHRIS BONINGTON



INDUS
PUBLISHING COMPANY

FOREWORD

I first visited the Himalaya in 1960 to make the first ascent of Annapurna II, in Nepal. At that time there was only one major road in Nepal, from Raxaul to Kathmandu, a couple of tourist hotels in Kathmandu and no trekkers at all. It is very different today across the breadth of the Himalayas with a network of roads into the mountains, trekking lodges, all the 8000-metre peaks climbed and most of the seven thousanders. There can be up to a thousand people at the Everest base camp and six hundred summiting in a single season.

For me, the joy of mountaineering or trekking is to escape the crowds, to penetrate valleys untouched by tourism, to find my way up unclimbed peaks or passes. This surely is true mountaineering and it is something that we can still accomplish, whatever our climbing ability or aspirations. There are still hundreds of unclimbed peaks in the 5000 and 6000-metre range, untravelled glaciers and passes.

Since it first appeared two decades ago, *Exploring the Hidden Himalaya* has led to the opening of many areas, offered challenging peaks and opened the minds to many new possibilities. During the past few decades, on expeditions with Harish, I enjoyed climbing peaks like Panch Chuli, Sahadev and Rangrik Rang, which can be called peaks of middle mountains for middle-aged mountaineers. We enjoyed ourselves thoroughly, every bit as much as on any high peaks—apart from anything else the effects of altitude are kinder. My focus has shifted in later years, to what could be described as adventure for the ageing and we climbed still lower but equally satisfying Himalayan peaks. The Himalaya has lot to offer.

My trips with Harish, to many peaks mentioned in this book, were sheer joy. Untrodden valleys, no bureaucratic hassles, virgin steep peaks and enjoyable company—what else could you ask from a mountain holiday? This book offers many choices and suggestions for climbing for many years to come. The Himalayan Club has done a great service to mountaineers by drawing attention to these lovely peaks and valleys. This book, already a mini classic, is in a genre of its own.

SIR CHRIS BONINGTON

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INTRODUCTION

In 1988, The Himalayan Club celebrated its Diamond Jubilee. The first edition of this book was a special issue to commemorate the occasion.

In selecting what to include in this book we decided to avoid all 8000-metre peaks as having received enough attention elsewhere and instead to highlight the lesser known peaks and climbing areas, while also describing some of the lesser known but challenging routes up the more famous mountains. We would outline the history of exploration and climbing in the areas we cover and update the main climbing activity to 1987-88. Bhutan, Nepal and the Western and Central Karakoram are not included since there have been, in recent years, a number of books covering these regions. Our main purpose is to excite the modern climber sufficiently for him to take notice of the vast possibilities the Himalaya has still to offer, to explore the little known paths, the unclimbed faces of known mountains and the hundreds of named and unnamed peaks to whom few have paid much attention. There has, however, been no attempt to turn this volume into a comprehensive dictionary of peaks in the Himalaya. Our problem has been not what to include, but what to leave out. The choice may perhaps appear to be a bit arbitrary, built up as it has been on the knowledge pooled from amongst our membership. Quite naturally, we have relied rather heavily on the issues of the *Himalayan Journal* and the *Himalayan Club Newsletter* for references. But should the reader fail to find his favourite peak or valley, we trust that he will be compensated by at least three that he has probably never heard of.

A word about the Club: The Himalayan Club was inaugurated in Delhi on 17 February 1928. Later in the year, on 14 December, an amalgamation took place with the Mountain Club, Calcutta. During the early years, the Club occupied itself by holding lectures, meetings and employing the specialists amongst its members to advise trekkers and climbers visiting the Himalaya on a variety of subjects such as geology, botany, zoology, and also render assistance to the large expeditions that visited the Himalaya and the Karakoram, by helping to clear baggage and equipment from the docks, hiring Sherpas and porters for them and offering the services of a liaison or transport officer to smooth over their trek to their base camp. In other ways, advice and equipment such as tents, sleeping bags etc., were ready at hand for any who sought them. The Sherpas were given numbers for identification and pass books for the comments of their employers to be entered. They were looked after by the local Secretary in Darjeeling who ensured that all got their fair share of expedition work. The Club started a tradition to award 'Tiger' badges for exemplary service from amongst the Sherpas. This was the picture of the Club around 1947-1950.

The great surge in climbing activity after the war, the improvement in communications, the opening up of Nepal to foreigners, all helped in introducing mountaineering to the youth of India. From a small beginning, by the likes of Jack Gibson, Gurdial Singh, Holdsworth and John Martyn who took young schoolboys on summer trips to Garhwal, it progressed to the youngsters themselves (Nandu Jayal and Hari Dang for example) following in their school masters' footsteps. After the 1953 ascent of Everest by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, Indian mountaineering burst out of its shell and within a decade mountaineering institutes were spawning climbers in large numbers, with sufficient interest generated amongst the youngsters to ensure the perpetuation of the sport by its own momentum.

With the proliferation of climbing clubs all over India and

the formation of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation which issued permits and liaison officers to oversee the expeditions, the character of the Himalayan Club had perforce to change. Its assistance was no longer needed by large expeditions, Indian or foreign, as all of them were well-endowed with funds and experience to guide them to their goals.

The Club, however, does still carry out some of its traditional duties. It has a library, one of the finest on the Himalaya which may be consulted by members, and a scholarship fund to give financial assistance to Indian students attending courses at mountaineering institutes. It still maintains a fair amount of equipment at its main centres in India which is hired out to members at a nominal fee. It continues to hold meetings and seminars thus enabling the climbing fraternity in Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta to meet and discuss their expeditions with slide shows and lectures. It provides information to many parties, both from India and abroad, and has amongst its members a great number of leading mountaineers, the world over.

Soon after its formation the Himalayan Club began the publication of the *Himalayan Journal* which after eighty years of existence, has today come to be recognised as one of the foremost references to mountaineering and scientific activity in the Himalaya, Karakoram and the Hindu Kush. The journal got off to a magnificent start with Kenneth Mason who nursed it from its humble beginnings to a mature publication. Logistic problems during the war and the retirement of its first editor brought forward the second generation, all of whom have authored books in their own right—Wilfrid Noyce, H.W. Tobin, George Band and Trevor Braham. With the departure of Trevor from India, there were some doubts whether this 'institution' could continue; but every crisis brings forth a hero and the *H.J.* survived by the induction of Dr. K. Biswas, later assisted by John Martyn, both of whom held the fort and maintained the tradition with Bob Lawford pitching in for

good measure—the crisis was over. It was easier for Soli Mehta to take over the reins and increase its coverage to the size that exists today. The person most responsible for the high standard of the current issues of the journal is Roy E. Hawkins. Hawk, as he is lovingly called by his friends, as Hon. Asst. Editor introduced some consistency and refinement in the treatment of the material for publication which restored the journal's professionalism. In the years of Soli's absence from India, Harish Kapadia quickly learnt from Hawk and continued, innovating and improving further the presentation of material, both in the *H.J.* as well as the *Himalayan Club Newsletter (H.C.N.L.)* by roping in Dhiren Toolsidas, Arun Samant and Muslim Contractor. It now has a new team with Nandini Purandare and Rajesh Gadgil.

The photographic contributors have breathed the real life into the first edition of this book. In all cases the photographs and slides were received without delay and where there was duplication, our choice became extremely difficult to make. From the hundreds received, we could select only a fraction of them and we take this opportunity to acknowledge our sincere thanks to all our friends and members who responded, whether their contributions are printed or not—we really have been overwhelmed by the generosity of thought and action from them.

A word about the authors who made all this possible: Firstly, we have Harish who along with Muslim Contractor dug up the horrendous amount of data from which the final material was sifted. They also wrote up the captions for the peaks and checked all factual data and references; the chapters on the Eastern Karakoram, Kinnaur, Spiti, Kashmir and Kumaun are edited from Harish's contributions, some of which have been published in the *H.J.* The sketch maps are entirely the contribution of Arun Samant who has single-handedly solved that vexatious problem for us and, with the others, selected the colour and the black & white prints for publication. We were indeed lucky to have Joydeep Sircar for

the chapter on the little known mountain area of Assam. The scant information must have been particularly difficult to extract. Soli Mehta undertook the task of researching Sikkim, Kullu-Lahaul, Garhwal and editing all the other material for presentation in a uniform style.

SOLI MEHTA
HARISH KAPADIA

INTRODUCTION TO SECOND EDITION

It is 10 years after its first publication that the second edition is called for. Soli Mehta, my co-author, tragically passed away even before the publication of the first edition. It was indeed a tragic loss to the Himalayan Club and a personal loss to me. This edition is brought out in his memory specially. I am grateful to George Band for writing a Foreword.

R.E. Hawkins died in 1989, within three weeks of the death of Soli Mehta. Suddenly two persons who had done a lot for the *Himalayan Journal* were no more. We continued their work. By 1996 the journal missed another great enthusiast, this time to greener pastures, when Muslim Contractor migrated to Canada. Today, I, with support from Monesh Devjani from Bangalore, continue as the editors. The journal continues its journey.

Soli and I had ended the Introduction to the first edition as under:

“We would wish the reader happy hunting, please share your unknown valleys and peaks with us—who knows, we might come out with a volume two.”

Well, if not volume two, at least a thoroughly revised and updated edition is now published. Here I have added important climbs and happenings in the last decade (till 1998), added newly discovered peaks, and tried to bring the

book up-to-date with recent rules and information. Hope it generates the same enthusiasm for the unknown areas as it did a decade ago.

HARISH KAPADIA

INTRODUCTION TO THIRD EDITION

The second edition in 1998 was at the turn of the century. Another eventful decade has passed and the Club will celebrate its 80th year in 2008. This third edition has been updated to climbs achieved until 2007. The world is changing rapidly and with cheaper airfares and local support available, climbers' attention is focused on a variety of climbs. Apart from updating expeditions till 2007, this edition has two additions. The Arunachal Pradesh Himalaya (formerly Assam Himalaya) is now more accessible and open to trekkers and climbers. Hence a new chapter has been added to past information. Secondly the focus of climbing in the future may shift to unknown valleys and peaks lesser in height but greater in difficulty. Hence a few suggestions have been made towards that.

At this juncture I miss my co-author Soli Mehta who worked tirelessly for the first edition but never saw it in print. It is his dedication that has paid off as this revised third edition is based on his expertise. I wish to recall dedication of Arun Samant who drew most of the maps in this book, before his untimely demise.

This is a tribute to them and the Himalayan Club on its first 80 years.

HARISH KAPADIA

1

SIKKIM

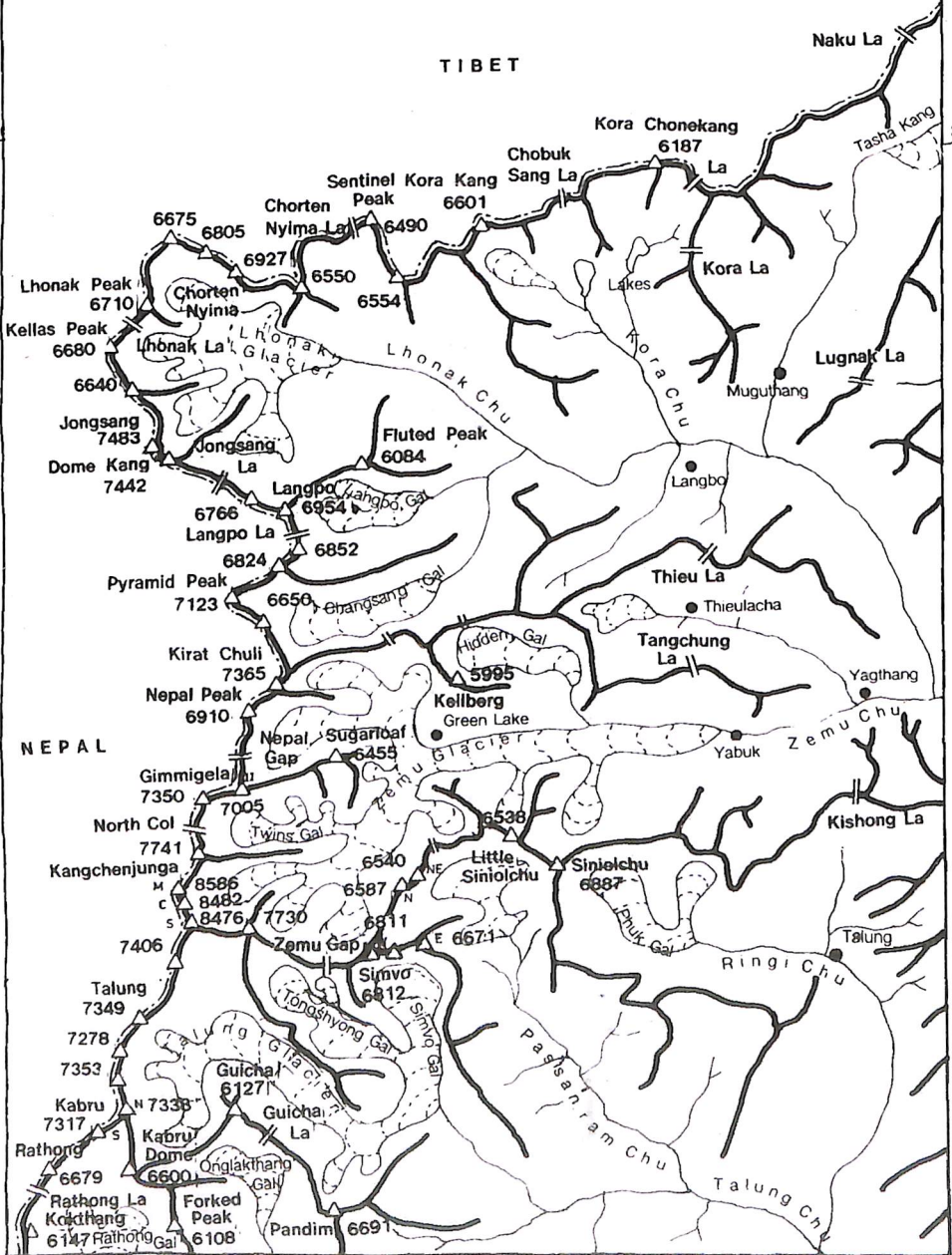
Sikkim Himalaya is one of the more physically accessible sections of the Himalaya—within four days from Kolkata, the traveller can be among the mountains. In the records of exploration and climbing in Sikkim the names of Sir Joseph Hooker,¹ the great botanist explorer, Douglas Freshfield² and Dr A.M. Kellas³ (eminent climbers of their day) stand out as having opened the western eyes to the beauty of the area and for calling attention to the possibilities of trekking and climbing of every degree of severity.

After the reconnaissance surveys under Hartman and Tanner which were completed in the 1870s, the country soon opened to travellers and explorers. During 1888-96 Major L.A. Waddell made several journeys, although his book⁴ is of greater interest to ethnologists.

Claude White also travelled extensively as Political Officer during 1889-1902. Amongst his travels, the more important were the ones in 1890 when he crossed the Guicha la and descended the Talung valley to the Tista river, becoming the first person to investigate the gorges between the Pandim and Simvo groups. His other major journey was up the Zemu glacier, to about 5340 metres. When stopped by bad weather, he diverted over the Thieu la into Lhonak where he was barred by the officious Dzongpon of Kampa Dzong who claimed that the Thieu la was the frontier between Tibet and Sikkim. However after the 1902 Sikkim-Tibet boundary

SIKKIM

TIBET



mission, White was to travel further afield—all the way up the Chorten Nyima la.

In 1899, Freshfield, along with Prof. Garwood, the brothers Sella and Sherpa Rinzin Namgyal, made his 'high-level' tour so interestingly described in his *Round Kangchenjunga*. He first traversed the Zemu glacier and camped east of the Green Lake (which, alas, has disappeared today—presumably drained when its blockage gave way). Bad weather foiled his attempts at investigating the approaches to the Nepal Gap and the Zemu Gap. He therefore crossed into Lhonak via the Thieu

Pandim (6691 m)

A sacred and famous peak in West Sikkim. W.W. Graham recceid it in 1883 followed by H. Boustead in 1926, and T.H. Somervell in 1928. It was seriously explored by C.R. Cooke and John Hunt in 1940, before it was closed for religious reasons. In recent years it has beaten back two attempts but the sacred mountain still remains a virgin challenge.

—H.J. Vol. XIII, p. 89

la, crossed the Jongsang la onto the Kangchenjunga glacier (in Nepal) and made a thorough study of the 'Pyramid', 'Tent' (now Kirat Chuli) and 'Nepal' peaks from the west. From the village of Kangbachen, he passed through Ghunsa and Tseram and re-crossed into Sikkim via the Kang la to Dzungri, whence he visited the Guicha la.

1883 was the year in which the first serious climbing began in Sikkim. The climber was W.W. Graham who, with two Swiss guides climbed Jubonu

(5936 m), south of Pandim. He pronounced Pandim itself to be 'quite inaccessible owing to hanging glaciers,' then proceeded to climb a mountain which he claimed was Kabru—that too in three days from a camp at 5640 m (18,500 ft) apparently by its southeast face. This ascent excited considerable controversy, with the various experts arguing for and against the claim. The most generous conclusion suggested that he had climbed Forked Peak (6108 m).

The first serious attempt on Kabru (7338 m) was made

twenty-four years later in 1907 by Rubenson and Aas, two Norwegians, who approached their goal from the Rathong Chu and attacked the icfall between Rathong and the Kabru Dome. Five days of hard route-finding over the highly crevassed icfall brought them to the easier 'snow flat' (that can be seen from Darjeeling), whence they attempted the north summit (7338 m). The first attempt failed because of a late start and intense cold. The second time they tried from a higher camp, but once again the cold delayed their start and they gave up at about 7285 m. During the descent Rubenson slipped but was held by Aas (five of the six strands of the rope having broken under the strain). Frostbite to Aas' toes put paid to further attempts and the peak remained unclimbed till 1935 when C.R. Cooke succeeded in reaching its north summit.⁵

Some major ascents were made in the Kabru Group by the Indian Army team in 1994 (Col H.S. Chauhan). Spending long time in the region a well-acclimatised and large team with resources made the first ascents of Kabru South (7317 m) and Kabru III (7395 m). Kabru North (7338 m) was also

climbed. It was after many years that this high group received vigorous attention.¹³

No climber has enjoyed himself and travelled so extensively in the Sikkim Himalaya as Dr A.M. Kellas. Unfortunately for the climbing fraternity he wrote hardly any detailed descriptions of his climbs. He first visited Sikkim in 1907 and then returned in 1909, 1910, 1912, 1920 and 1921. During

Kangchengyao (6889 m)

Kangchengyao lies in the Dongkya range in Sikkim, north of the Sebu la. It was first attempted by Dr Kellas in 1912. He approached from the north, gained the east col and then reached the east summit which is slightly lower than the main or western peak.

Discounting a dubious claim in 1961, the first ascent of the main peak was made in 1982 by an Indian Army team (Major V. Singh).

—H.J. Vol. XXII, p. 75

**Gimmigela (Twins)
(7350 m)**

Situated above the North Col of Kangchenjunga, this pair of peaks was first reached by Paul Bauer's team in 1936 from the Twins glacier. They attempted the eastern peak unsuccessfully. A Japanese attempt in 1963 reached within 200 m of one of the summits before withdrawing due to rough weather. In 1993 a Japanese team (Tsuguyasu Itami) reached 7000 m on the peak when a member died in a crevasse fall. The summit was climbed in 1994 by the Japanese (Kenshiro Otaki) from Sikkim side, after a heroic struggle where summiteers suffered severe frostbite. The peak was climbed again, this time from the Nepal side, by a British team (Major Pat Parsons) in 1997.

—H.J. Vol. IX, p. 64

1907 he concentrated on the Zemu glacier, attempted Simvo with alpine guides, all three attempts being beaten back by bad weather and snow conditions. He also failed to reach the Nepal Gap in the two attempts made. In 1909 he attempted Pauhunri (7125 m) twice but was beaten back by storm and snow. He also visited the Langpo and Kangchenjunga glaciers, crossed the Jongsang la into Lhonak, reached high on Jongsang and climbed Langpo (6954 m). He tried for the Nepal Gap again, but was defeated near the top by a snowstorm.

The next year (1910) he returned to the Zemu and reached but did not cross the Simvo Saddle and the Zemu Gap. On his fourth attempt he at last reached the Nepal Gap, except for a small rock wall at the summit. He then crossed the 'Lhonak pass' into Lhonak and climbed high on Langpo to reconnoitre the summit of Jongsang, then crossed the Chorten Nyima la and climbed Sentinel Peak (6490 m) and finally dashed off to climb Pauhunri, which he did in a five-day struggle, and put the finishing touches to a most eventful season by climbing Chomoyummo (6829 m) (old spelling is Chomiomo) after reconnoitring its various approaches. His 1912 visit was devoted to exploration of different approaches to Kangchengyao (6889 m) and he eventually reached

the summit plateau from the north. He was believed to have been the first European to cross the Sebu la, connecting the Lachen and the Lachung valleys. He was back in 1920 and climbed Narsingh (5825 m). The following year he worked out a new route on the icefall of Kabru, hoping to use it later. He returned to Darjeeling only a few days before starting on the first British Everest expedition; alas, he died on his way through Tibet with the party.

One of the better documented journeys into Lhonak was that of G.B. Gourlay⁶ who, with E. Eversden, managed to escape the heat of October in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1930 to travel extensively in Lhonak.

Earlier that year (1930), the International expedition led by Prof G.O. Dyhrenfurth had not succeeded in its attempt on Kangchenjunga from the north-west (Nepal) side.^{7,8} But the strong team of climbers, at their fittest after their struggle at altitude, engineered a route up and over the Nepal Gap. As the rest of the expedition worked its way slowly down the Lhonak valley to Lachen, E. Schneider climbed Nepal Peak (6910 m) by himself from the Gap. Then the remaining fit mountaineers crossed the Jongsang la into Lhonak and made the first ascent of Jongsang (7483 m) after gaining the north ridge (3 and 8 June 1930). Schneider and Hoerlin, who were first up Jongsang, travelled on to the northern boundary with Tibet and climbed a high peak on the border.

One of the earliest traverses of the Passanram and Talung valleys was made by Dr E. Allwein and H. Pircher, members of the second unsuccessful German expedition to Kangchenjunga in 1931 (led by Paul Bauer). During the expedition, Allwein and Breuner had already ascended Sugar Loaf (6455 m). After the expedition disbanded these two, along with three Sherpas, climbed up to the Simvo Saddle (between Simvo and Siniolchu), hardly an easy route out of the Zemu glacier, and descended into the Passanram valley. Their journey⁹ through miles of twisted rhododendron thicket, complicated by an inaccurate map, gave them a harrowing time before they

emerged into the Talung valley and eventual habitation.

In 1932 G.A.R. Spence and J. Hale attempted Chomoyummo.¹⁰

Almost during the same period Capt G.H. Osmaston, along with friends, visited Lhonak over the Lugnak la,¹¹ and made an unsuccessful attempt on Fluted Peak (6084 m). Then the party visited the Chorten Nyima la and fixed accurately the position of Sentinel Peak, first climbed by Dr Kellas in 1910. On the way back Osmaston and his cousin entered the Zemu valley by a snow gap, Kellas' 'Lhonak Pass', four miles east

of Kirat Chuli (Tent Peak), and from Yangthang, Osmaston proceeded alone over Kishong la past the Talung monastery to Mangen, a pleasant month's holiday from Calcutta.

Lhonak in the days before the second world war was fast becoming a popular climbing area and, as the members from the two Kangchenjunga expeditions enjoyed the climbing in the valley, so the British climbers returning from Everest in

Kokthang (6147 m)

It lies across a col south of Rathong. Its serrated summit ridge has led almost all the expeditions to believe that they have reached the summit. Many expeditions have reached one or other of the subsidiary humps on the ridge, while the true high point lies at the northernmost end.

—H.J. Vol. 40, p. 34

1933 chose to relieve their tired limbs on the lesser but by no means easier heights in Sikkim. Thus, Shipton and Wager crossed over from the Lashar plains into Lhonak over an unidentified pass which they named Lhonak la (first crossing) between the Jongsang and Lhonak Peaks.¹² From here, Shipton climbed Lhonak Peak (second ascent) to the north of the col.

G.B. Gourlay and J.B. Auden spent the October/November of 1934 in northeast Sikkim.¹³ In spite of the wind and cold they took a lot of photographs and sorted out some of the inconsistencies in the Survey of India maps.

One of the more interesting climbs in the mid-thirties was

C.R. Cooke's first ascent of Kabru in November 1935. He correctly predicted the more stable but colder weather conditions of the post-monsoon period as being the most suitable for Sikkim. G. Schoberth, six Sherpas and Cooke ascended the formidable icefall that guards all approaches from the east, under the slopes of the Dome. Once fully stocked in the relative safety of the upper terrace, which took them a good three weeks, they made rapid progress diagonally up the south face to reach the north summit in good order—a more successful repetition of the Norwegian attempt twenty years earlier.

Sikkim in 1936 was again a happy hunting ground for climbers and trekkers. The Germans (Paul Bauer) in preparation for Nanga Parbat (1937) visited the Zemu glacier with Karl Wien, A. Göttner and G. Hepp.¹⁴ Their first attempts were on the eastern summit of the Twins (now Gimmigela) (7005 m) and yet another shot at Tent Peak (now Kirat Chuli)

(7365 m), both beaten back by dangerous snow conditions, though they once again climbed Nepal Peak (6910 m) en route to Tent Peak. But a most satisfying climb was Siniolchu (6887 m)—one of the loveliest peaks in all Himalaya—by Wien and Göttner. Before leaving the region, Bauer, Göttner and Hepp climbed the western of the two north peaks of the Simvo massif (6587 m).

The same year Shipton, Warren, Kempson and Wigram, returning from Everest, entered Sikkim over the Kongra la and, from a camp on the nearby lake, Shipton and Kempson climbed Gurudongmar (6715 m).¹⁵

Meanwhile, Tilman ('with some unexpected time on my

Sugar Loaf (6455 m)

The Paul Bauer Kangchenjunga expedition in 1931 failed on the main peak but the members branched in the different valleys of the Zemu glacier to climb subsidiary peaks. During this Dr E. Allwein and Breuner climbed a peak to the north of the glacier. Because of snow conditions and its shape it was named Sugar Loaf.

—H.J. Vol. X, p. 49

Kirat Chuli (7365 m)

Formerly known as 'Tent Peak', Kirat Chuli is a prominent peak on the ridge running north from Kangchenjunga. Paul Bauer's team made an attempt on the southwest ridge in 1936, passing over the summit of Nepal Peak (6910 m) but gave up due to dangerous avalanches. Next year, a German-Swiss team was beaten back, as were C.R. Cooke and John Hunt, the latter reaching the southwest summit of Nepal Peak. The same German-Swiss team made a fine first ascent in 1939.

Approaching from the Nepal Gap, they climbed Nepal Peak and then followed the difficult 1.5 km ridge leading to Kirat Chuli. Next attempt was in 1985, from Nepal, by a British-Nepal expedition but this failed on the south ridge of Nepal Peak. Other routes remain to be tried. With the recent opening of the area in 1995, German (Wolfram Schroter) and Austrian (Kurt Elbl) teams attempted the southwest ridge.

—H.J. Vol. 43, p. 112

hands') potted around the southern approaches to the Zemu Gap¹⁶ and came away suitably chastened. This is by no means a recommended short cut into the Zemu glacier from Darjeeling.

The *Himalayan Journal* Vol. IX printed photographs, and noted the completion of the Himalayan Club hut at Mome Samdong. It was planned to build a similar hut on the Lachen side, enabling travellers to traverse the Lachung and Lachen valleys (over the Sebulu) without the use of tents. The second hut was subsequently established and the system worked admirably for a few years until the end of World War II, but neglect and disuse brought the facility to a sad end.

Kirat Chuli (old Tent Peak) (7365 m) continued to evade the most determined efforts—its armoury comprised soft and wind-slab snow and fierce winds. In 1937 Schmaderer, Paidar and Grob spent six weeks in the Zemu investigating the approaches to Kangchenjunga, during the course of which they had a shot at Tent Peak and the Twins, but were beaten back. As a consolation they made a fine second ascent of Siniolchu.

Later that year John Hunt with

his wife and C.R. Cooke spent October/November in the Zemu.¹⁷ They too had their eyes on Tent Peak. As they reached the ridge south of Nepal Peak, the wind smacked them with full force. Hunt bravely soloed up the western summit of Nepal Peak (7153 m) (only thirty-five metres below the main summit) before the sheer threat of being lifted off his feet by the wind persuaded him to return to the safety of the lower and protected heights. Cooke then led an exploration to the North Col of Kangchenjunga, Hunt reached Nepal and Zemu Gaps, and the party climbed Keilberg, a look-out peak just above Green Lake. They also crossed the Twins-Sugar Loaf ridge from the Nepal Gap glacier onto the Twins glacier—a remarkable feat. Finally Cooke left the Zemu over the Simvo Saddle and was lucky enough to chance on a relatively easier trail through the rhododendron jungle down the Passanram and Talung valleys to Mangan. Except for an occasional trekking party (K.N. Naoroji)¹⁸ no expeditions were allowed into this forbidden part of the Lhonak valley in north Sikkim. Rules were stringent and costs were prohibitive under the new Sikkim state (since 1976). It was in 2002 that a German expedition (Herbett Stribel) set up their base camp on the Nepal Gap glacier. From this 3900 m camp they set up three more camps on the southeast ridge of the Nepal Peak, with Camp 3 at 6620 m. On 21 October 2002 Ms Carl Claudia, Jojann Paul Hinterimmer with the leader climbed the south ridge to the summit of Nepal Peak.¹⁹

Another Everest returner from Tibet broke slightly newer ground. Naku la is a pass lying west of Chomoyummo and is used by Tibetans grazing their sheep along the Chaka chu on the Sikkim side. Tilman, in 1938, followed this route into Lhonak, crossed over a col into the Tashi chu and made the first ascent of Lachsi (6212 m). Having reached Thangu in the Lachen valley, he diverted into the Zemu, and made the only recorded crossing over the Zemu Gap, across the Tongshyong and Talung glaciers and over the Guicha la into the Parek chu, Dzongri and back to civilisation—this crossing

was more of a mountaineering feat than mere trekking and, from its description,²⁰ hardly to be recommended.

Kirat Chuli (Tent Peak) eventually allowed its first ascent in 1939²¹ by Paidar, Schmaderer and Grob, who took the traditional route, over the top of Nepal Peak and reached the summit by tricky and dangerous southwest ridge (29 May 1939).

In July 1945, Harry Tilly climbed Chomoyummo (6829 m) and in September of the same year Wilfrid Noyce climbed

Pauhunri (7125 m). Both were accompanied by Sherpa Ang Tharkay, and both were second ascents of peaks climbed by Dr A.M. Kellas.

Sikkim continued to be the favourite area for treks and short mountaineering holidays during the war years and after. The maps still appeared to contain errors, but one by one these were put right by the keen members of the Himalayan Club—Trevor Braham in 1949 cleared some uncertainties in an area south of Pauhunri and discovered a 'hidden col' from the plateau at

Simvo (6812 m)

East of the Zemu Gap stands Simvo with its four subsidiaries—West (6811 m), East (6671 m), North (6587 m) and Northeast (6540 m). The north peak was first climbed by Paul Bauer's team in 1936 from the Zemu glacier. Two Indian teams have made ascents of what is presumed to be the main peak, one in 1979, and the other in 1984. Details of both ascents, however, are lacking.

—H.J. Vol. IX, p. 69

the head of the Kangyong glacier to the valleys to the west and eventually into the Lachung valley, near Mome Samdong. His attempt on Kangchengyao by Kellas' 1912 route was beaten back by the lateness of the season (November), the chill of the winter winds and lack of what we today recognise as thermal protection. A real pioneering bit of work.²²

In the early fifties, Sikkim began to receive its first set of geographical restrictions, particularly for foreigners, and

gradually with the deterioration in the Indo-Chinese relationship, the flight of the Dalai Lama and the Indo-Sikkimese Treaty where the defence of Sikkim fell to India, permission even to Indian nationals became restricted in certain areas, mainly around the border passes into Tibet. Expeditions needed greater preparation and took longer to obtain permits beyond the Inner Line and mountaineering activity became restricted to teams from the Armed Forces. Eventually, around 1961, all but the small area of Western Sikkim was closed to everyone except army personnel.

It was in 1975 that members of the Indian Air Force and the Indian Mountaineering Foundation (A.J.S. Grewal) attempted Talung from the Guicha la and Talung glacier.²³ Whilst the approach from Sikkim side was peppered with avalanches and hanging glaciers, it was considered advisable to make serious attempts only from the Yalung glacier in Nepal. Attempts at reaching the Zemu Gap from the south were barred by large crevasses a few hundred feet below the saddle.

In 1976 Harish Kapadia and Zerksis Boga were the first civilians in fifteen years to be allowed into the north,²⁴ the playground of the past. They repeated some of the popular routes: to Green Lake, over the Thieu la into Lhonak, over the Lugnak la to Thangu, over the Sebu la to Mome Samdong and back to Chungthang.

Since then, most expeditions have been around the east

Siniolchu (6887 m)

Rising on the southern side of the Zemu glacier on the watershed between the Passanram and the Zemu glaciers, Siniolchu has often been labelled as the most beautiful peak in the world. It was first climbed by Paul Bauer's team in 1936. From their base camp on the Zemu glacier, they reached the ridge between Siniolchu and Little Siniolchu (6538 m) and climbed it to the summit. The second ascent was made the next year by a German-Swiss expedition, while the third ascent was achieved by an Indian team in 1979.

—H.J. Vol. IX, p. 66

Tingchenkhang (6010 m)

It is an inviting peak south of Pandim in west Sikkim, on Prek chu. The first attempt was by an Indian team (Nima Tashi) in 1996. After recce of the north face they established a route on the west face and reached within 150 m of the summit. It was by this route that an Indo-British territorial army team made the first ascent in 1998. The peak was climbed twice in 2004, by the Himalayan Club expedition (AVM A.K. Bhattacharyya (Retd)) in traditional style and in a three-day return push by Roger Payne and Julie-Ann Clyma.
—H.J. Vol. 55, p. 217

Rathong glacier, the valley used by students of the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute at Darjeeling. The usual targets are Frey Peak, Forked Peak, Kokthang and Kabru Dome. Rathong has been climbed by Indian pre-Everest expeditions and army teams in 1964 and 1987, but always by the western approach, from the Yalung glacier.

In 1979,²⁵ a Calcutta based club was given permission to attempt Pandim (6691 m) and Guicha Peak (6127 m), both considered holy and therefore hitherto out-of-bonds—that is when the powers-that-be wanted to say 'No'. In the days when Sikkim was an independent Protectorate of the Indian Government, there used to be some consistency in the summits that were regarded as holy and therefore not open for climbing. They approached Pandim by trying to latch onto its north ridge from the Onglakthang glacier, but bad weather and lack of sufficient time forced them to return from a few metres short of the saddle on the ridge. The ridge connecting Guicha Peak and the Guicha la was deemed an unpromising route to the summit of Guicha due to snow conditions.

The same year Sonam Wangyal (Everest summiteer, 1965) led a team from the Sikkim Police to Siniolchu²⁶ and the ascent was by more or less the same route as its two previous ascents in 1936 and 1937. It was a brave effort and a successful one over a heavily corniced and broken ridge connecting the summit with Little Siniolchu.

After considerable wrangling, permission was given to another Calcutta team in 1980 to climb Lama Anden, first climbed by Wing Cdr A.J.M. Smyth in 1944. Led by B. Nayak, their route lay over Kishong la and the ridge connecting the pass to the summit.²⁷ That this obvious route is not plain sailing was made quite clear to the team who had to retreat from fairly near the top owing to shortage of time and some error in route-finding.

Peaks to the north are still 'Armed Forces Territory'. Thus Gurudongmar (6715 m) was climbed from the northeast by an Assam Rifles party led by Norbu Sherpa in 1980,²⁸ forty-four years after its first ascent by Shipton and Kempson.

The following year a team from Bombay (sponsored by the Himalayan Club) attempted Kabru Dome,²⁹ a peak that looks far more easy than it actually is. For a start it is defended by an icefall that is extremely tricky, then comes the final badly broken ridge with several false summit-like bumps, and the highest point, at the far end of a wide arc, is sufficiently exposed to test the skill and endurance of the hardest climber. Instead of attempting the normal icefall, they sought out a gully which gave them direct access to the ridge south of the peak. The gully too turned out to be a mini icefall in disguise and, after some valiant attempts at getting through, they were forced to withdraw.

Yet another I.M.F.-sponsored pre-Everest expedition, led by Col D.K. Khullar, climbed Kabru Dome by the regular icefall route in 1982.³⁰

The same year Sonam Wangyal led a successful Sikkim Police expedition to Lama Anden,³¹ but his account in the *H.J.* Vol. 39 is surprisingly bereft of even the most elementary detail of route.

Lama Anden was also climbed by an Indian Artillery team led by Lt Col Kuldip Singh in 1984.³² A good effort that culminated in success after taking some risks through an avalanche-prone route.

**Kabru (S Peak—7317 m;
N Peak—7338 m)**

This prominent pair of peaks lie on the continuation of the Kangchenjunga-Talung ridge in the Singalila range. They are approachable from the Rathong as well as the Talung glaciers. A Norwegian pair made a spirited attempt from the Rathong glacier and after crossing the huge icefall proceeded along the ridge joining the two summits but they were beaten by the cold and the wind when just about 50 m below the north summit. This was a pioneering post-monsoon attempt. In 1935 C.R. Cooke was successful even later (November) and made the first ascent of the north peak. He reached the summit alone. Kabru South was climbed for the first time in 1994. This was by an Indian Army team (Col H.S. Chauhan).

—H.J. Vol. VIII, p. 107

Chomoyummo was climbed in 1986, this time by a pre-Kangchenjunga team from Assam Rifles.³³ A route from the northeast was selected. This was a mass ascent with a vengeance—a total of thirty-nine climbers reached the top in three summit groups on 27, 28 and 29 October 1986. The mountain was to seek revenge in 2005. A vastly experienced team, which included two Everest summiteers and four experienced Sherpas, was led by Dr P.M. Das, who was then vice-President of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation. While attempting the summit an avalanche engulfed them. While being hurled down they were entangled in the rope they were tied to (all five were tied together on the same rope). They were found dead but the other two climbers, who were on a separate rope, survived with serious injuries. Amongst those who perished with Das were Inder Kumar, Ms Nari Dhami (each of these two had summited Everest twice), Sherpas Dawa and Wangchuk. It took some time to locate bodies and gather sketchy information as all leading members died in the accident.

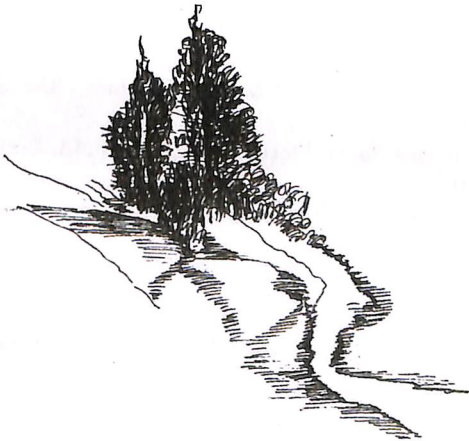
Das, a decorated Police officer, was an experienced and well-known climber who had participated in many expeditions and in his death

the Indian mountaineering lost a senior mountaineer and able administrator.³⁴

Rathong was again a target for a Gorkha Rifles team in 1987. Led by Maj K.V. Cherian they vainly tried the approach from the east Rathong glacier. But after overcoming the horrible icefall, they found their way totally barred from the plateau-like amphitheatre that is surrounded by the peaks of Kabru and Kabru Dome. Learning their lesson, they then crossed over the saddle between Rathong and Kokthang into the Yalung valley taking the route of previous ascents, a fine west ridge that guides the climber to the summit which they reached on 24 May 1987.³⁵

Kokthang (6147 m), lying across the pass south of Rathong, has been claimed by several expeditions. Its serrated summit ridge comprises several humps, giving the impression of summits. An army team (Maj Rana) in 1961, a ladies' expedition (Miss Pushpa Athavle) in 1966, another army expedition (Maj K.V. Cherian) in 1986 and a Doon School team (Dr S.C. Biala), plus a team from Assam in 1988, have all reached subsidiary points on the ridge while the true summit at its northernmost end remains inviolate.

In the early nineties the Government of Sikkim changed rules. They demanded additional peak fees and insisted on a



second liaison officer to accompany the teams. This was a most unfair practice and the Himalayan Club took a lead in protesting against this rule. Now the fees are collected by the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, avoiding the bureaucratic delays and only one liaison officer accompanies the team. There is some relaxation in the rigidity about the issue of permits and some expeditions have been allowed in the sensitive areas as long as they could pay. Kirat Chuli, Siniolchu and Chummankhang East were either attempted or climbed.

One of the important expeditions to visit Sikkim was led by Doug Scott in 1996. They explored approaches to Chombu and Chomoyummo, crossed Donkhya la and finally climbed Chombu East (5745 m). Several other peaks were attempted. They brought back excellent pictorial records which should be most useful for this otherwise restricted area.¹⁴

Kangchenjunga (8586 m), the only 8000er in India, was climbed from the eastern approaches. Since its first ascent by this route, several teams have climbed the mountain. But as written in the Introduction, 8000 m peaks are to be left alone—it can hardly be called ‘exploring’ and they are certainly not the ‘hidden Himalaya’.

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