The Everest Map

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In 1980 Bradford Washburn, who had just retired as Director of the Boston Museum of Science, wished to increase the accuracy of maps of the Everest region and finally obtained permission from the Chinese and Nepalese governments to overfly Everest at 13,000m. The aerial photographs on which the new maps are based were obtained in two overflights carried out in December 1984. The main purpose was to produce maps at 1:10,000 with 20m contours so that geologists and glaciologists would have a large-scale and detailed base from which to plot their field work, and the present 1:50,000 map with 40m contours is a development. In addition there is a sheet at 1:5000, 'Everest over 7000m', while one at 1:2500 of the N face is in preparation. The depiction of ground features, in the unsurpassed style of the *Landeskarte der Schweiz*, is masterly, attractive and accurate, and the whole is the result of extensive international co-operation between the Boston Museum of Science and the National Geographic Society who provided finance, West German photography from the US space shuttle Columbia in December 1983, the Swiss Federal Office of Topography in Berne and, of course, the Chinese and Nepalese governments.

Although it is now clear from Kempson's chapter on the local name of Everest in Ruttledge's book *Everest: The Unfinished Adventure* (1937) that the Tibetans had called the mountain Chomolungma from about AD 750–800 onwards, this was not known to the Survey of India. In 1856, at the suggestion of Waugh, the Surveyor General of India, the name Mount Everest was given to Peak XV, the world's highest, because there seemed to be no single well-defined name or native appellation for the mountain. (See *Proc RGS1*, 345, 1855–57.) Sir George Everest, Waugh's immediate predecessor, had been Superintendent of the Great Trigonometrical Survey.

Modern exploration and mapping of the Everest region began with the Survey of India and in particular the Pandit Hari Ram ('No9' or MH), who circumnavigated the mountain between 1868 and 1888. His observations are included in the Survey of India's maps of Nepal, where work was continued up to glacier level by native surveyors but not by Europeans, who were forbidden to enter the country.

The first detailed map of the N side of the mountain was made by Wheeler on the 1921 Reconnaissance, with additions in 1922, and by the Indian surveyor Hari Singh Thapa in 1924. The next advance was the 1:20,000 photogrammetric survey of the N face by Spender in 1935. Details of the southern, Nepalese, side remained scanty and inaccurate until a remarkably accurate 'running' map with an extremely limited circulation was drawn by

Milne of the Drawing Office of the Royal Geographical Society. Compiled between 1933 and 1947 from photographs taken on the 1933 'Flight over Everest' and possibly unofficial flights over Everest in 1945 and 1947, this was available to us on the 1951 Reconnaissance from Nepal, but was never mentioned in any books about this expedition.

These and other maps drawn by French and Austrian mapmakers (most noteworthy among them Erwin Schneider's 1:25,000 map of the southern approaches) were incorporated into the 1961 1:100,000 map by Holland of the Royal Geographical Society. This was revised and extended, with Chinese contributions, in 1975 and could fairly be said to be the first comprehensive map of the Everest region.

The present (1988) 1:50,000 map uses Pin-Yin names in China (Tibet); this has meant a change from Changtse or North Peak to Bei Peak, and the North Col is now the Bei ao, but names on the border are familiar. The map is a major contribution which will give pleasure to those who look at it, and instruction to those who use it.