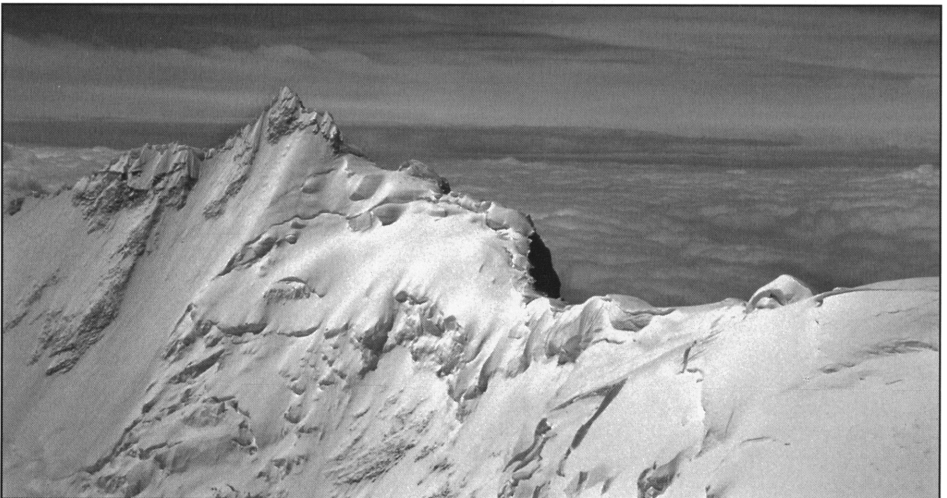


Gankarpunzum, Reconnaissance, and Liankang Kangri, First Ascent. When we attended the 40th Celebration of Chinese Mountaineering Association (CMA) in May, 1998, in Peking, we inquired about the possibility of receiving a mountaineering permit for a peak on the China-Bhutan border. We received a good reply. We set about planning the expedition to Gankarpunzum (7570m), the highest peak of Bhutan, for the next year, and sent a reconnaissance party to the mountain in mid-October, 1998. Prior to our attempt, successful ascents on the China-Bhutan border included both Khula Kangri (7538m) by a 1986 Kobe University party and Chomolari (7326m) by a joint China-Japan party in 1996.

The members of the reconnaissance were T. Itami, S. Nakamura and A. Yamamoto, and two news reporters for the newspaper Yomiuri. The approach to the mountain was made in a ten-hour ride from Lhasa by Landcruiser; we traveled alongside Yamudo Tso Lake and over the Monda La pass to arrive at Yojitsongtso (4500m), the last village. We gathered information from all the available sources in this village, after which we went on horseback into the old valley trail used by traders from Tibet to Bhutan. We set up Base Camp at Sumdo (4750m), the confluence of the glaciated valley of Namsang and Liankang Glacier. In the beginning, we entered the Namsang Glacier and made a camp on the left bank of the glacier. We advanced up the Namsang Glacier to see the upper side of the valley and the summit of Gankarpunzum. We found two possible routes to the summit, one on the northeast ridge via Liankang Kangri and the other directly up the east face of Gankarpunzum. Still more reconnoitering led to the south side of Khula Kangri Massif, which gave a general view of the possible routes on Gankarpunzum. (We also reconnoitered the Liankang Glacier, but found that there is no secure route to the upper part of the glacier.) We stayed in the hills for three days, and returned to Lhasa on November 12.

After returning home, we formed a mountaineering expedition to Gankarpunzum by selected JAC members. In February, the JAC received a notice from the CMA: the climbing permit for Gankarpunzum was postponed. The authorities in Bhutan had protested, stating that the peak lay on the Bhutan border and was thus forbidden. The notice confused the expedition committee, but we decided to send a younger members party to Liankang Kangri, which the CMA had proposed as a substitute.



Gankarpunzum, the highest unclimbed peak in the world. N. KOBAYASHI

We established Base Camp on April 21 at the same place as we had the year before. From Camp I, we made a route toward some seraced slopes, veered off the crevasse zone to CII, and pitched CIII below the 6921-meter pinnacle. On May 9, K. Suzuki and four men stood on the summit of Liankang Kangri (7534m), and the next day A. Yamamoto and four men climbed to the top as well. From the summit of Liankang Kangri, we could see the long knife-edged ridge stretching toward the summit of Gankarpunzum; it looked very serious, especially below the summit. Members of the expedition were T. Itami (leader), S. Nakamura, A. Yamamoto, K. Suzuki, H. Kadoya, H. Kobayashi, H. Takeuchi, K. Takahashi, Y. Kato, J. Takahashi and T. Sato.

TSUGUYASU ITAMI, *Japan*

Rock Peaks of the Siguniang Region. Japanese explorer Tamotsu Nakamura's photographs of the rock peaks near Mt. Siguniang in the Qionglai mountains make up an article that appears earlier in this journal.

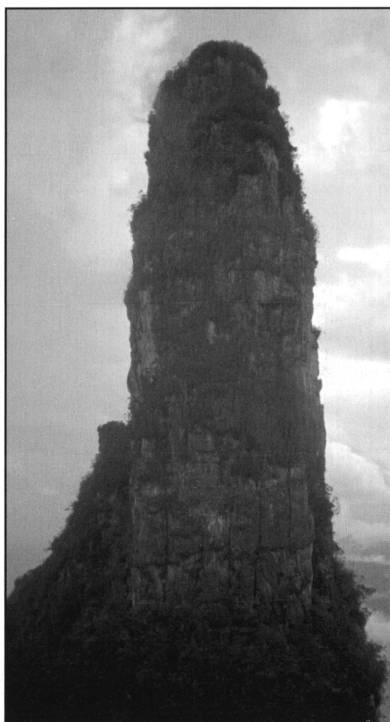
MALAYSIAN BORNEO

SARAWAK

Batu Lawi, South Face. On March 5, Volker Shoefl, Scott Morley, photographer Chris Noble, videographers Jim Surrette and Ken Sauls and I began the first leg of our ascent of Batu Lawi (6,703'), a remote spire in the Kelabit Highlands of Borneo. After a hair-raising flight (one engine failure) to the Highland community of Bario, then a short walk to the longhouse at Pa Ukat where we hired porters, the group began trekking toward the spire. We hiked for four days in an almost continuous downpour before reaching the base of the spire.

Our first attempt was on the east face, the largest and most striking side of the spire. Not much is known about this part of the world, and despite a scientific study claiming the spire to be of karst limestone, we found it to be Melingan Sandstone. Being porous, this rock absorbs a lot of the 300-plus inches of rain the Highlands receive each year and can thus be very weak. We had a limited amount of time, and after a few days of attempting to aid on hooks and knife blades up thin, water-weakened cracks (something none of us specialized in), we were forced to attempt the more moderate-looking south face.

The ca. 800-foot south face had its own difficulties. Large clumps of thick vegetation hung over many of the cracks like seracs, and their overhanging



The south face of Batu Lawi.
SAM LIGHTNER, JR.