

MUSTANG HIMAL, AUTUMN 2001

Tamotsu Ohnishi

## NEW TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP OF WESTERN NEPAL

In the summer of 2001, the new 48 sheets of topographical maps of Nepal came out from the Survey Department of His Majesty's Government of Nepal. These are a part of the western series of Nepal Topographic Mapping Project which cover most part of the mountainous districts in western Nepal. They are in a scale of 1/50,000 and in a division of 15 minutes in longitude and latitude similar to the 34 sheets of eastern and central Nepal that were published in 1997. They were elaborated with the technical cooperation and financial support by the government of Finland. Beautifully printed in multi-color, contour interval is 40 meters and supplementary contour at 20 meters.

In our reconnaissance to the mountain ranges in Mustang in the autumn of 2001, we could avail ourselves of the 9 sheets (JOMSOM, MUKTINATH, TILICHO, DAMODAR KUNDA, LO MANTHANG, PANLHAM, GAMMAR, ALANIKO CHULI, TINJE) out of 11 sheets that we needed at the time of our start. For the lacking 2 sheets, we substituted rather old and obsolete maps of the Survey of India and other private maps. Generally speaking, new maps are useful to obtain the current information pertaining to the regional administration such as the boundary between villages and districts, mountain tracks, settlement names, locations of mountain passes, bridges, schools, gompas and etc. It was difficult to find such information in detail on the maps of the Survey of India since 1960's.

Reportedly the new maps have been worked out and compiled being based on the aerial photograph taken by Survey Department in the autumn of 1995, which were taken in quite cloudless sky condition of early winter. In this photograph, much of the Himalaya regions are mantled by fresh snow. We have interpreted some of the photographs of Mustang region, and were confused to identify the land surface condition exactly. In the

sheet of TILICHO, for instance, we can find some errors in drawing and coloration of contours on the maps, especially at the glaciated area to the north of the great ranges. These errors are obviously caused by the insufficient field survey works.

Nevertheless, it was the fact that we were much helped by the new maps in order to identify the numerous minor peaks seen from the top of the passes or hills near by the main road. Meanwhile, in old maps, there were areas which had lack of the surveying data. The first group was the area on the boundary ridge between Mustang and Dolpo district, and the second was along the international border ranges extending from Manshail to Arnikochuli to the north and western part of Lo Manthang. Some of these ranges had been drawn incorrectly almost owing to very poor print on the old one inch/one mile Survey of India map. Many peaks exceeding 6000m exist in these areas. But they were not listed in "Nepal Himalaya Inventory 1994" published by Nepalese government although it is a useful booklet. On the new maps, the heights of these peaks are determined by GPS photogrammetric measurement, along with the data from the Attached Map of the Boundary Agreement between Nepal and China in 1979. The heights of the main peaks along the international boundary are seemingly adopted by the Attachment Map. However, even in this group, some discrepancies are found in the heights of large number of peaks among the old Indian maps, the maps of the Boundary Agreement and the new maps.

We also have to point out that there are not a few confusions and errors in naming of peaks, rivers, villages or historical places that we have ever used. Now, to our regret, some of these names are changed, newly created, missing or misplaced on the new maps. Though the notation in Romanized place name is explained as "pronounce guide" in the margin of the map, the problem of the difference between Tibetan name locally used and Nepalese name on the map is still not solved. The media news agency mentioned that all the works of the mapping project would be completed before early 2002 and accordingly all maps would be printed and published by this spring. However as all the works

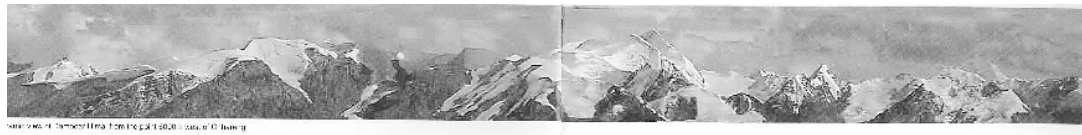
have too hurriedly been done in a shorter time, we are much concerned that they would come out without adding the data of the sufficient field investigations and subsequent amendments. Although the revision in this regard might be urged, it would be not easy work to retouch them in a limited time, because they employed no digital system of the world current trend method for the map making.

We invited Mr. Katsutoshi Asahi as a scholarly member to our expedition who has been studying on Glaciology and Geomorphology in Nepal, and is now carrying out the steadfast surveys on fluctuation of glaciers in all over the Nepal Himalaya. Regarding to his field works done in the northwestern Mustang that remained ever in blank and the other regions of the western Nepal, we sincerely hope a fruitful outcome that leads to a success in his study work. His accomplishments in the eastern Nepal (Kangchenjunga, Langtang area) were already appeared in the academic papers mentioned bellow.

**Asahi,K & Watanabe,T: *Past and recent fluctuations in Kanchenjunga Himal, Nepal.* Journal of Nepal Geological Society,vol.22, pp481-490, 2000.**

**Asahi.K: *Inventry and recent variations of Glaciers in the Nepal Himalaya.* "SEPPYO" (Journal of the Japanese Society of Snow and Ice) vol.63, pp159-169. 2001.(in Japanese with English abstract)**

**Asahi,K & Watanabe.T: *Issuance of the New Topographical Maps in Nepal and its problems.* "CHIRI" (Monthly Journal of Geography) vol.43-1, pp81-85,1998. (in Japanese)**



Panoramic view of Damodar Himal from the point 6000m west of Chharang.



By courtesy of His Majesty's Government of Nepal, survey Department, First edition, 2001, (1:50,000) Sheet No. 2983 08.