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. Meanwhil,e 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
2000.

Asahi.K: Inventory and recent variations of Glaciers in the Nepal
Himalaya. "SEPPYO" (Journal of the Japanese Society of Snow and

Asahi.K & Watanabe.T: Issuance of the New Topographical Maps in
Nepal and its problems. "CHIRI" (Monthly Journal of Geography)
Panoramic view of Damodar Himal from the point 6000m west of Chharang.