

FIRST ASCENT OF SHIMOKANGRI ON TIBET-BHUTAN BORDER

Korea-POSCO Alpine Club Expedition 2002

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The news came to us in early October of 2002.

A Korean party of the Alpine Club of POSCO - the largest steel mills in Korea - succeeded in the first ascent of Shimokangri (7204m) on the 29th September of 2002. Li In Oei - leader and eight members joined the expedition. Five members of Nam Yong Mo - climbing leader, Li Ji Ryue, Li Fua Fun, Kim Ze Yong and Chuen Oir stood atop.

This article is composed in two chapters. Firstly I summarize a record of the Korean remarkable ascent from a monthly magazine "Man & Mountain" Nov. 2002 - Korean version. (Japanese translation by Kanenori Emoto of JAC

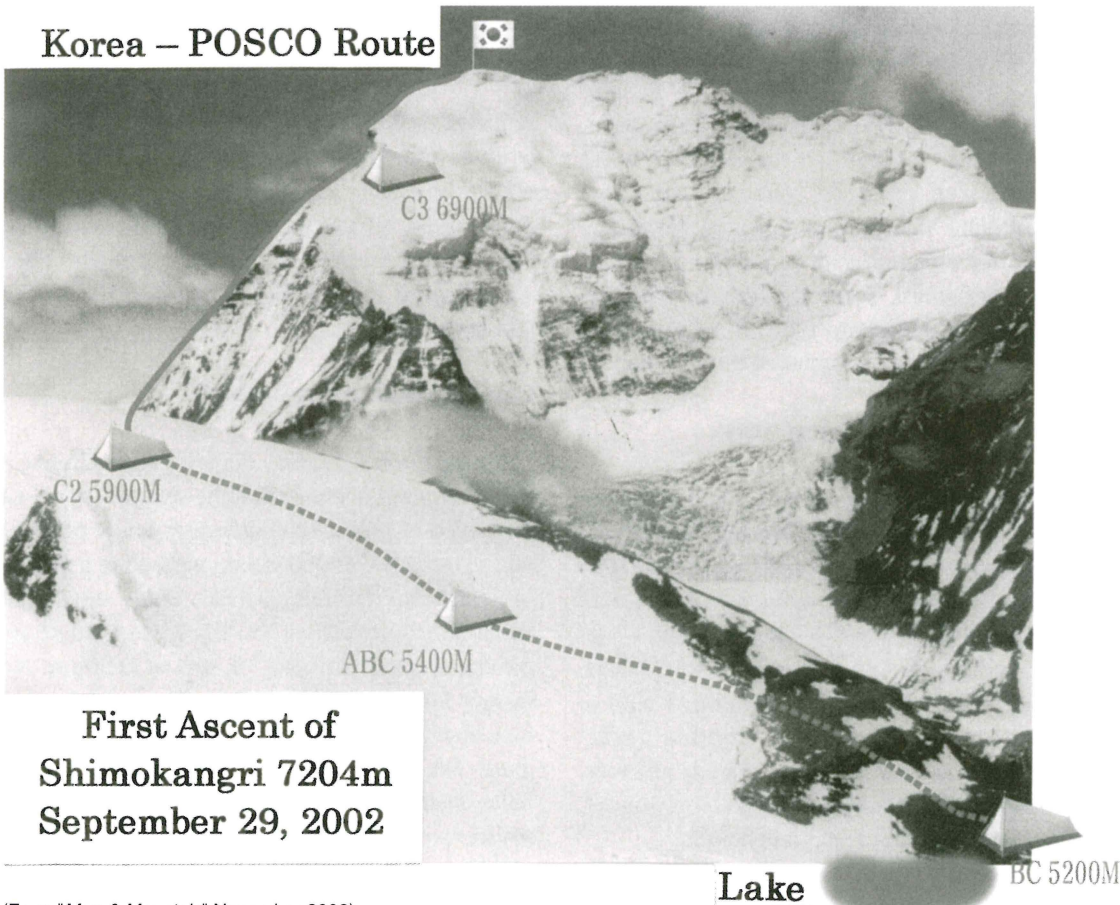
has been used.) Secondly views and comments of Kinichi Yamamori, The Himalayan Association of Japan are introduced.

1 A Record of the First Ascent

To the advance base camp

On September 5, all the members left Lhasa by four jeeps and one truck. They marched arid and wild plateau higher than 4,000m above the sea level. After two days drive they set up the temporary base camp (BC) near by a lake at 5,200m on September 7 where they had a rest for three days.

Korea - POSCO Route



**First Ascent of
Shimokangri 7204m
September 29, 2002**

(From "Man & Mountain" November 2002)



The north face of Shimokangri 7204m (left) and Tongshanjiabu 7207m (right). Close to the south, Teri Kang ca 7000m in Bhutan side is seen. A view from the north. (The photo was taken by Kinichi Yamamori on Sep. 29, 2000.)

On September, five members went on a reconnaissance to establish the advance base camp (ABC) on a glacier. On the 13th they started climbing. A route was taken on the rough glacier partly covered with moraines. It was a really exhausting task. From the 14th to 16th they were engaged in setting up ABC at 5,400m. Bad weather with strong wind bothered the members.

Route opening and paving work

On September 17, they set up C2 at 5,900m on a col just below the ridge forming the Tibet-Bhutan border. The wind continued to blow fiercely as there was no barrier in the vicinity that interrupted the wind. On the following day, route opening and paving work from C2 to C3 was commenced. Seven members negotiated with a steep snow face of some 75 degrees angle alternatively in two batches. Snow shower washed them incessantly during climbing of 1,900m in distance and 1,000m in height.

On September 22 to 23, a climbing leader, Nam Yong Mo and other three members once

returned to ABC after placing ropes fixed up to 6,700m. On September 25 to 26, five members left for an attack, but bitter cold and strong wind made them retreat to C2. Snowfall continued from the 25th and wind became stronger. They were forced to stay at C2 and had to change climbing tactics.

Final assault to the summit

On September 27, they departed from C2 to C3 early morning in a hope that the weather would be improved. Climb carrying heavy loads of 20kg was extremely difficult being exposed to a danger of avalanches and falling rocks. Snow shower hit them intermittently too. They stopped route paving work at 6,700m. It was at 6:00pm. No farther advance was possible. They bivouacked on a small ice ledge that they made cutting by ice axes. The place was so unstable that they must belay themselves by their own crampons. A long night bothered them, whether to continue climbing or to give up.

On September 28, they resumed an ascent at

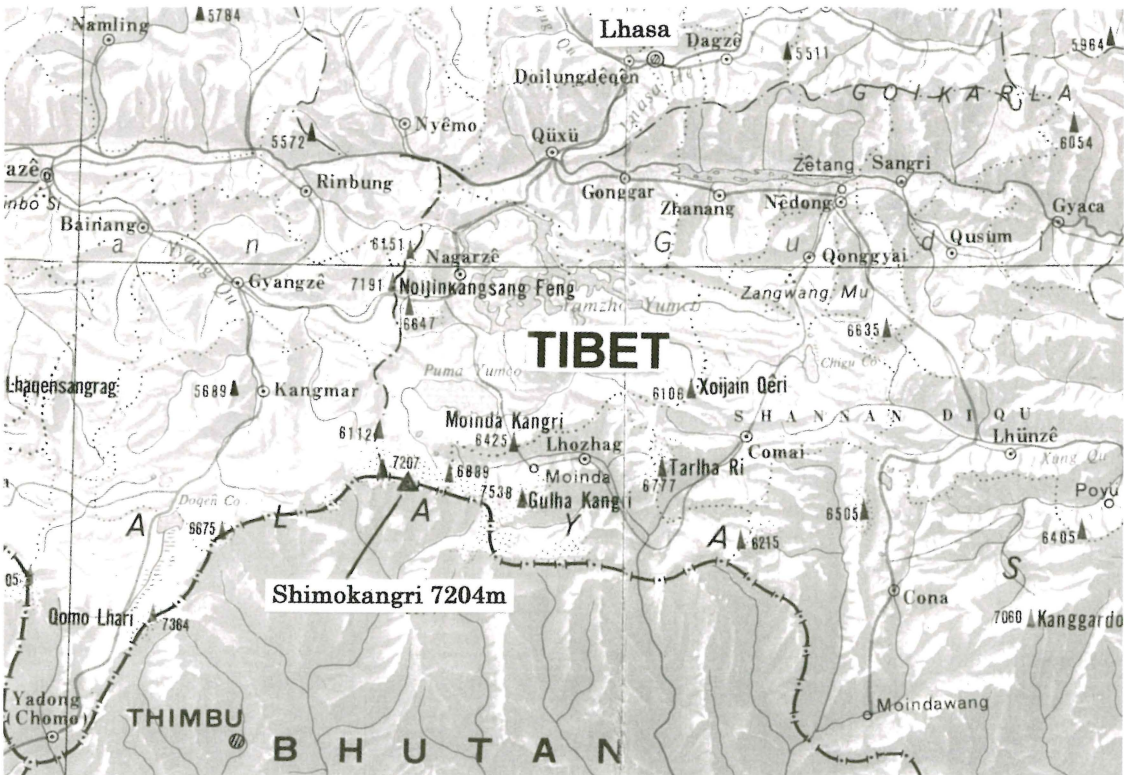
8:00pm. Nam Yong Mo, a climbing leader, led the party. They reached a site for C3 at 6,900m at 4:00pm and pitched a tent in a wet snow slope. All the five members were exhausted.

On September 29, the final push began. They climbed the north face and then went around to a slope of the southwest ridge. A number of peaks appeared in sight in Bhutan territory whilst in Tibetan side many lakes were viewed in highland. Five hours and twenty minutes climb took Nam Yong Mo and four other members to a point just below the summit. Ultimately all of them stood atop Shimokangri at 10:00am. It was fantastic and the most memorable first ascent indeed.

2 Yamamori's Views and Comments

Height of Shimokangri:

1:50,000 topographical map of China People's



Liberation Army (PLA) indicates 7,202m for the peak that POSCO party ascended, whilst the other Chinese map shows 7,204m. Russian topographical map of 1:100,000 scale indicates only a height of the west peak 7,220m (7,147m on the PLA map), but does not show a height of the main peak.

Name of Shimokangri:

No name of "Shimokangri" is found on the PLA map although the height of 7,202m is given to the peak climbed by the Korean party. The PLA map meanwhile applies a name of "Shimori" to the peak 6,902m ranging to the north from the west peak. It is understood, therefore, that "Shimokangri" has come from "Shimori".

On the other hand, Bhutan people have been calling the mountain as Kangphu Kang.

Issue on Permission:

It would not be obsolete news that the Gankarpunzum expedition 1998 of The Japanese Alpine Club was suddenly suspended due to a controversial border issue between China and Bhutan. (See Japanese Alpine New Vol. 1

October 2001) Now, however, a permit to the peak “Shimokangri” on the Tibet-Bhutan border has been granted to the Korean party. It implies that the other peaks on the border such as Tongshanjiabu 7,207m for which The Himalayan Association of Japan has already sent an application would possibly be opened to foreigners.

