BHUTAN HIMAL

By MICHAEL WARD

(*Four illustrations: nos. 39–42*)

KNOWLEDGE of Bhutan is scanty and difficult to find. However, a number of people have visited this country and a certain amount of information is available.

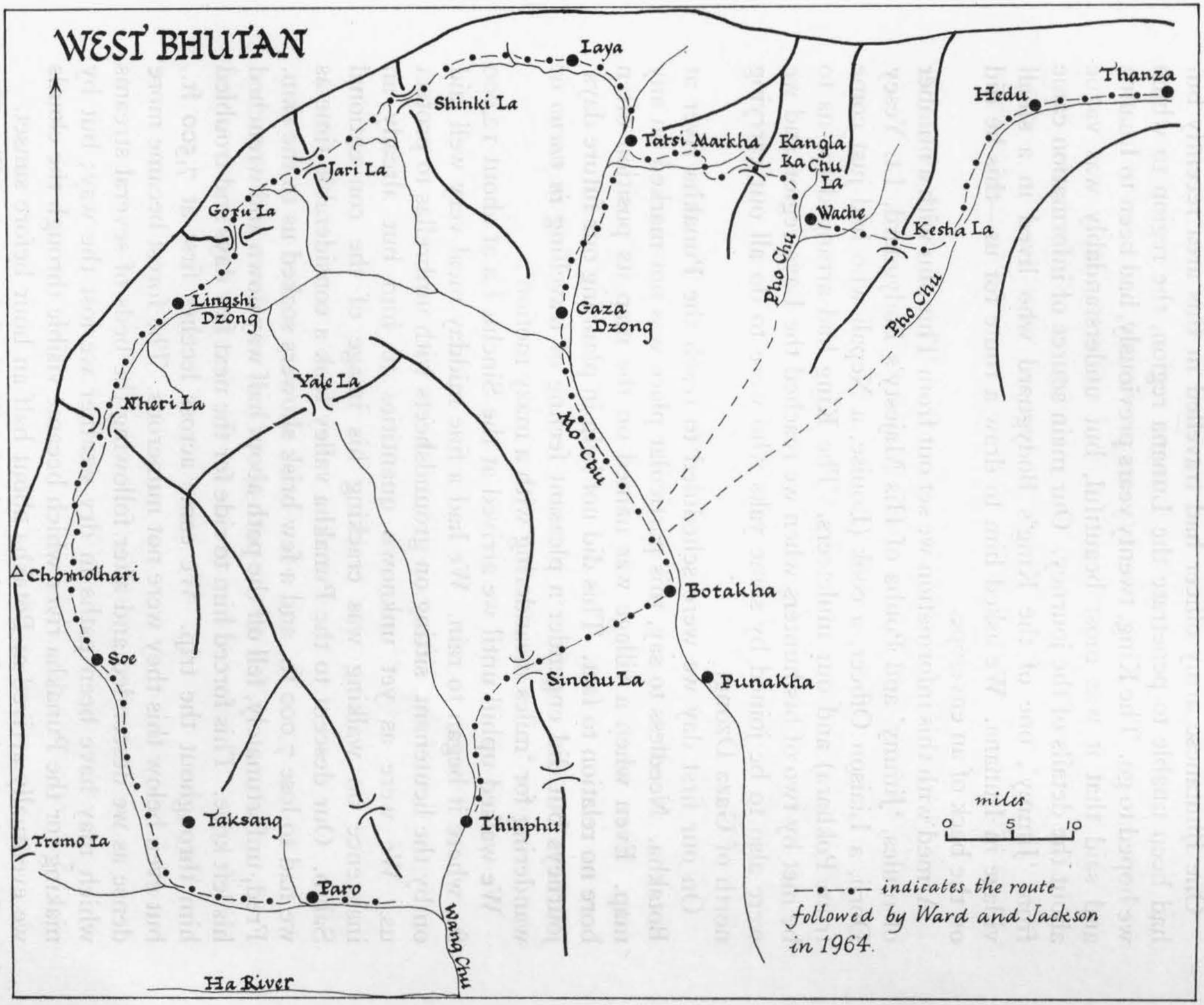
Most travellers appear to have confined themselves to the central portion of the country and have visited the main towns of Eastern and West Bhutan. A few journeys have been made also to the mountainous regions of the western border which abuts on the Chumbi valley salient of Tibet. Spencer Chapman climbed Chomolhari, on the Bhutan/Tibet border in 1937 from the Tibetan side.

The main valleys of Western Bhutan are the Ha, Paro, Thinphu and Punakha valleys. The Ha, Paro and Thinphu rivers join a common river, the Wangchuk, that crosses the Indian border at Hashimara to join the Brahmaputra. The Punakha river joins the Brahmaputra further east.

The mountainous region drained by the three former rivers corresponds approximately to the western ranges of Bhutan that form the east side of the Chumbi valley. The headwaters of the Punakha river drain a considerable portion of the mountains forming the northern border. The two main tributaries of the Punakha river are the Mo Chu (or Female River) and the Pho Chu (or Male River).

The mountainous northern border seems to be unknown to Europeans, and it was therefore with considerable excitement that Fred Jackson and I (during a professional visit to Bhutan) accepted His Majesty the King's invitation to visit this region in August, 1964. What information we could find about travellers in Western Bhutan revealed that some had travelled up the valley of the Mo Chu and then turned west towards the western group of peaks, and had then descended via the Yale La to the upper waters of the Thinphu river, to Thinphu. Other travellers had been up the Paro valley to Soe and thence travelled over the Nheri La to return along the Mo Chu to Gaza Dzong; or by the Yale La into the headwaters of the Thinphu river. The Ha valley is fairly well known to western travellers.

From available maps the Pho Chu appears to drain most of the mountainous region to the east of the Mo Chu and it was into the headwaters of this river that Fred Jackson and I hoped to be able to travel. Our information about this area was scanty. The maps of


WEST BHUTAN
Laya
Shinki La
Jari La
Goru La
Lingshi Dzong
Nheri La
Yale La
Chomolhari
Soe
Taksang
Tremo La
Paro
Ha River
Wang Chu
Thinphu
Sinchu La
Botakha
Punakha
Mo-Chu
Gaza Dzong
Tatsi Markha
Kangla Ka Chu La
Wache
Pho Chu
Kesha La
Hedu
Thanza
miles
0 5 10
indicates the route followed by Ward and Jackson in 1964.

Bhutan are to all intents and purposes a blank for any region north of the Paro/Thinphu/Punakha axis. The quarter-inch Indian survey shows a few triangulated points, but most of the valleys so carefully shaded are imaginatively drawn.

One Bhutanese army officer had travelled in this area recently but had been unable to penetrate the Lunana region, the region to which we hoped to go. The King, twenty years previously, had been to Luanna and said that it was most beautiful, but understandably was vague about the details of the journey. Our main source of information came from 'Jimmy', one of the King's Bodyguard who lived in a small village in Lunana. We asked him to draw a route for us—this he did on the back of an envelope.

Armed with this information we set out from Thinphu with a number of mules, 'Jimmy' and Pouba of His Majesty's Bodyguard, Lt. Yesey Dorji, a Liaison Officer, a cook (Louise, a Nepali who had just come from Pokhara) and our muleteers. The King had arranged for us to be met by two of his hunters when we reached the Laya region and we were also to be joined by some yaks who were to do all our carrying north of Gaza Dzong.

On our first day we were scheduled to reach the Punakha river at Botakha. Needless to say, this particular place was not marked on any map. Even when a village was named on the map its position often bore no relation to fact. This did not help in planning our future days' journeys but did engender a pleasant feeling of travelling *in vacuo* or wandering for 'miles meandering with a mazy motion'.

We walked uphill until we arrived at the Sinchu La at about 12,000 ft., where it began to rain. We had a fine midday meal very well laid on by the lieutenant, sitting on groundsheets with umbrellas to protect us. We were as yet unknown quantities to him but already an insistence on walking was cracking his image of the conventional Sahib. Our descent to the Punakha valley took a considerable time as we had to lose 7,000 ft., and a few brisk showers soaked us to the skin. Fred, unfortunately, fell off the path about half way down and wrenched his left knee. This forced him to ride for the next few days and troubled him throughout the trip. We came across leeches first at 7,500 ft., but even below this they were not numerous. The forest became more dense as we descended and after following the beds of several streams which may have been paths in dry weather we lost the way; but by making for the Punakha river which became visible through the clouds we eventually arrived at Botakha about half an hour before sunset.

Some hours later the mules arrived. We had been travelling too rapidly for them and had been nearly eleven hours on the route with only an hour for halts. Next day the mules rested and we tried to find out more about our route without much success. We saw a number

of sick people and sent one to the hospital at Thinphu where we saw him three weeks later.

On August 7 we started off trying to get to a place, Tamji. Leeches soon appeared on our legs. The muleteers wore their trousers rolled up at the knees and touched each leech with a bag containing salt and tobacco. The path was fairly well defined as it is the main route between Punakha and the north. After lunch by the river we ascended steadily, and after nearly twelve hours' travelling we arrived at Tamji. By then our luggage on the mules was hopelessly behind, but next day we continued up the gorge to Gaza Dzong; myself with a temperature from the leech bites. The lieutenant was a little perturbed by the schism between us and our baggage. However, I reassured him by telling him that on the Everest Reconnaissance Expedition in 1951 we had not seen our baggage for over two weeks during the march in and nothing had been lost.

At Gaza we had our first view of some mountains, two fine peaks about fifteen miles away to the south-west. Here we met the yaks and two of the King's hunters, Dorji and Tsering. Three riding yaks were provided for us and they were a good deal less frisky than the others, which required careful management and were quite savage on occasion.

Two days later we arrived at Tatsi Markha after rejoining the Mo Chu some miles before this village. Here we saw a number of patients and next day retraced our tracks for about two miles down the valley.

We then started up a narrow, barely used path which turned round into a narrow valley coming in from the east. We walked up the north side of this valley and it opened out as we reached the upper limit of the trees. We stopped for lunch by the river and were told that our camping place was only half an hour away. The yak men refused to travel any further that day so when we got to our camp site, Rodofu, just beside a bridge, we decided to explore the northern side of the valley and see if we could get some views. Unfortunately the clouds remained obstinately about 2,000 ft. above us veiling the end of the valley. We could just see the dirty snout of a glacier and an occasional snowfield suspended seemingly in mid-air. To compensate for this the flowers were magnificent in their profusion and quality. Edelweiss, one of the few that I could identify, was so common as to be almost a weed.

We climbed quickly up the north side of the valley and I made for a small peak from which I hoped to have a good view. As I reached the summit, at about 15,800 ft., the rain started properly and cloud enveloped me. After a brief rest I descended to the black tents of some Yak herders. Two women with long, dank, straggly hair, in small coolie hats greeted me and I went to join Fred who was drinking yak milk. It was raining hard but despite their wide mesh these yak tents

are completely waterproof. Most of our yaks had come from this pasture and were owned by one of the yak men, who was very affluent and often addicted to chang.

Next day we set off early and walked up a valley running south, directly opposite the yak tents, and crossed the two passes of the Tsumi La. We saw some extraordinary yellow plants on our way—about three to four feet high and bright yellow—that looked as if they would be more at home in a science fiction landscape than on a Himalayan mountain side.

At the second of these passes we were surprised to find that our route turned north as we had been expecting to continue in a southerly direction. The clouds cleared enough to give us a tantalising view of some snow peaks, glaciers and some fine-looking aiguilles. We also saw the pass to be crossed the following day—the Kangla Ka Chu La (16,750 ft.). We camped about an hour short of this pass beside a huge boulder, Thangnam. It rained most of the night and we were all glad to start next day. Unfortunately we had no views from this pass, but a dry glacier on the far side was obviously fed from the snow-fields to the south. We walked along the lateral moraine for about three miles and then reached the side of a river running south.

A number of glaciers formed the source of this river which we learnt was one of the sources of the Pho Chu. We were most excited about this discovery and sat down at a good vantage point waiting for the clouds to lift. Every now and again we would see a snow ridge appearing through a rift in the clouds only to disappear. There were evidently a great many peaks to the north and east. Eventually our yaks appeared and we were told that we would have to descend the Pho Chu for nearly two days before turning east again.

We descended rapidly to the valley floor—here a waste of boulders between a quarter and a half mile wide. Evidently some years before, a glacier lake, dammed by a moraine, had overflowed and caused tremendous devastation. Many people were drowned as far away as Punakha. Even now uprooted pine trees, hurled around as though by some giant's hand, were left stranded in the strangest positions—some hanging in the branches of the living trees, some leaning at impossible angles and others most improbably upside down, their roots like gigantic umbrellas' ribs. After a wet night, at a hut at Tari Thang, we descended the Pho Chu for a few miles and then ascended the east bank to Wache, a small hamlet of three to four houses. Our camp was pitched in the pouring rain and we awoke next day to more rain and clouds.

Going east again we crossed a valley running north and south that eventually joined the Pho Chu, and climbed up to the Kesha La. Obviously the valley that we crossed ran up into the group of peaks we

had seen the day before. However, the rain fell in an even more concentrated fashion on the pass and my main impression of the Kesha La was the delightful smell of juniper that greeted us on our descent to the next village, Tega. From Tega we turned north again and the path ran alongside another source of the Pho Chu. Some years previously a path ran down this valley but a portion of it had been demolished by a landslide; so it was no longer a possible route. A few miles upstream the path descended to the river bank and there we saw a lacham or musk deer which we were told were very rare in Bhutan.

The river then turned east again and the valley widened considerably. At the bend a large stream, glacier-fed as it was turquoise green in colour, thundered into the main river. About a mile or so beyond this point we reached Hedu and, wet through, splashed into the newly built schoolhouse. The next day Fred rested his knee which had become more painful again and I set off for the head of the valley.

Needless to say it was raining but when Lt. Dorji and I reached the first village, Chozo Dzong, the clouds lifted a little. To the north a fine peak of about 21,000 ft. gleamed and the sun glinted on the lakes of an alluvial plain which stretched two miles to the east. We went into the Dzong, a very old one built in the time of the third Bhutanese Lama. The Lama in charge of the Dzong could not tell us how long ago this was in years as they appear to have no means of estimating this exactly in Bhutan.

After leaving the Dzong we walked through a carpet of flowers up the valley to two villages, Thenche and Thanza, the two most remote villages of Lunana. Beyond, the path led to the Gangto La, a difficult snow pass into Tibet about two days' march away. We had some yoghourt and roasted rice for lunch and left once again in the pouring rain. The clouds then sat on the valley floor and through the gloom I saw several goats marooned on an island in the middle of one of the larger lakes. Strangely enough there were no boats in the villages and in any case we were told it would be unlucky to move these animals. Soaked to the skin we arrived at Hedu to find that Jimmy and Dorji the hunter had shot three 'nau' goats and were skinning them in the schoolhouse. This meant we had enough meat for the rest of our journey.

A dance that evening lasted until the early hours. Unlike Sherpa dances, small groups circulated around a lamp or fire. Each dance has a definite meaning—i.e. the ripening of the barley or the planting of rice—and is usually danced by either men or women.

Next day we left Hedu after photographing the dancers and doing a sick parade. As we left the sun came out and we could see a fine snow peak just to the south. This seemed to be about 19,000 ft. and was, I think, a minor peak in a quite considerable range that lies to the

south of this valley. We retraced our path that day to Wache which we reached in the afternoon.

Next day we took the wrong path and descended directly to the Pho Chu. The mass of boulders on the valley floor was difficult to negotiate, but after some time we eventually arrived on the path again. As I sat and waited for the yaks (Fred was riding as his knee was hurting) I noticed that the weather was clearing and a number of fine peaks were emerging at the head of the valley. This was only temporary but the sky down the Pho Chu appeared to be lightening.

Early next morning the weather had definitely changed and we hurried to the head of the valley in the warm sun. A great cirque of peaks was appearing and disappearing. We could see that at least two, and possibly four, glacier streams flowed into the Pho Chu. The mountains were about 20,000 ft. high and there was one peak remaining obstinately hidden that appeared to be a great deal higher. As we climbed up to the Kangla Ka Chu La the clouds thickened. Jimmy and the hunters set off in pursuit of a herd of goats, running rapidly uphill at about 17,000 ft.! The mountains south of the pass now cleared for about half an hour and it seemed that a route could be found up each peak without too much difficulty. I reached camp about two hours before dark and wandered around taking photos, accompanied by the continuous roar of avalanches. Fred arrived just before dark saying that he had managed to get some good photos from the col.

At 5 a.m. I was woken by Fred saying it was a lovely day and indeed the morning was quite clear. We decided to climb up to the col immediately in order to get some idea of the mountains to the east. In under an hour we were on the pass and had a marvellous view of the country through which we had been travelling for the past few days—Lunana—timeless, beautiful and as remote a place as any in the world.

It seemed that at last we were going to have a good day. North of the pass was a group of aiguilles and the nearest one seemed to be climbable. From the summit we thought we should get an extensive view in every direction and at last should have a good idea of the geographical configuration of this part of the country. We descended rapidly for a large breakfast and told the lieutenant of our plans. After climbing the peak we hoped to descend into the eastern end of the Rodofu valley which we considered would end somewhere near the foot of the group of aiguilles. We decided to ask Dorji, one of the King's hunters, to accompany us.

We took some bars of Lindt chocolate, kindly given to us by the Queen before we left; filled a plastic tube (normally used for jelly with the E.C.G. machine) with a quantity of Beefeaters Gin, and set out. These two items were the only European food we had with us on the whole journey.

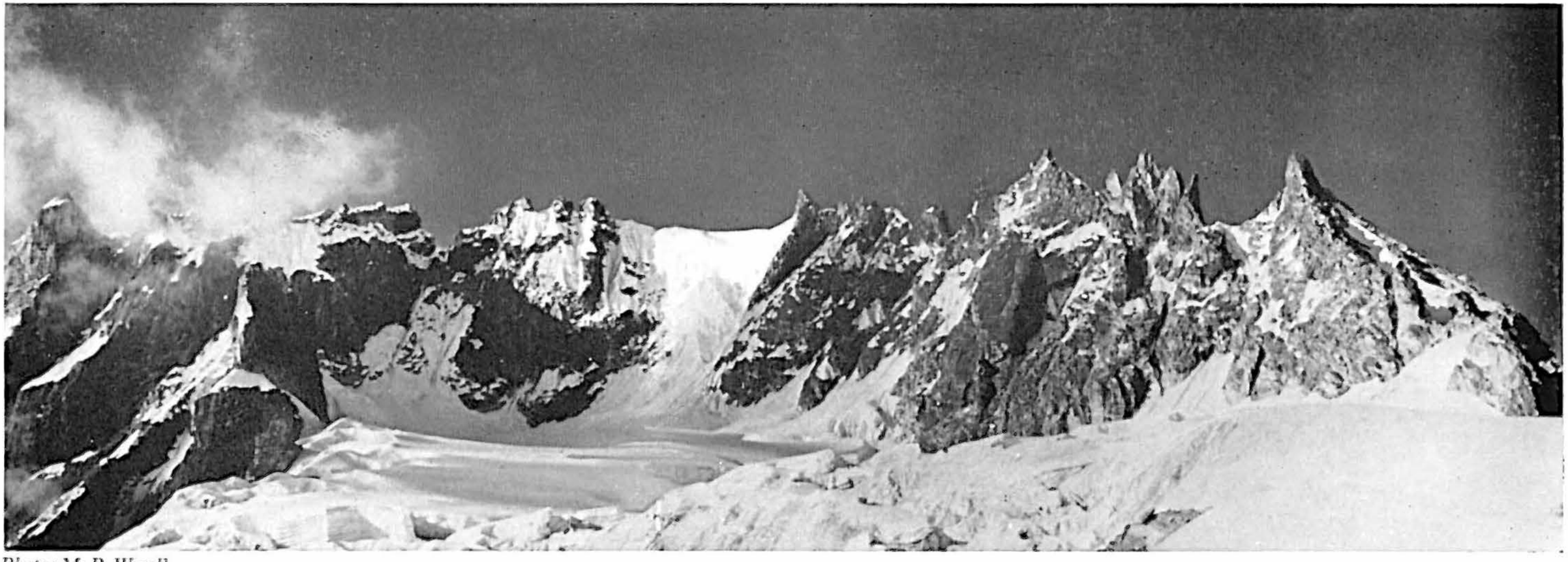


Photo: M. P. Ward]

AIGUILLES DE RODOFU: PEAK ST. GEORGE IS THE FINE SPIRE ON THE RIGHT. THE KANGLA KA CHU LA IS FURTHER RIGHT AGAIN, OFF THE PICTURE.

(No. 39)

After ninety minutes' climb we came to a whaleback ridge of rock near the foot of our aiguille. Here we took a round of photos which included the mountains to the south-west of Gaza which we could easily identify; what we thought was Chomolhari and a group many miles away, yellowed by distance, that looked very like Kangchenjunga. Nearer to us was a fine group about 22,000 ft. high which was probably the Lingshi group, and then the nearer peaks. We then turned east towards our peak.

The obvious route lay up the ridge coming towards us which was approached by a glacier. We left Dorji at the foot of this ridge with instructions to stay until we returned. We roped up and set off (we had luckily brought a rope, a pair of boots and an ice-axe each). The snow was rather soft in parts and we soon crossed a bergschrund and got onto a ridge which was composed of particularly rotten rock. An obvious line led us across the South face to a further snow-slope and we managed to climb up the runnel between this and the rock face. We made height steadily but not nearly quickly enough, for we were frightened the clouds would come down and obscure the peaks to the north and east once again.

The climbing was not difficult, but we moved singly as neither the rock nor the snow was in particularly good condition. Soon we reached a small shoulder about one hundred feet from the summit. Here there was a small rock pitch of about fifty feet and I climbed this making my way onto a platform on the north and west side of the peak just below the summit. Fred followed and then I stepped around to the South face and in a few feet was on the summit to which I belayed. The time was 1.45 p.m.

The day was perfect and the views tremendous in every direction. We yelled loudly to tell Dorji that we were on top and hurled some boulders down onto the glacier. We then started taking photos and trying to identify peaks. Beyond Chomolhari and Kangchenjunga, both then nearly obscured in cloud, we could not identify any peaks at all. I thought I could see the peak I had glimpsed north of Chozo Dzong four days before, but could not be certain. Our main impression was that of a great number of mountain ranges in the Lunana area, some of which seemed to run in a southerly direction. One very high peak, probably between 23,000 and 24,000 ft., seemed to be about fifteen miles away. This peak was the one we had caught glimpses of on our way up to the Kangla Ka Chu La. We had in fact asked many people in Lunana whether there was a mountain called Khula Kangri in the region, but none knew of it.

To the north a glacier flowed into the eastern end of the Rodofu valley, obviously draining a considerable number of peaks which were hidden from us by the group of aiguilles of which our peak was one.

Between us and the Lingshi group there were some other slightly lower mountains. We confirmed that we could in fact descend into the eastern end of the Rodofu valley, and with the eye of faith we thought we could see the peak I had climbed above Rodofu. After forty-five memorable minutes on the summit we descended, reaching Dorji at 4.15 p.m.

We then descended a dry glacier and continued until we finally reached a lateral moraine valley. The clouds had come down and it was getting very dark and soon we were stumbling among stones, into holes, into sidestreams and fighting our way through dwarf rhododendrons. Eventually we reached the river and ploughed along in a downward direction. We disturbed several slumbering yaks on the way and several times thought that we had missed the bridge. Suddenly out of the gloom we heard a welcoming shout from the opposite side of the river. Even so we were an hour from our camp at Rodofu which we reached at 8.45.

Lieutenant Dorji thought that he had really lost us for good this time and was most relieved to see us. We decided to call our peak Peak St. George after a great friend of the Bhutanese royal family. The group of aiguilles we tentatively called the Aiguilles de Rodofu.

The sun was shining again next day and we had a pleasant walk down to the Mo Chu and up to Tatsi Markha for lunch. In the afternoon we crossed two tributaries of the Mo Chu and walked up to Laya. Laya is the main village of this region and has a number of fields of barley and mustard. There is also a considerable amount of grazing for yaks and cows. In fact this is the main yak grazing area of Western Bhutan.

We changed yaks there and had a lengthy argument as to how long it would take us to Paro. Tsering said eight to nine days which I refused to believe. We decided to get to Lingshi in three days and then have another argument (in fact we arrived in Paro in five days).

Next day we held a sick parade from 6.30 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. when we had our second breakfast. We then set off, again in the sunshine, and after two to three hours came to a bridge across the Gangchetabichang Chu. From there we had a fine view of the Lingshi group of peaks, some five to ten miles away. Their southern slopes were incredibly steep and no obvious line of ascent could be seen.

Some hours later we crossed another river, the Timuchang Chu and from there we could see Kangchita or Tiger Mountain. This is another member of the Lingshi group.

We camped at a yak pasture that night called Phoudingi. There Fred found some wild rhubarb which he cooked most expertly. We then turned south and for the next few days travelled in a south-westerly direction. The next pass the Shinki La (16,400 ft.) was a grass one and the country changed in character. From our viewpoint on

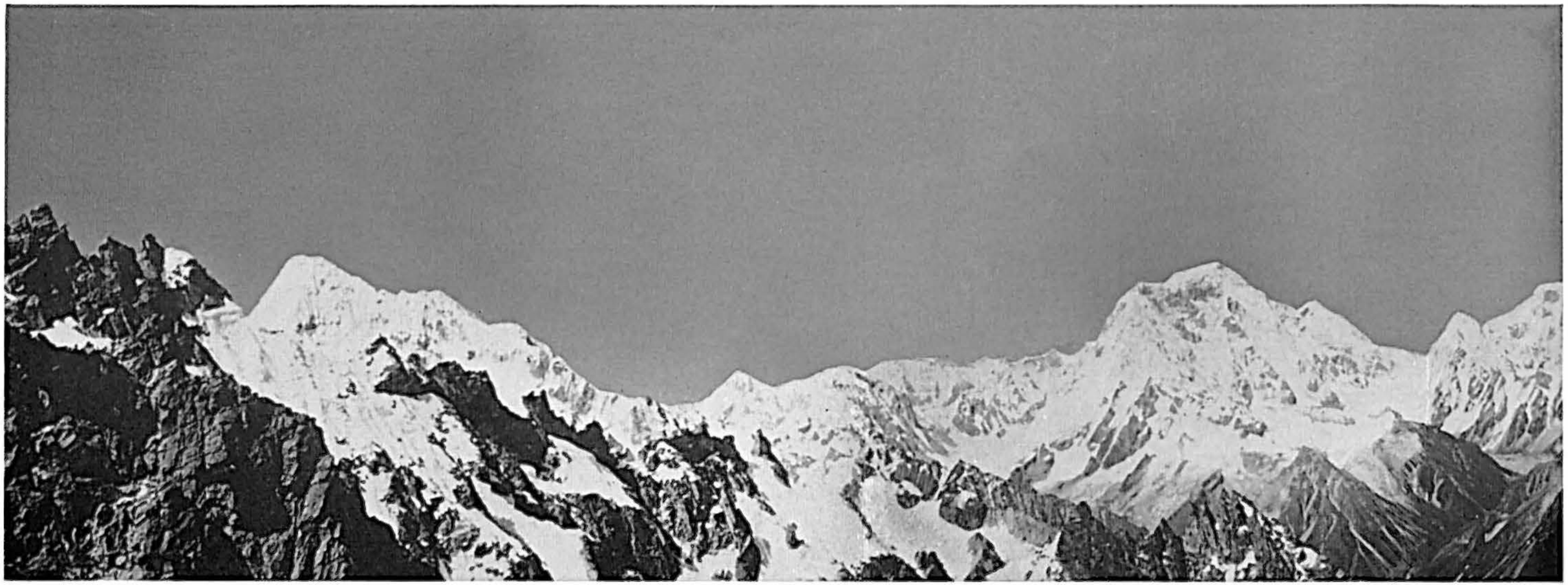


Photo: M. P. Ward]

VIEW NORTH TO NORTH-EAST FROM THE SUMMIT OF PEAK ST. GEORGE. THE NEXT ILLUSTRATION (NO. 41) CONTINUES THIS PANORAMA TO THE RIGHT.

(No. 40)



Photo: M. P. Ward]

VIEW NORTH-EAST TO EAST FROM THE SUMMIT OF PEAK ST. GEORGE.

(No. 41)



Photo: M. P. Ward]

F. S. JACKSON ON THE SUMMIT OF PEAK ST. GEORGE: LINGSHI GROUP IN BACKGROUND.

(No. 42)

Peak St. George there had been no high snow peaks between the Lingshi group and Chomolhari and we were then travelling in this region. The lower hills were rolling and grass covered and the higher ones resembled the Pyrenees in bareness, with occasional small glaciers and snowfields.

Beyond the Shinki La I visited some yak pastures at Gangserry some 500 ft. above the main valley. I was consulted about a yak with a broken leg and was asked if I could do anything about it. Despite the fact that the fracture was a month old there was no evidence of union and I was unable to give much hope to the yak herder.

After a vast meal of cheese and yoghourt we set off again, meeting Fred and the cook who thought we were miles away down the valley. We descended to the next big river, the Zami Chu, which flowed into the Mo Chu just below Gaza Dzong, and saw a large herd of wild goats. Suddenly one of the hunters motioned us to stop. About half a mile down the valley on the opposite side we could see a large animal. This we were told was a rouginsee. We crept closer to it hoping to get a good photograph; unfortunately we did not have a telephoto lens but could see the animal well through our glasses. In fact it was a thakin, and one of the rare varieties as it had a brown golden skin. There were about a thousand of these animals in the Laya-Lingshi region according to Tsering.

We then crossed the Zami Chu and came to a ruined Dzong and a few deserted houses. Evidently there had been a large village, which was abandoned when the inhabitants became ill and died. Although the height of this place, Tharizaj Thang, was 13,250 ft. we were bitten severely by mosquitos and were glad to leave and walk up the next pass, the Jari La (15,600 ft.). This also was a grass pass, the lowest depression in a long ridge each point of which had a prayer flag placed on it. On the far side a wide pleasant valley was dotted with yaks and ponies. Lower down we could see the black tents of some yak herders and the white tents of some horse herders. We descended quickly—it was raining again—and sheltered in the tent of a Tibetan refugee who owned about twenty yaks. The two King's hunters had been to Tibet several times both for trading and for pilgrimage before the border was sealed. They spoke Tibetan, so we could talk quite well to the yak man, his wife and daughters.

The refugees had fled from Tibet leaving behind a herd of some two hundred sheep, but bringing some yaks. They owned a house in the Lingshi region and lived there when not grazing their yaks. The few Tibetans that we met in Western Bhutan appeared to be as tall, but not so thickly built, as the Bhutanese, some of whom are of a really magnificent physique. In addition both Tibetan men and women tend to wear their hair long in plaits, whereas the Bhutanese men wear their

hair very short and the women either have an urchin cut, which is most attractive as they have the faces for this, or have long hair hanging in dark Chelsea strings.

Our tents were pitched in the pouring rain and the cooking fire was placed so that all the smoke blew into the tent. Even the hardiest of our entourage had to leave for fresh air occasionally. I was surprised to see this, most Himalayan hill people seeming to be quite impervious to wood smoke.

In a brief spell of sunshine next morning we saw a high peak which was almost certainly Chomolhari. This was confirmed by Tsering who knew the area well. One of my climbing boots was missing—presumably eaten by one of the Tibetan mastiffs which roamed the area after dark. Luckily it was an ancient one due for disposal.

Our next objective was Lingshi Dzong and for the first three or four miles of the walk we were in the sun. We descended and crossed the Zasey Pasa Chu, another tributary of the Zami Chu, and then walked up to the Goku La (14,500 ft.), a pass across the shoulder of a pleasant grass-covered peak.

After lunch a slight drizzle began and we soon descended abruptly. The grass was closely cropped and smooth and slippery. Jimmy, Pouba, Dorji and Tsering started to hurtle downhill taking very small steps. I followed and in a few minutes had slipped and my umbrella was cartwheeling at an ever increasing speed towards the next village. All four men accelerated after it and it was incredible to see the speed and ease with which they negotiated these treacherously slippery surfaces. I managed to get up a fair speed but could not hope to match theirs. We descended about a thousand feet in this breakneck fashion and I arrived with aching knees in a village, Lajlu (13,200 ft.), where I saw a cretin for the first and only time on our trip.

We arrived at Lingshi at 4.30 p.m. The Dzong is placed on a hill 350 ft. high and after tea we went up to have a look at it. It is in a fine commanding position. In the temple one of the Lamas was saying evening prayers and his deep bass voice and the occasional sound of the drum reverberated in an eerie way from the tower of the Dzong and the surrounding hills. This Dzong had withstood many a siege from the Tibetans who used, on the whole, to bypass it rather than attempt to capture it.

We said goodbye to our yak men there, taking mules for the remainder of our journey. After payment everyone settled down to a night of gambling and we woke every now and again to the slap of dice on the wooden floor.

Next day we walked up the Nheri La. As we ascended, the hills became very bare and scree-covered. We saw two pairs of eagles with yellow head and underparts, dark wings and tail, and a wing span of

over six feet. We crossed the Nheri La (16,000 ft.) at lunch time and descended into another wide valley dotted with many grazing yaks.

Just after 3 p.m. we stopped at a small village, Soe, which was about one mile from a lake formed by a moraine dam. We had been told that it was possible to travel from Soe to Paro in one day and this we proposed to do.

We set off at 5.15 a.m., the day was clear and we had fine views to the north and west of the peaks which we assumed belonged to the Chomolhari group. At 8 a.m. we arrived at an army checkpost where we made a fine breakfast of roasted rice, biscuits, tea and a lot of Bhutanese rum.

Fortified we were then ready for the next stage, a long gorge. As we descended the forest grew thicker and the path was wet and root-entangled. We had taken two soldiers as guides for this portion of the route—they were small, round, compact, hard men who obviously knew the path by heart. At one point they took a short cut which put us ahead of the main group. One of the soldiers stayed behind and the other broke off into a brisk trot. I followed him and we proceeded to race down the gorge. The only way I could possibly keep up was to stay about two yards behind him using the same rocks and roots as he used for stepping places. In this fashion, my eyes glued to the path, we trotted down. After three hours of continuous movement, the little trots uphill followed by agile jumps from stone to slippery root, I recall without pleasure, we suddenly joined the main trade route to the Tremo La. My tormentor stopped for five minutes and we were joined by the cook who was, as he said ,'going too fast, Sahib'. After another hour we trotted into the next village. It was then only one o'clock so I had some food and saw some sick people. After another hour the others turned up and I had my second lunch.

Then we set off again walking, now without our soldier guide but directly into a thunderstorm which moved at walking pace down the valley for the next two hours. The rivers rose at a furious rate and one bridge, which I crossed some way ahead of Fred, seemed most insecure. A few minutes after the main party crossed it this bridge was swept away.

About three and a half hours further down the valley I met a man with a basket. I passed him in a haze of water without a thought. A few minutes later he padded up to me and produced a thermos of tea, some of which I drank, and somewhat surprisingly a bottle of Heidsieck champagne. Whether due to stupidity or public spirit I left this for the others and set off again at a brisk walk.

As darkness fell, Pouba, who had been ghosting along some fifty yards behind me, directed me uphill to an army camp where a jeep was waiting for us. After three quarters of an hour Fred and the lieutenant

arrived, full of champagne. We had travelled for twelve hours and covered nearly forty miles since breakfast.

We learnt that the champagne was a gift from His Majesty, who later told us that it is a Bhutanese custom to greet returning travellers in this manner at the end of their last day's march. Indeed the kindness and hospitality that we received everywhere in Bhutan was a memorable feature of our visit there. We are particularly grateful to His Majesty for giving us this rare opportunity to travel in his beautiful and remote kingdom.

Notes

That portion of the Himalaya east of Sikkim and extending to Namcha Barwa is known collectively as the Assam Himalaya. This includes Bhutan and the North-east Frontier Agency. It would seem reasonable, however, to call the snow peaks in Bhutan, the Bhutan Himal.

From observations made during our journey it seemed that the snow peaks of the Bhutan Himal in which we travelled could be further sub-divided into several main groups: (1) the Chomolhari group; (2) the Lingshi group; (3) the Rodofu group; (4) the Kangla Ka Chu La group; (5) the Lunana group, and (6) the group south-west of Gaza.

We asked repeatedly in the Lunana region if a mountain called Khula Kangri existed.[1] Either we were nowhere near this mountain or else it is not called by this name, as nobody had ever heard of it. Occasional peaks were named and these are indexed below together with the group in which they are thought to lie. No doubt many peaks have more than one name and the same peak is called different names in different villages. In addition, the rendering of Bhutanese place names into English is obviously unreliable. Most of the place names in this paper are translated from Bhutanese sound into English spelling by Lt. Dorji who was remarkably fluent in English.

The height of Peak St. George and the passes crossed and the villages were read from an altimeter. Heights of other mountains are only approximate guesses.

(1) *Chomolhari group:*	Chomolhari Takaphu Kungphu	(Indian Survey)
(2) *Lingshi group:*	Kangchita	
	Masagang	
	Gyu Khan Tsulim Khan Tando Khan Tse-jah Khan Takha Khan Masa Khan	(S. Nakao)
(3) *Rodofu group:*	Aiguilles de Rodofu (including Peak St. George)	

(4) *Kangla Ka Chu La group:*	Kangla Ka Chu
(5) *Lunana group:*	Thasey Gang Kumnado group Zongo group Gangri Chin Zoe
(6) *Group south-west of Gaza:*	Gangbom

[1] See *A.J. 68.* 37, where the local name of Khula Kangri is said to be Kira Khari. A sketch-map, by S. Nakao, of the North-western Bhutan Himalaya is at p. 36 of the same volume. Michael Ward points out that neither Mr. Nakao's map nor his own should be accepted as correct, either in scale or in the direction of most of the ridges.—EDITOR.