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**(Kangchenjunga Massif) Das Massiv des Kangchendzonga (Himalaya) von Marcel Kurz  
Ingenieur-Topograph der Internat. Himalaya-Expedition (1930)**

**Stock#:** 85338  
**Map Maker:** Kurz  
**Date:** 1931  
**Place:** Bern  
**Color:** Color  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 31.5 x 47.5 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



**Description:**

***The Most Comprehensive Topographical Map of The Third Highest Peak in the World of Its Time.***

Fine large format map of a section of northern Sikkim and Himalayas centered on Kangchendzonga National Park, prepared by Marcel Kurz in 1930 and published in 1931.

This remarkable work is the most comprehensive topographical map of the region to date. Published in Bern, Switzerland, by Kümmerly & Frey, this work was of the highest importance for mountaineers exploring the region prior to World War II. The map was published to illustrate the "International



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Himalaya Expedition of 1930," in which Marcel Louis Kurz (1887-1967) was a Swiss surveyor, author, and mountaineer. As noted in his obituary in the Alpine Journal:

*In March 1930 he joined the Dyhrenfurth Expedition [International Himalaya Expedition] as an engineer-surveyor and climber to explore the Kangchenjunga region. His ambition was crowned when with members of the expedition [Hermann Horlin, Erwin Schneider, Frank Smythe, Ulrich Wieland, Tsering Norbu, Lewa and Guntar Oskar Dyhrenfurth] he reached the top of Jonsong Peak (7459 m), at the time the highest mountain that had ever been climbed. The result of his surveying work was a map of the Knagchnjunga Massif which formed an appendix to Dyrenfurth's Report.*

The party had intended to climb Mount Kangchenjunga but were forced to abandon the climb before reaching its summit. Following this expedition, Kurz created the present map, which was considered the definitive work in the region for a number of years. Kangchenjunga would finally be climbed in 1955.

Kurz's report on his 3 expeditions to the Himalayas, *Le Probleme Himalayen*, published in 1934, was the first comprehensive work on the exploration of the Himalayas at the time of its publication.

#### **Account of the Expedition**

The following is excerpted from Volume 3 of the *Himalayan Journal*, 1931.

*THE INTERNATIONAL HIMALAYAN EXPEDITION, 1930*

*PROF. G. O. DYHRENFURTH.*

*WAS IT successful, this expedition of ours ? Some people say, No ! for the newspapers proclaimed loudly at the beginning that we were out to conquer Kangchenjunga, and this ascent did not succeed. Therefore-a failure !*

*I am not responsible for what newspapers say ! As a matter of fact, I have always indicated that the ascent of Kangchenjunga was to be one task, the most important task, of our expedition. But we always intended to attack several other high peaks of the Kangchenjunga region, should that great mountain prove to be impossible. Briefly the results of our expedition are as follows :*

*Four peaks of over 7000 m., or 23,000 feet, have been climbed to their summits. These are Jonsong (24,473 feet), Nepal (23,470 feet), Dodang Nyima (23,623 feet), and Ramthang*



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*(23,311 feet). As far as I know, up to now nine or ten mountains over 23,000 feet have been climbed and four of these have been conquered by us.*

*The International Himalayan Expedition (or I.H.E., for short) also ascended five lower peaks, viz., one of 20,014 feet and one of 20,424 feet, above Pangperma ; the " Mouse " (20,539 feet) between Kangbachen and Ramthang peaks; a peak (alt. c. 21,350 feet) between Kellas' Saddle and Jonsong peak ; and the Kang peak (18,735 feet).*

*\* \* \**

*Everest and Kangchenjunga are from five to six thousand feet higher than all their surroundings. Viewed from any high point, these two giant massifs stand out like islands in a sea of lesser peaks. The most probable explanation seems to be the right one : They are actually islands of elevation-elevation that is so recent that it is still going on at the present time, though perhaps only an inch or two a year.*

*Mountains are levelled by atmospheric forces. In the Kangchenjunga region the forces of elevation have overcome those of decay. This is the explanation, not only of the great height of the mountain, but also of its form. The precipitous wall which everywhere blocks access to the higher parts shows very recent forms.*

*By means of that theory of elevation we can also explain another remarkable fact. The principal chain of the Himalaya, in spite of its height, is not a watershed ; the latter is formed by the much lower range to the north. The Indus and Brahmaputra break through the Great Himalaya in enormous gorges. In our own field of activity, the Arun and Teesta have their sources north of the great range and break through it in order to reach the Ganges. All these valleys cannot be explained merely by retrograde erosion and river capture. The theory of elevation gives a more satisfactory solution, namely, that these rivers flowed southward before the high chain was raised and they kept their courses open while the mountains were being built.*

*\* \* \**

*For topography we naturally relied on Garwood's map and the measurements of the Survey of India. Our own topographer, Ing. Marcel Kurz, revised and supplemented these by our own surveys, so that we are now able to publish a new and, we hope, a good map of the whole Kangchenjunga region from Darjeeling to the frontiers of Tibet, on a scale of 1 : 100,000. This*



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*map will be published with the official story of the expedition during 1931.*

\* \* \*

*I had always intended to attack Kangchenjunga, if possible, from the north-west, for from the accounts of Freshfield, Garwood and Kellas, this side seemed to offer the best chance of success. It was, however, necessary to obtain the permission of H. H. the Maharaja of Nepal, not only to enter his country, which is generally closed to Europeans, but also to be allowed to use it as a base. The permission that was granted was a very delightful beginning to our undertaking, but there is no doubt that, coming as it did on the very eve of our departure, our work was multiplied a hundredfold. We had already accustomed ourselves to the plan of advancing from the east, through Sikkim. We could then have sent on the baggage on animals to Lachen, beyond which place the distance through the valley of the Zemu to the eastern foot of the mountain is relatively short and without special difficulties. A hundred and fifty porters would then have been sufficient, and the relay system of transport between Lachen and a base camp had been worked out in detail. Tempting as the northwest front of Kangchenjunga was from a scientific and mountaineering point of view, we fully realized that the transport difficulties would be enormously increased by attacking it from that side, and more complicated than those of the Munich expedition of 1929. Actually we had to transport about 350 loads for a distance of eighteen very difficult marches over several high passes to the Base Camp, in addition to supplies for the porters themselves who were to carry the loads at least as far as Khunza, 15 marches from Darjeeling. After consulting Colonel Tobin, whom I should here like to thank for his extensive and painstaking work, a plan was drawn up by which the advance from Darjeeling to the Base Camp would be made in three separate groups ; Wood Johnson being the leader of the first group, Hannah of the second and Colonel Tobin himself of the third. Both Wood Johnson and I were against this division into three groups and only agreed when Colonel Tobin strongly advised it. I am, however, more than ever convinced now that many complications would have been avoided if we had moved forward with one big caravan. Having decided upon this division into three, it surely would have been best to allow an interval of ten or twelve days between the start of the first two groups and the third in order that the porters could return from Pangperma to Dzongri. For the benefit of future expeditions it seems necessary for me to point out frankly the mistakes we made.*

*On 7th April the first group started from Darjeeling, 10 Europeans and 220 porters. Dr. Eberl, taking advantage of his leave of absence, accompanied us to beyond the Kang La, and we were sorry when he had to return. Hannah and Wieland started one day later with 180 porters. The*



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*route from Darjeeling to Dzongri has often been described and is well known. Dzongri, at 13,124 feet, was reached in eight days.*

*The change from the warmth to the cold of regular winter was rather sudden. Dzongri hailed us with a violent snow-storm. This did not affect the Sherpas and Bhutias much ; but to bring up our small army of coolies within a few days to the necessary number, we had had to enlist Lepchas from the warm valleys of Sikkim, and at Dzongri they sat, wretched and shivering, and could not be persuaded, even by the good example of the others, to assist in pitching the tents. The next morning we had the first great porters' strike ; Wood Johnson took the greatest possible trouble and spent hours in trying to persuade the men to stay, but even he was unable to prevent forty from absconding. Forty important loads had to be left behind and we suffered from this mishap for weeks.*

*The next days brought the hard work of crossing the Kang La (16,454 feet). The spring of 1930 was unusually snowy, according to the experts ; the Kang La was still buried deeply beneath its winter snow. We had brought from Europe enough Alpine equipment for about seventy or eighty men, but certainly not for more than three hundred. Nevertheless the Kang La had to be forced ; the success of the whole expedition depended on it. On the Sikkim side our camp was pitched at 13,500 feet. At 14,000 feet the blanket of snow commenced. Although we had distributed 70 pairs of good Bavarian mountaineering shoes, there were still a few coolies left who had to go barefoot. Also we had only 240 pairs of snow-glasses. Nevertheless, we succeeded in traversing the pass in one day with our main body. This was due largely to Wood Johnson, who stayed with the rearguard, and, carrying a load himself, arrived late at night at the Nepal camp with the last of the porters.*

\* \* \*

*According to the plan we had decided upon, we had proposed to send back about 150 porters from Tseram to Dzongri. The baggage of the third party had been advanced as far as Yoksam on mules and from there by local porters to Dzongri. The complications which occurred at the Kang La naturally caused this fine programme to be abandoned, for we now had to send a strong contingent of men under Sirdar Lobsang back over the pass, to bring the loads of our own and Hannah's party, which had been left behind. Unfortunately, Colonel Tobin, with the best intention of helping us, had left Darjeeling too soon, five days after us. So at the time it was quite impossible to send men to help him. In Tseram there were neither local porters nor provisions to be had. The help promised by H. H. the Maharaja was not due till we reached*



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*Khunza, and after long conferences with a Nepalese Subadar and the people of Tseram, Wood Johnson and I judged that the only course open to us was to push forward to Khunza as quickly as possible.*

*We now had to traverse the ridge between the Yalung and the Kancchen valleys in a two-days' forced march. Four mountain passes between 13,600 and 15,000 feet had to be overcome ; the route was nothing but a snow-morass, compared with which the most abominable spring snow in the Alps is almost pleasant. We had ski with us, but of course only for the Europeans, and in order not to demoralize the porters, some of us had to go on foot. The snow-shoes proved a mixed blessing, for if one did break through the thin crust, it was most difficult to get one's legs out again. An old guide from the Vorarlberg once uttered the words: " Thigh-deep snow is passable! " Here we very often sank in as far as the chest and the track of our caravan was like a deep trench.*

*Our one compensation was the splendid view of the group of proud Janu and the Yamatari glacier on the morning of the second day, when we were on the ridge south-east of the Sinon La. But we were glad to leave these passes behind us and to descend to the richly-wooded valley of Khunza. We pitched our tents on a fine meadow in front of the village (11,089 feet). Since Freshfield's expedition no European had been here. We were received in a friendly way and all of us were in the best of spirits ; but we grew gloomy as soon as we touched on the supply and transport question. Although the headman had received orders to help us in every way, the stupid peasant at first assumed the role of passive resister. We were now fifteen days' march from Darjeeling and had provisions only for one day more. The subadar's energetic persuasion only procured absolute essentials for the porters. To secure a reserve supply for the next few weeks, the Gurkha descended to the next large village, some marches distant, while the subadar stayed on at Khunza. All the porters we could spare or get at Khunza were sent back to Tseram via the Sinon La and Mirgin La.*

*Freshfield records that his porters felt so happy when they reached Khunza that it was difficult to get them to start again. The same thing happened to us, and a well-earned day of rest at Khunza was marred by anxiety about provisions and by the passive resistance of the porters.*

*The march up the valley took us through burnt forests and later over a gigantic moraine and the tongue of the Janu glacier, which was buried beneath boulders, to Kangbachen, opposite the fearful 10,000- foot wall of Janu (25,294 feet). A short march to Ramthang had been planned for the next day. The pastures of Ramthang lie from one to one-and-a-half hours'*



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*march below the spot marked Ramthang on Garwood's map. In consequence of this mistake, camp was pushed forward too far, and many porters were benighted in bad weather. We were none too happy ourselves, for my wife had mountain-sickness and fell into a stream, while we all reached camp in a violent snow- squall.*

*On 26th April we reached our preliminary goal and pitched the Base Camp opposite the tremendous north-west face of Kangchenjunga, at a height of 16,569 feet, a little to the west of Pangperma.*

*That our hope of finding from here an easy or even a possible approach to the highest summit of Kangchenjunga was not realized is well known from Smythe's reports. After having examined the mountain from all sides I do not go as far as he does when he declares that Kangchenjunga will not be climbed in the present generation or by present-day methods. Kangchenjunga is certainly exceptionally difficult and dangerous, but I believe its ascent is possible. The best route seems to me to be through Sikkim and then by the north-east spur and the north ridge. In spite of the immense difficulties described by the Bavarian expedition one has at least the advantage on their route of moving on a convexity and thereby escaping to some extent the great danger from ice-avalanches.*

*This danger, the greatest which can threaten the Himalayan mountaineer, cannot be avoided on the Nepalese north route, however good the guiding. The route from the Kangchenjunga glacier is to every eye trained by alpinism the only one that can be pursued. After the first survey of it through trieder and telescope from Pangperma all the seven mountaineers of the I. H. E. agreed at once about it. Smythe himself found this route so obvious that he at first cheerfully exclaimed " How easy ! " I was never so optimistic myself, but I confess that I too, with all the others, was fully convinced that the ascent was possible. At the beginning we all underrated very much the danger of avalanches.*

*And so our plan was unanimous : Camp 1 was to be pitched at the upper end of the flat part of the Kangchenjunga glacier, and Camp 2 in the firn-basin under the north col, between the Twins and Kangchenjunga. From there the great ice-wall near the north end was to be made passable as close to the rock as stones falling from the north col would permit. We thought that three or four days would suffice for this. Camp 3 was to be laid out on the first terrace as an ice- cavern, whence the route to the north ridge would also be prepared by several days' work cutting steps and fixing ropes.*

*Alas ! It did not come to that! On 9th May when we seemed to have conquered the big ice-wall*



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*and Camp 3 was about to be prepared, a great mass of the hanging glacier above broke away and the ice- avalanche, so dramatically described by Smythe, who was an eyewitness of it from below, came down.*

*There our gallant Chettan met his death. No one can regret his death more than I do. He was a fine climber, perhaps the finest of all the " Tigers very keen and very reliable. To the members of the Himalayan and of the Alpine Clubs I need say no more. Unfortunately I must protest against the statement which has been made in some quarters that I was directly responsible for Chettan's death. If it is a question of responsibility, we must all share that responsibility ; for the north route was, as I have already mentioned, not merely the whim of the leader of the expedition alone, but had been decided upon by all the mountaineers of the I. H. E. I had been forced, unfortunately, by a bad cough and by difficulty of breathing at night, to go back to the Base Camp. I was therefore unable to influence the march of events at the ice-wall, and indeed it would have been the height of folly to send orders to such experienced mountaineers as Schneider, Hoerlin, Smythe and Wieland from Pangperma. It is ridiculous to speak of responsibility, as though someone had been guilty of a crime! War with these Himalayan giants entails hard and relentless fighting; the most careful leading can never guarantee that such fighting will cost no lives. Have not the Everest expeditions, which were prepared with the minutest care, also cost a number of lives ? Nobody dreams of holding the leaders of Everest expeditions responsible for the price. " C'est la guerre! " Kangchenjunga is only a little lower than Everest and certainly much more difficult and dangerous.*

*It is an interesting fact that even the porters would not hear of giving up the north route. The Memsahib was bombarded with petitions to persuade the Bara Sahib to continue the attack by the north route. But I could not agree to it; the responsibility for such a course seemed too heavy for me. I therefore decided on a second attempt by the north-west ridge, although I certainly agree with Smythe that this route never appeared very promising. But at least we were safe from avalanches and could be sure of good results, both topographic and photographic. I also felt, now that we were here, obliged to explore the whole north-west and west front of Kangchenjunga and to leave no shadow of doubt about it. For this reason I do not regret for one moment that I decided on this second attempt.*

\* \* \*

*The most evident success of our expedition was the ascent of Jonsong peak, for it is the highest summit conquered up to now. I am far from lessening in any way the heroic deeds of*



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*the Everest Expeditions ; but though on the second and third expeditions they climbed to altitudes a great deal higher than Jonsong peak, there was probably no summit reached. Actually six mountaineers of the I. H. E. reached the summit of Jongsong : three Germans, one Austrian, one Englishman and one Swiss.*

*If an expedition is to be successful the members must act as a team. There must be no personal ambition. After the passage of the Jonsong La, Kurz was busy with his survey ; Wieland was in need of a rest; and I was much occupied with organizing transport and communication with Lachen as well as with geological studies. The first party chosen for the ascent of Jonsong peak therefore comprised Hoerlin, Schneider, Smythe and Wood Johnson. With twenty porters they moved off to the southern Lhonak glacier to search for the best route to the summit.*

*As the route across the north-east face was possible but dangerous owing to ice-falls, the north ridge was selected. Here too I may refer to Smythe's account. The third and last high camp of this party was established at 21,300 feet, and from this point the final assault was carried out- six hundred feet of descent across a difficult ice-ridge, and then a climb of 3700 feet, the greater part of which was across difficult rocks which may be compared to the Matterhorn ridge.*

*Wood Johnson, who had been so perfectly fit at both Kangchenjunga and at the Jonsong La that he had made his first attempts to ski at the latter place, was unfortunately taken seriously ill during the ascent, and Smythe was forced to return to look after him. Victory therefore was won by Schneider and Hoerlin only. Five days later, however, on 8th June, we succeeded in making a second ascent of Jonsong peak. The second party originally comprised Kurz, Wieland and myself. At Jonsong Camp 1 (18,700 feet), where we met the first party, Smythe accepted my invitation to accompany us.*

*It was not merely for sport that this second ascent was made. It was necessary for scientific reasons that both a geologist and topographer should climb Jonsong peak. As a man of forty-four, I feel that I have a certain right to be proud of this success, the more so as on 6th June the situation was rather precarious. The weather on this day was very unfavourable and the porters, after a very cold and stormy night, were disinclined to go further. Smythe, who on this occasion did not wear the expedition boots-which he loves to laugh at-was afraid of frostbite and wanted to descend. Kurz also was inclined to give up the Jonsong peak and would have preferred to try Lhonak peak. Wieland remained neutral. It was I who declared that I would*



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*stay with the porters and continue the attack, and it was my optimism which fortunately turned the scales. Everybody stayed and we established Camp 3 (21,300 feet). After cutting a route down the ice-slope to the last glacier valley and making this passable for the porters, we established our fourth and last camp on the north col at 21,500 feet. The following day we undertook the final attack. Delayed by my geological investigations I reached the main summit (24,473 feet) at half-past four, much later than my friends, but I was tempted nevertheless to go over alone to the eastern summit. My descent with my orderly, Lewa, therefore took place by night during a bad storm. I am an old Alpinist and have been through many struggles. This experience on Jonsong peak was my hardest mountaineering feat. There were moments when I almost wondered whether I should get back.*

\* \* \*

**Detailed Condition:**

Fold toning.