

# ASIAN ALPINE E-NEWS

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Unknown unclimbed Damyon massif east face, southeast Tibet, viewed over Mekong

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Langtang Lirung 7227m, Nepal Himalaya

TOSHIO YOSHIDA

## New species of Blue Poppies from Bhutan

Blue Poppy, or *Meconopsis* in science, is a symbolic flower of the Himalayas and also the national flower of Bhutan. Recently four new species of *Meconopsis* have been found from Bhutan and described by the present author and other coauthors: *M. bhutanica* T. Yoshida & C. Grey-Wilson (2012), *M. elongata* T. Yoshida, R. Yangzom & D. G. Long (2016), *M. gakydiana* T. Yoshida, R. Yangzom & D. G. Long (2016), and *M. merakensis* T. Yoshida, R. Yangzom & D. G. Long (2016). The latter three species were collected in the collaborative field researches between Blue Poppy Society, Japan, and National Biodiversity Center, Bhutan.

*Meconopsis bhutanica* (Fig.1) is endemic to western Bhutan and occurs only in a limited area south of Mt. Chomolhari. The flower color is pale blue variously tinged with purple. This species had been wrongly included in *M. discigera* Taylor in the past. However, the latter, *M. discigera*, has pale-yellow flowers. This group (subgenus) of *Meconopsis* is characterized by the disc-like appendage covering top of the ovary.

*Meconopsis elongata* (Fig.2) is also endemic to western Bhutan, occurring in Haa and adjacent regions of Paro and Thimphu districts. The flower color is blue to purple with a reddish tint. The specific name derives from the elongate, whitish strings of vascular bundles protruded from the tip of filaments and also from the elongate narrow racemes. The picture of a stamp once issued by Bhutan Post with a name of *Meconopsis horridula* seems to be this species growing at Chelei La on the ridge between Haa and Paro districts.

*Meconopsis gakydiana* (Fig.3-5) occurs in eastern Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh of India, and southern Tibet. This species had been wrongly included in *M. grandis* Prain or its subsp. *orientalis* Grey-Wilson in the past. According to an official site of the National Tourism Organization of Bhutan ‘The national flower is the Blue Poppy (*Meconopsis grandis*). It is a delicate blue or purple tinged blossom with white filaments. It grows to a height of 1 meter, and is found above the tree line (3500-4500 meters) on rocky mountain terrain. It was discovered in 1933 by a British Botanist, George Sherriff, in a remote part of Sakteng in eastern Bhutan.’

The national flower written in the official site of NTOB with a name of *M. grandis* is now to be called *M. gakydiana*. The specific name derives from the Dzongkha word for

happiness, *gakyid*, to reflect Bhutan's important cultural aspiration of 'gross national happiness'. The most important origin of garden varieties of *Meconopsis* cultivated in English gardens and collectively called Himalayan Blue Poppies is said to be 'George Sherriff 600', which was collected by G. Sherriff in the Sakteng region, and now included in *M. gakyidiana*.

*Meconopsis merakensis* (Fig.6) occurs in eastern Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh of India. This species had been wrongly included in *M. prainiana* Kingdon-Ward in the past. The type variety of *M. merakensis* is endemic to eastern Bhutan and has blue-purple flowers, whereas the var. *albolutea* occurs in eastern Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh and has white or pale-yellow flowers. The specific name derives from the regional name, Merak, located in the easternmost Bhutan.

#### References:

- Yoshida T. & Grey-Wilson C. (2012). A new species of blue poppy. *The Plantsman* 11(2): 96-101.
- Yoshida T., Yangzom R. & Long D. G. (2016). A new species of *Meconopsis*. *The Plantsman* 15(3): 177-181.
- Yoshida T., Yangzom R. & Long D. G. (2016). Dancing butterflies of the east Himalayas – New *Meconopsis* species from east Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh and south Tibet. *Sibbaldia* 14: 69-96.

#### <Figure legends>

Fig. 1.

*Meconopsis bhutanica* at Tsho Phu, Paro district, W Bhutan, alt. 4400 m. Photo T. Yoshida, 3 July 2012.

Fig. 2.

*Meconopsis elongata* at Tsabjo La, Haa district, W Bhutan, alt. 4050 m. Photo T. Yoshida, 12 July 2015.

Fig. 3.

*Meconopsis gakyidiana* at Merak, E Bhutan, alt. 4,000 m. Photo T. Yoshida, 4 July 2014.

Fig. 4.

*Meconopsis gakyidiana* with dark-red flowers at Merak, E Bhutan, alt. 4,000 m. Photo T. Yoshida, 2 July 2014.

Fig. 5.

*Meconopsis gakyidiana* and yellow-flowered *M. paniculata* at Merak, E Bhutan, alt. 4,000 m. Photo T. Yoshida, 1 July 2014.

Fig. 6.

*Meconopsis merakensis* var. *merakensis* at Merak, E Bhutan, alt. 4350 m. Photo T. Yoshida, 3 July 2014.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



**Fig. 3**



**Fig. 4**



**Fig. 5**



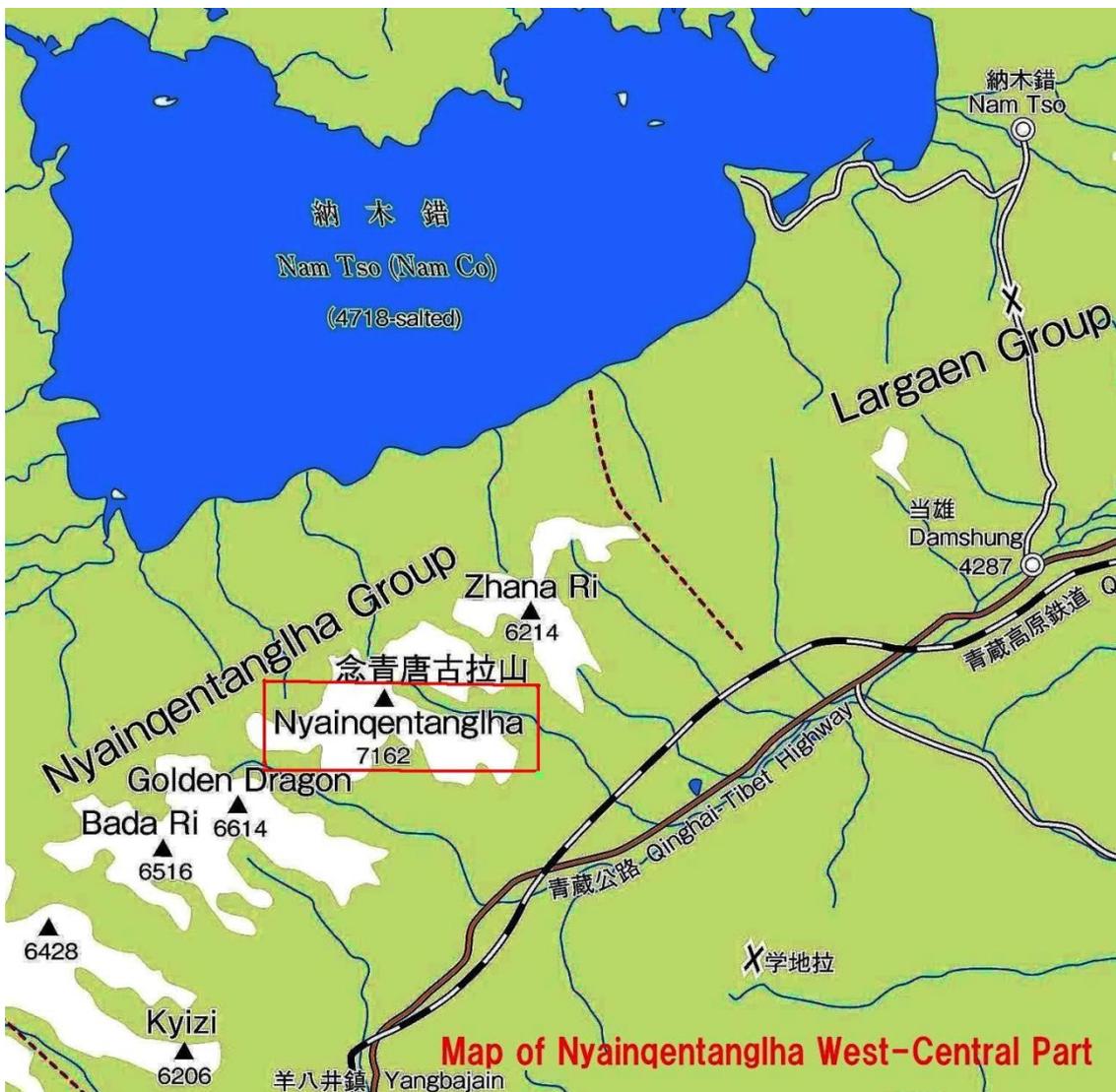
**Fig. 6**

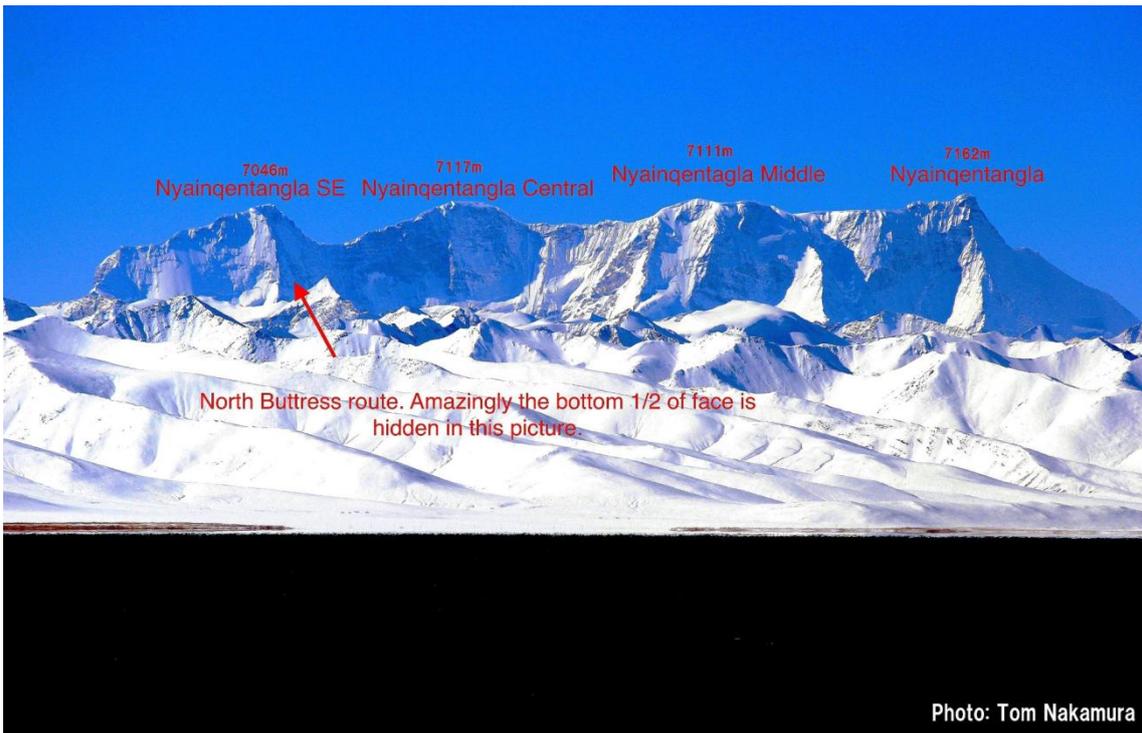
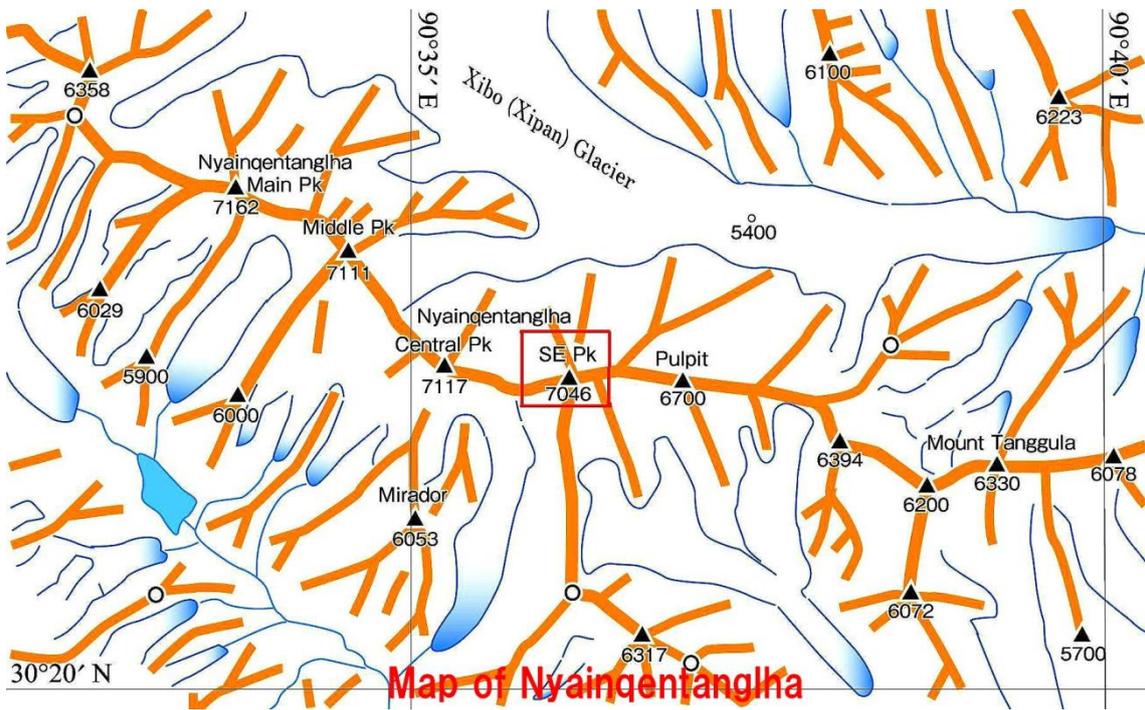
PAUL RAMSDEN

## Nyainqentangla SE Report –First ascent of north face

September-October 2016

While perusing the latest 'Japanese Alpine News' several years ago I was struck by a set of pictures of the four 7000m Nyainqentanglha peaks. Tom Nakamura's pictures taken from the northeast showed a large north wall falling away from the four summits. Nine months later myself and Nick Bullock arrived in Tibet.





Base camp was in a pretty location and despite the poor weather we decided to press on with some acclimatisation as you might as well sit around with a headache feeling sick as not when the weather is bad.



**North face of Nyainqentanglha SE 7046m (leftmost), Central Peak 7117m (centre)**

Our original plan had been to climb the north buttress of Nyainqentanglha's main summit, which looked just brilliant in Toms pictures. However as we walked below the face we realised there was a hidden monster. The lowest 7000m peak and first on the ridge, Nyainqentanglha South East had a recessed north face not really visible from anywhere other than directly below. As we edged into position the clouds cleared to reveal a huge north buttress that was just incredible. Our first attempt on the route is best forgotten about. We camped under the face, it dumped snow, the tent nearly blew away and we retreated. Lets just call it a gear carry to Advanced Base Camp!

Eventually conditions were deemed to be suitable, or as good as it was going to get so we set off for our second attempt.

Luckily the only two really nice days of the trip coincide with our walk back up and our first day on the face. It didn't last though! Once on the face we soon discovered that we weren't going to get any neve on this trip. The snow was deep, really deep and the only ice existed when things steepened up and the powder had sloughed off. That first day working our way up the lower slopes was really hard work, almost never ending post holing as we worked our way towards the planned first bivy ledge below the ever steepening rock bands above.



**Climbing route with bivouacs marked**

Unfortunately it only produced two semi reclining sitting ledges, grim! Open bivouacs in mediocre weather are best avoided, a bad night on your first night on the mountain is a really recipe for a retreat.

From our bivy ledge, things steeped up alarmingly. From below we thought this would be the crux of the route. A very steep rock band crossed the full width of the face, in most places it was too steep for ice but in the centre there was a thin veneer of white covering the rock.

We traversed diagonally up and rightwards aiming for some steep runnels and the elusive ice. Much of what had looked like ice from below turned out to be powder snow

stuck to the underside of overhangs and a thin delaminated snow crust on the vertical rock itself. Luckily a series of shallow runnels did hold some goodish ice.

Slowly we worked our way up some very absorbing pitches, occasionally hauling sacks. The climbing was excellent. Eventually the groove line ended and Nick was forced to climb a steep rock wall, fortunately beneath the snow veneer were a series of flakes that allowed for good if scary hooking, a fine lead.

Then we were through the rock band and looking for somewhere to camp. The following day we woke pretty exhausted. From this point we had two options, either follow the crest of the buttress or the more mixed ground on the right, however concerns about the avalanche potential on some of the snow fields and the feasibility of some of the rock bands meant that the crest of the buttress was clearly the best option.

Traversing leftwards we hit the crest and climbed an arête in a pretty wild position. We decided to make day three a short one and we stopped as soon as we could find another good spot. The ledge was better this time and the tent fitted on comfortably. In the evening we had great views of the adjacent Nam Tso Lake and could quite literally see the moisture being sucked off the surface ready to dump on us. The lake was so big the route felt a bit like a sea cliff!

Now we were following the crest of the buttress the setting was dramatic but as the route became less technical the snow just got deeper and deeper, which combined with the altitude made for some lung busting pitches.

The fourth camp was good but that night it started to dump snow and at 6700m you suddenly start to realise what a serious position you are in. Retreat down the line would be difficult due to a lack of ice making abolokov threads time consuming to find and we didn't have enough rack to abseil on rock anchors all the way. Upwards to the summit and hopefully down an easier ridge was the best option but all this snow could make that option hazardous for avalanches.

Dawn brought more snow and cloud. Post holing upwards we made the summit about midday. It was the second ascent of the peak and my first time over 7000m, we were both exhausted. There wasn't any view due to the clouds so after a quick selfe I was keen to get off down. We descended the east ridge until it terminated in a huge cliff at which point we would abseil down the north side on abolokov's before regaining the ridge again at a col. From here we descended into the valley to the north which amazingly the valley opened out onto grassy slopes just above the small hamlet where our Liaison officer was living with the village headman, perfect. Big celebration followed with many rounds of rancid salted yak butter teas. It turns the stomach but you get used to it!

## Supplements

We began the climb on the 2nd October, summited on the 6th October and got down on the 8th October. I don't think any climbers have been to the north side before. The climb itself was really good, 1600m of climbing and pretty steep in places. Nick likened the bottom half to the Colton Macintyre on the Grandes Jorasses, the top half was more of a Peuterey Arete. It was my first time to 7000m and much panting was involved. The weather in the region is particularly bad, probably due to the adjacent high altitude lake that makes sure there is always plenty of moisture in the air. I think it snowed, hailed, rained, the wind blew, then a bit of sunshine almost every day, though it was cloudy most days most of the time. I was particularly pleased with the latest version of my snow hammock (thanks Di for the excellent sewing), which basically allows you to pitch a tent almost anywhere there is snow. We slept flat most nights which was a massive improvement over previous trips. The route involved four bivies on the way up and two on the way down. We ended up descending into a different valley.

**Editor's note: Nyaiqentanglha SE 7046m**

**First Ascent by Japanese in 1995, Second Ascent by Austrian in 2002 and Third Ascent by British in 2016.**



**Snow hammock (latest version)**



**Nick Bullock and Paul Ramsden**

## Photo Gallery of Climbing



MICK FOWLER  
**Sersank - The Mick and Vic Reunion**  
**The first ascent in Pangi –West Lahaul**



**North face of Sersank showing the summit pyramid – Photo taken by Jim Lowther from Gupta Peak**

It was the British mountaineer Martin Moran who prompted our interest in Sersank. He led a trek across the Sersank La in 2011 and wrote that the north side presented a ‘tremendous north face of linked white spiders.’ Victor and I knew Martin well enough to read between the lines. We contacted him confirmed our suspicions and found our 2016 objective.

Vic and I had not climbed together since we did the Golden Pillar of Spantik in Pakistan in 1987. Over the intervening years we had a boxing match in a seedy East London pub and intermittently kept in touch but essentially we went our separate ways; Victor became a mountain guide based in Chamonix and I stayed with my tax office job in England. And then, in 2015, a joint selection of our memoirs was published in France, a

literary award was won and talk of a fresh trip together was born. And so it ended up that Vic and I, at 66 and 60, were back together in the mountains - 29 years after our Spantik experience.



Himalayan trips have changed a lot in 29 years. Back in the 1980s we freighted gas cartridges, spent hours in customs sheds, negotiated with porters and generally did everything ourselves. Now though gas cartridges can be bought in India, bigger baggage allowances to Delhi mean there is no need to freight kit and a plethora of in-country agents means that mountaineers can lay back and let others take the strain. We embraced the new world. Simplicity is all. With logistics all arranged through Kaushal, our ever reliable agent in Manali, our first job was a quick drop in to the Indian Mountaineering Foundation in Delhi and meet up with our Liaison Officer, Sanju. An air conditioned 16 hour Volvo bus ride to the honeymoon town of Manali followed. Here we met Kaushal and Devraj our cook before boarding a mean vehicle called a Force Traveller to cross the Rhotang Pass into the heart of the Himalaya. 12 hours or so from Manali we arrived in the delightful Sural valley where, in line with so many of the valleys hereabouts, the road head has now been extended to the last village, Sural Butori.

From here mules were hired (and never turned up) porters were engaged and after a halting two days of slow walk and negotiation base camp was established in sight of the Sersank La pass and at an altitude of about 4,400m. And then, after a day of rest and sorting, two days of getting us and our heavy sacks up the energy sapping scree to the Sersank La and a further day of descending the far side, Victor and I were able to lie in our little tent acclimatising and peering at the face we had come to climb.

Our initial plan of accessing the face via a very steep runnel was soon dismissed as too exposed to anything falling down the face. But like minds spied a single safe line accessing the face via a buttress to the left. It would add a few hundred metres to the climbing and no doubt increase the time we would spend on the climb but the fact that we both homed in on it was refreshing. Like minded thinking in the mountains is important and we had both wondered whether we would still feel the same way after so many years apart. Our personalities have always been very different but by the time we were settled into our acclimatisation routine the banter was flowing as freely as it did in the 80s (albeit with old man subject matter) and our mountain judgement looked as if it was in tune too. Already we were agreeing that it was great to be back in the mountains together.

Before climbing though we had to re-cross the Sersank La, drop down to base camp, sort ourselves out, fill our stomachs and then re-cross again to the foot of the face. I could see

that I was going to get quite weary of the steep, energy sapping scree of the pass. By the time we were at the foot of the face I had been reminded of Victor's wiry strength and enviable ability to plod through deep snow and carry huge loads at great speed. I had hoped that my fell racing efforts might have levelled us out in this respect but that appeared not to be the case.

The buttress was steep with powdery snow stuck to all but the very steepest rock. What looked to be straightforward from a distance was terribly precarious and painfully slow involving clearing perhaps 15cm of snow, hooking crampon points over rugosities in the rock and teetering upwards. It was not until early on our second day that the ground changed as we reached the knife edge crest of the buttress. The pitch that Victor led to get us to this point was a heroic performance that left me in no doubt that years of commercial expeditions have not dented the Saunders ability.

The way forward now was to traverse the sharp crest towards the face. It wasn't the kind of ground that was conducive to abseiling and if we should fail higher on the face it was clear that we would have to reverse these pitches followed by a climb back over the Sersank La. That would be horrendous. I very much hoped we were good enough to get up. 'My stomach is not feeling too good' It was at the end of our second day on the face. By the end of day 3, as we were being buffeted by spindrift in our precariously positioned tent, it was clear that it had worsened. 'Got to get out' came urgently from the far end. Being of slight build and with minimal blubber Victor likes to wear a lot of clothes both in his sleeping bag and whilst climbing. We were testing various items of Berghaus clothing and Victor was wearing them all together. This meant that he was wearing five layers and a harness.

For the rest of the night we lay with our own thoughts. The accumulation of spindrift was pushing the tent off the ledge but Vic's predicament was a more serious problem for us both. Four days out from base camp and three days into the face it was not the best position to have this kind of difficulty. Come the morning there was no improvement but Victor was irrepressibly positive. 'Looks to be wonderful climbing' he enthused staring up at the ice streaks above.

The conditions on this upper part of the face were indeed much better than lower down. It felt as if every pitch looked uncertain to begin with but turned out to be just about within our limits. Progress was slow but steady. On this difficult ground it was

interesting to note that I readily recognized Victor's distinctive way of moving from 29 years before. He too commented that he instantly recalled my habit of resting my head against the slope when tired. A fantastic day ended with us at a little snow crest where we were able to cut two small sleeping ledges, one above the other. Victor was still not feeling well. I think perhaps it is the dehydrated food' he announced leaving most of his portion.

This was unfortunate as, aside from boiled sweets, we didn't have anything else to eat. It also struck me that Victor had told me that his usual weight is 59Kg (compared to my 70Kg) and our pre climb blubber comparison had suggested that I had more reserves. As I boosted my calorific intake by polishing off his food I couldn't help but wonder how Victor could survive on so little. 'Not a problem' he assured me. 'It's probably that I'm allergic to the evening meals. The porridge for breakfast will stay down.' Whatever the situation we were high on the face and it was clear that finishing the climb and descending the far side would be considerably easier than retreating and re-crossing the Sersank La.

The porridge only partially stayed down and day 5 on the face proved both challenging and memorably fine. By the time we had solved the difficulties of the headwall and had the cornice in sight the Saunders body was surging forward. Where he found the energy from I do not know. Despite numerous trouser dropping stops not once did he complain about a situation that would have ended the climb for lesser beings. At the age of 66 he is a truly remarkable man. The cornice provided an acrobatic finale before, at 18.30 on our fifth day, we flopped out to a new panorama and the relatively amenable slopes of the south west side of the mountain.

The summit pyramid itself had not been climbed. In 2008 a team of Japanese climbers and high altitude porters had reached its foot via the glacier systems to the south west but they did not proceed further as local people had apparently asked them to leave the summit untouched. Knowing this beforehand we had quizzed locals at Sural Batori who assured us that they had no objection to us climbing to the highest point.

From the side we approached the pyramid it was not particularly difficult and by 12.30 on our seventh day out from base camp we stood on the top and built a little cairn to mark our passing. The panorama of the Kishtwar, Pangi valley and Lahaul peaks was inspirational. Every time I stand on a summit in this area I seem to see exciting new

objectives. It was a first for Victor in this area and he was like a playful puppy faced with an array of new chews. It was left just to descend the glacier systems of the south west side. Martin Moran had suggested the descent would be easy. Let's just say on that front he was wrong. After a day and a half of complex glacier travel, including several forced abseils through icefalls, we eventually escaped onto rocky ground and descended to a welcome tea and nibbles meeting with Sanju and Devraj.

Back home Victor wrote; "On return to base there was pleasant recovery haze as we ate our first real cooked food for nine days; dozed in comfort on flat ground without being tied into the mountain; and generally enjoyed the warmth of the lower altitude. Mick was content to lie in his tent in a bubble of happiness; having ticked the adventure climbing boxes: new route, sizeable length, sufficiently challenging, previously unclimbed summit and descent by a different route. Meanwhile I was in my own bubble, happy to have discovered that the old friendship was still intact.'

All we have to do now is agree a follow up re-union climb. There's a lot to be said for them.



(left) Victor Saunders, (right) Mick Fowler on the summit



Victor meets dinner at BC

# LAHAUL-CHAMBA

(from "Indian Himalaya" JAC Tokai Section)



# Pangi Valley & Western Lahaul

Sersank  
Aka Shiv Shankar



## Photo Gallery of Climb & Descent



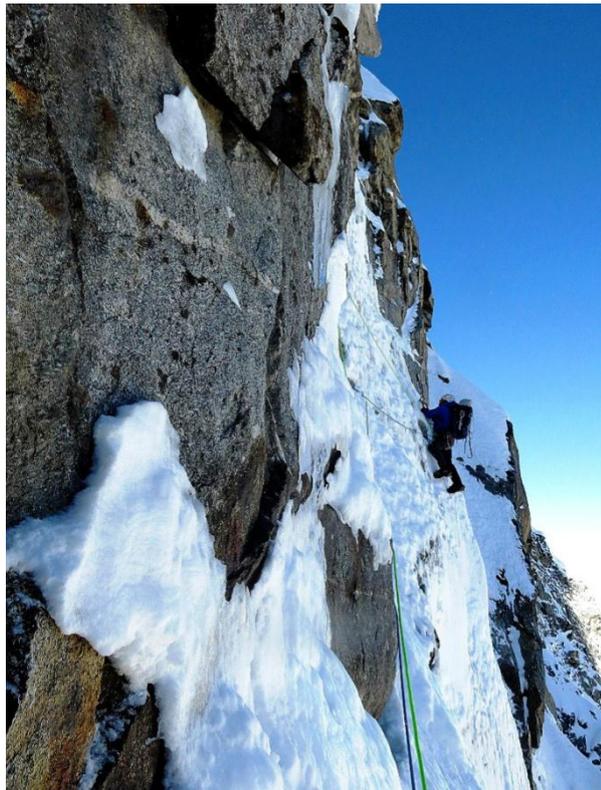
Start of Day 4, crest of Day 3 below



Pitch one on Day 5



About to leave 4th bivouac on the face



Mick Fowler on pitch 3, Day 5



**Victor Saunders on complex glacier descent – Day 8**



**Descent route with bivouacs marked**

MATIJA JOST – MATIC  
**Haptal Mountains 2016 Slovenian Expedition**  
**Exploration of RANGTIK TOKPO, SHIMLNIG TOKPO, DENYAI TOKPO**  
**Alpine climbing potentials in Zanskar**

In summer 2016 Anastasija Davidova – Nastja and I (Matija Jošt – Matic) (with the support of Alpine Association of Slovenia) spent some nice time exploring and trekking in the Haptal mountains massif. Idea to travel back to beautiful Zanskar arises in 2015 when we spent nice time in Raru Mountains and Tetleh Nala. At that time we realize that mountain area southwest of the Doda river (also refer as Stod river) is very rarely visited by mountaineers and may be hiding some nice alpine climbing potentials. From mid July to beginning of September 2016 we visit Rangtik Tokpo, Shimling Tokpo and Denyai Tokpo.

Main Doda river valley (Zanskar valley) running from Darung-Drung glacier near Pensi La to southeast direction towards Padum where after confluence with Tsarap river they form Zanskar river, a tributary of the Indus river. Along the river is main Kargil – Padum road with passes villages of Akshow, Abran, Kushol, Phey, Tungri. Southwest of the Doda river is Great Himalayan range, there are many valleys originate from it and converge to Zanskar. Some of them are (from north to south): Haskira Tokpo, Kange Tokpo, Hangshu Nala, Panding Tokpo, Bakarsei Tokpo, Denyai Tokpo, Mulung Tokpo, Shimling Tokpo, Rangtik Tokpo, Haptal Tokpo, Chhogo Tokpo, Gompe Tokpo. All this valleys are surrounded by many mostly unclimbed peaks. The altitude of the peaks vary from 5200 m to 6400 m. Local Ladakhi people (and early explorers) uses some of the valleys for connection with Kisthwar in the south. Main “trekking” passes are: Muni La at the head of Haptal Tokpo, Umasi La at the head of Mulung Tokpo and Hagshu La at the head of Hangshu Nala. Most “popular” for climbing is Hangshu Nala with famous and beautiful peak Hagshu (6515 m). All the other valleys get very little or no attention from climbers, but popularity of the area is increasing in recent years.

In 2009 Spanish climber Sergi Ricart who spent several months in Ladakh and Zanskar also visit the Haptal area and report in AAJ. At that time he visited Rangtik Tokpo and Kange Tokpo.

From 2009 to 2016 Japanese senior expedition leader Kimikazu Sakamoto explore in the area with different expeditions. He report about their activity and also made some

mapping of the area and identification of many peaks. They explore Gompe Tokpo, Haptal Tokpo and Mulung Tokpo if I mention only valleys in the vicinity of Ragtik, Shimling and Denyai valleys. He produced "Outline of Mulung Tokpo - Haptal Tokpo" in 2012 and marked some peaks with M1, M2 ect. for peaks in Mulung Tokpo and H1, H2, ect. for peaks in Haptal Tokpo. After revision in 2016 he changed some markings. For example M14 became after revision M26, but it is the same peak P6135 m in Denyai Tokpo.

With cooperation of local agency Skitpo Travel (<http://www.skitpotravel.com/>) we first visit Rangtik Tokpo, where we spent some 20 days climbing and exploring. Skitpo Travel employs local people mostly from Tungri village and they provide us really with excellent service and very nice cultural experience as we were introduced well to their traditional way of life. First we made acclimatization climb on south slopes of Remalaye (H5, 6278 m) and we reached prominent point on west ridge of the mountain (Remalaye west, GPS: 6266 m, 33°28'50" North, 76°43'33" East). It was obvious that main summit is higher and also some ridge gendarmes leading to the main summit looked higher than our standing point. After this weather turn to very unstable with mostly more than one shower per day. We made some attempts on Phobrang and P6193 m (aka H8). Every time we were forced to retreat quite low from their faces. Despite not so good weather we managed to climb route "Rolling Stones" to the summit of Shawa Kangri. First ascent of peak was made 16<sup>th</sup> August 2008 by Spanish climbers Luc Pellissa and Sergi Ricart via approximately 500 m high route "Rolling Stones" and they graded it D+, ice 65°, rock UIAA V+. They also named peak itself. The summit block looks like horn so they named it Shawa (Shawa means horn in Ladakhi language). Climbing was on nice ice and very good quality rock. It took us 8 hours roundtrip from our BC (GPS: 33°28'30" North, 76°45'13 East, 4926 m) to repeat this real nice alpine route. At summit we did GPS reading so the coordinates of Shawa Kangri are: 5728 m, 33°27'46 North, 76°44'07" East.

Because no improvement in weather we evacuated our BC and went for trekking. We started up the Shimling Tokpo, trekked almost to the very head of Shimling glacier, then turned back and passed 5638 m col to Mulung Tokpo and ended our trek at Zunkul Gompa. Shimling Tokpo is very unspoiled and we see no trace of human in the upper part of the valley. There is no record of mountaineering activity on the mountains surrounding this valley.

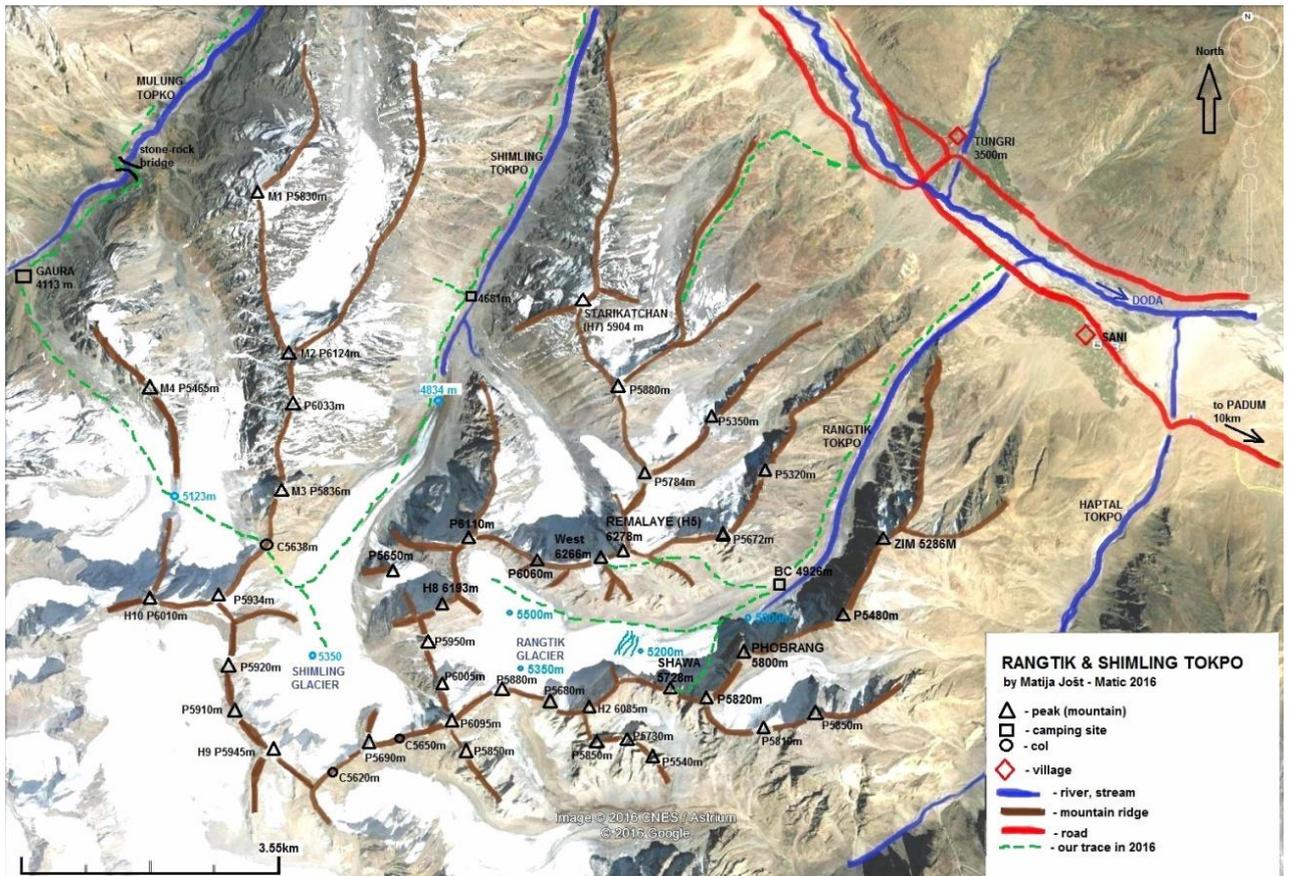
After some days in Tungri village we did also trek to Denyai Tokpo. We started our trek up the valley in Denyai village. During two days we visited head of the Denyai glacier and returned back to Denyai village. I think all peaks we see in Denyai are unclimbed and unnamed but they provided great potential for alpine style ascents of all sorts and of all grades. We found very little trace of human passage. Local people graze their animals in lower part of the valley, but upper part of the valley is very unspoiled.

In first days of September weather improves and we hiked again in Rangtik Tokpo. We made strong attempt on P6193 m (aka H8). We climb to small col (between P6110 m and P6193 m) from the east and then move to icy north flanks but we stop at some 6100 m and returned safe back down to our high camp at Rangtik glacier.

Unspoiled fragile nature, friendly people of Zanskar, heritage of Tibetan Buddhism and of course great mountains to climb is main attributes to visit the area. There is plenty of room for pristine alpinism as its best. Dimensions of mountains are more like Alps than the Himalaya, just with higher altitudes. Every expedition is pollution somehow. One of possible ways to minimize the pollution is to operate in small teams with modest comfort. We must try to climb clean and leave mountains as nice as we find them.



**Foto: Matija Jost-Matic**



View of Rangtik and Shimling mountains from north-east from slopes above Tungri village. V is Zim (5286 m), L is P5480 m, F is Phobrang (5800 m), M is P5820 m, G is Shawa Kangri (GPS: 5728 m, 33°27'46 North, 76°44'07" East), H is P6085 m (aka H2), E is Remalaye (H5, 6278 m), A is P6193 m (aka H8), B is P6110 m, S is P5880 m, P is Starikatchan (aka H7, 5904 m) and R is P6124 m (aka M2).



Base camp site in Rangtik Tokpo (GPS: 33°28'30" North, 76°45'13 East, 4926 m) and mountains on the south side of Rangtik glacier. F is Phobrang (5800 m), G is Shawa Kangri (GPS: 5728 m, 33°27'46 North, 76°44'07" East), H is P6085 m (aka H2), I is P5680 m, J is P6095 m and K is P6005 m. Route of first ascent of Shawa Kangri is marked in red. First ascent of peak was made 16<sup>th</sup> August 2008 by Spanish climbers Luc Pellissa and Sergi Ricart. They named their approximately 500 m high route "Rolling Stones" and graded it D+, ice 65°, rock UIAA V+. They also named peak itself. The summit block looks like horn so they named it Shawa (Shawa means horn in Ladakhi language).



Mountains on the south and west side of Rangtik glacier as seen from upper Rangtik Glacier. G is Shawa Kangri (GPS: 33°27'46 North, 76°44'07" East, 5728 m), H is P6085 m (aka H2), I is P5680 m, O is P5850 m, J is P6095 m, K is P6005 m, N is P5950 m and A is P6193 m (aka H8).



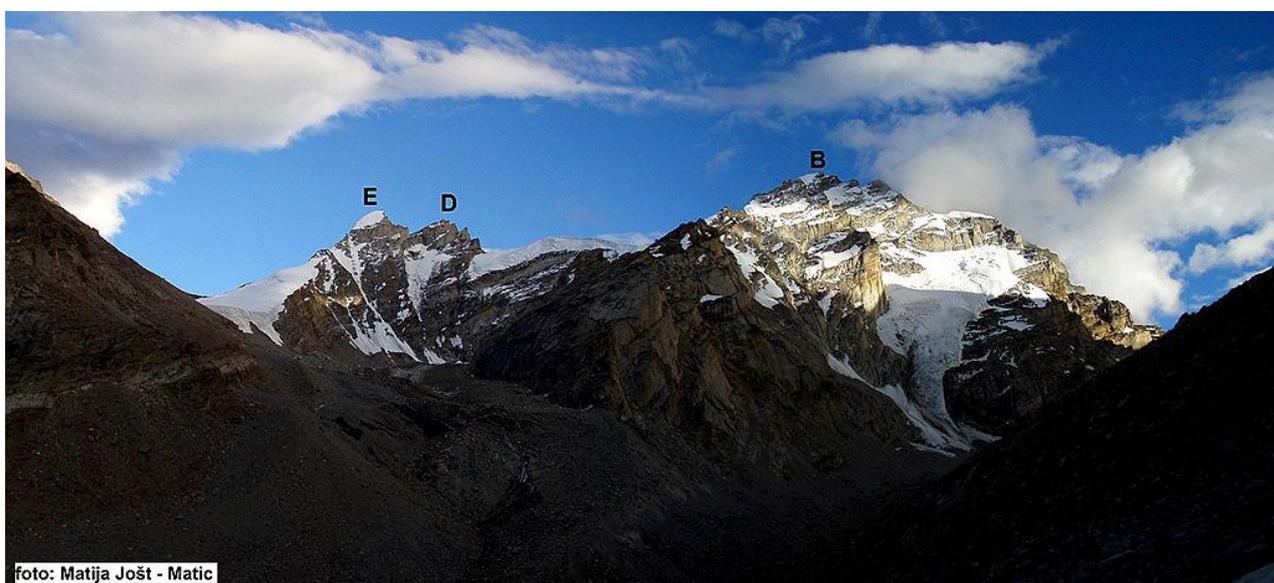
Mountains on the west and north side of Rangtik glacier as seen from Shawa Kangri summit. A is P6193 m (aka H8), B is P6110 m, C is P6060 m, D is Remalaye west (GPS: 33°28'50" North, 76°43'33" East, 6266 m), E is Remalaye main (aka H5, 6278 m). Red line indicates line of first ascent via south slopes by Anastasija Davidova - Nastja and Matija Jošt - Matic in 2016.



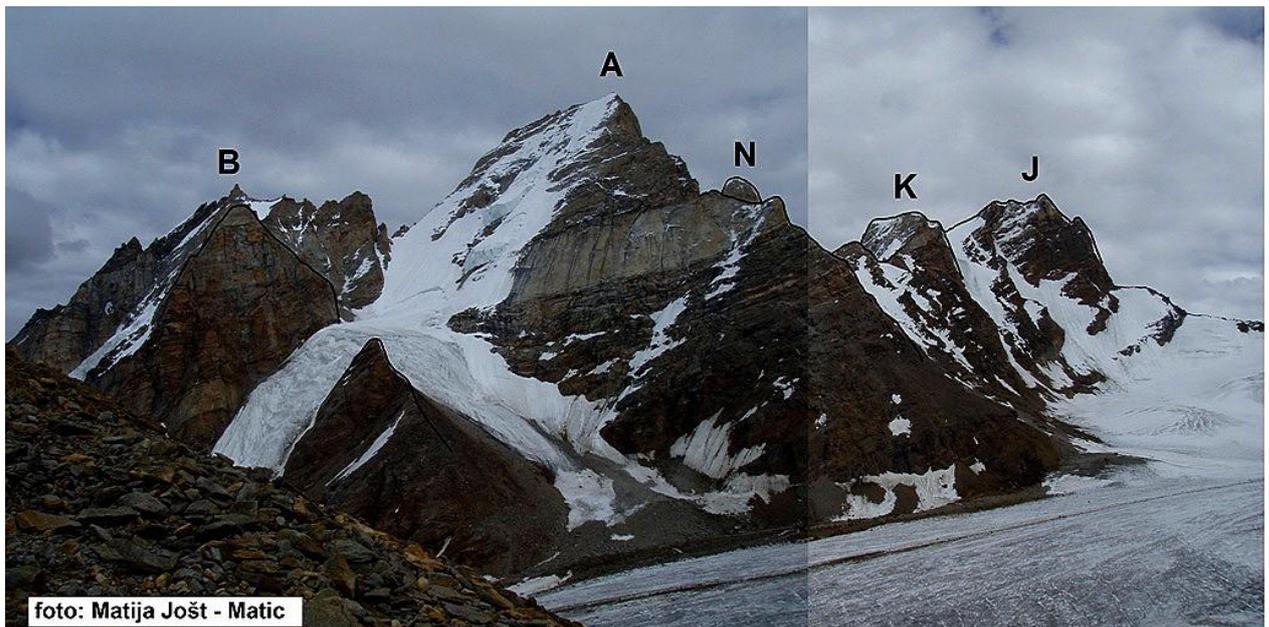
East face (in shadow) and southeast face of P6193 m (aka H8) marked with A as seen from the summit of Ramalaye west. N is P5950 m and B is western part of P6110 m



East face of Starikatchan (H7, 5904 m), highest point of the mountain is marked with P. Photo was taken from ridge just east of the mountain (GPS: 5227 m, 33°30'40" North, 76°44'25" East).



E is Remalaye main (H5, 6278 m), D is Remalaye west (GPS: 33°28'50" North, 76°43'33" East, 6266 m), B is P6110 m. Photo showing west and north slopes of the peaks. Photo is taken from viewpoint above campsite in lower Shimling Tokpo.



Panoramic view of the peaks on the east side of the upper Shimling glacier showing their west and north slopes. B is P6110 m, A is P6193 m (aka H8), N is P5950 m, K is P6005 m, J is P6095 m. Photo was taken from the pass connecting Shimling Tokpo with Mulung Tokpo (GPS: 33°28'58" North, 76°40'32" East, 5638 m). On the far right of the photo is col C5650 m.



Panoramic view towards east from the viewpoint at glacier junction in Mulung Tokpo (GPS: 33°29'25" North, 76°39'42" East, 5123 m). R is P6124 (aka M2), T is P6033 m, U is P5836 (aka M3) and A is P6193 m (aka H8). Just in front and right of P6193 m on very right edge of the photo is pass connecting Shimling Tokpo with Mulung Tokpo (GPS: 33°28'58" North, 76°40'32" East, 5638 m).



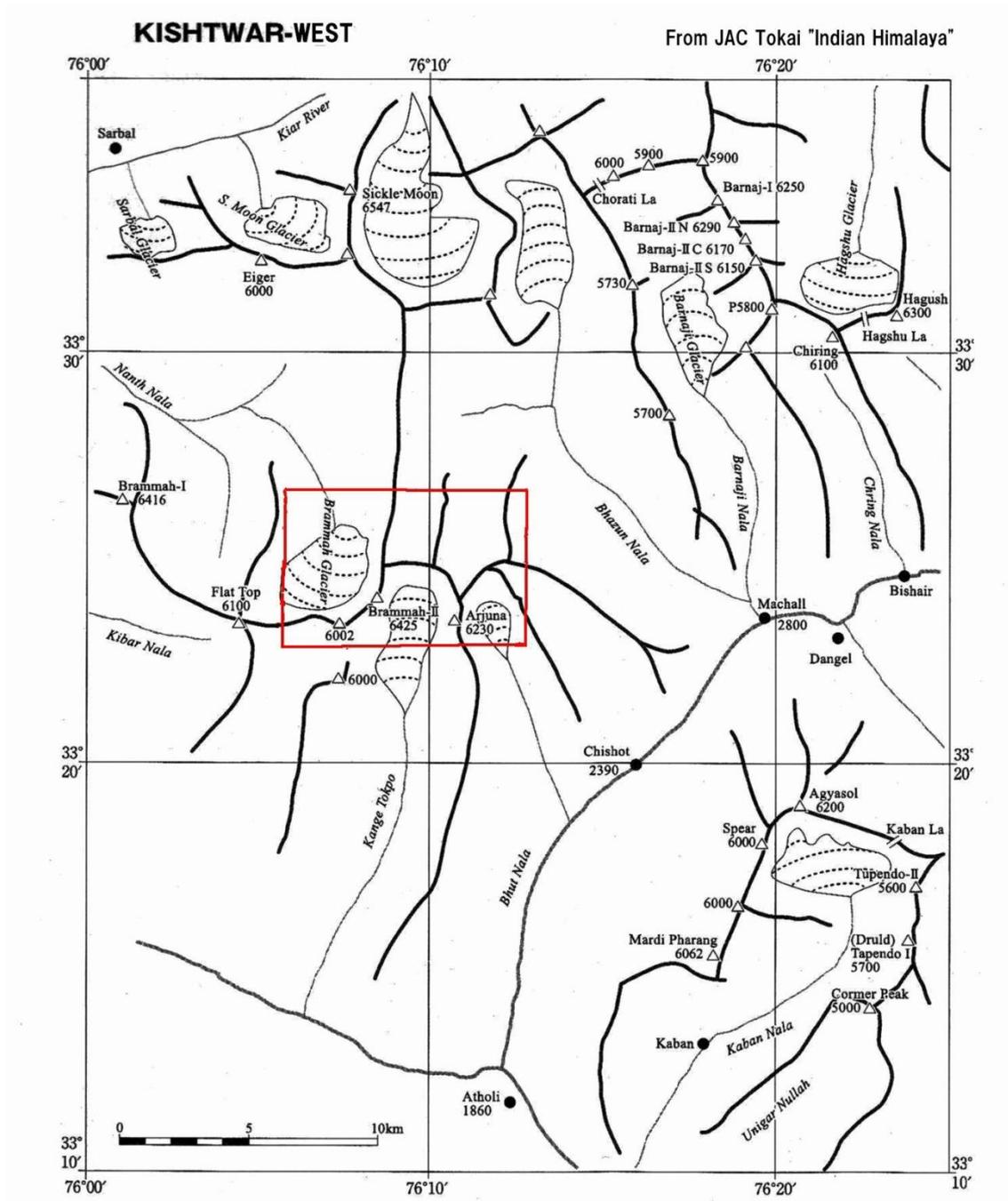


Mountains on the thru left side of upper Denyai glacier. G is P6095 m, H is P5999 m, I is P5920 m, K is P5890 m, R is P5520 m, L is P5883 m and M is P6135 m (aka M14 or revisted M2)

JEFF SHAPIRO

## First ascent of the South Face of Brammah II (6486m)

*Pneuma* (VI AI4, M5, 1300m) – Kishtwar, India



Early in 2016, I was reminiscing over images from the last expedition with my good friend and regular climbing partner, Chris Gibisch. It had been too long since our

experience in Western China's Daxue Shan Range and the trip down memory lane ended with me picking up the phone to point out to Chris; “.....I think it's time to go somewhere.”



Being the “up for anything” alpinist that he is, Chris was easy to convince. Only issue was....where? We have always been most drawn toward objectives that require exploration and an emphasis on adventure. Reports indicated that adventure was easy to find in Northern India so, after seeing the stunning imagery from lines completed the previous year by friends, it seemed to us that this was a good region to “have a look”.



Northern India's Kishtwar National Park has been mostly “off limits” to foreigners since the early 1980's. After we “flew” the area on Google Earth, iconic and pyramidal peaks throughout the range, clearly showing potential, provided all the psyche needed. The rudimentary imagery Google provided hinted at steep rock and ice faces throughout the Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh Himalaya. Further research revealed that not only did many of these peaks remain unclimbed.... some of the most attractive faces hadn't even been photographed! This was indeed where we wanted to go.

So, in Early October, with the support from the Mugs Stump Award and the Copp Dash Inspiration award, Chris and I boarded a plane...but with mixed emotions following the aftermath of losing two brothers from our mountain community 5 days prior. When Scott (Adamson) and Kyle (Dempster) disappeared, it shook us to our core. We knew we had to go – to continue on our path - but, the serious nature of the Himalaya had us introspective about the decisions we make - how it effects our friends and family – how it effects our lives relative to growth and perspective. The result for us was that we left without any real expectations. We'd simply “go”. No photos existed of the South face of Brammah II so, we'd simply have to take it one step at a time and maintain a “see what we find” attitude.



The long, 3 day drive began after typical pre-expedition formalities at the IMF, deep in the chaos of Delhi. Once past the mountain town of Manali, we continued to the Buddhist village of Udaipur through the mighty Himachal Pradesh, followed by another full day to Galabgarh on one of the wildest roads either of us had ever experienced. Drops of 1500' straight to the river below had us laughing out loud when the tires of the Jeep came within 6 inches of “the fast way down”. Being a passionate BASE jumper, I remember thinking that much of the road would have been a very nice “exit”.



Our expedition began with the task of getting our massive pile of gear, 12 porters and the two of us, along with our Government appointed Liaison Officer, across the cable trolley that bridged the Chenab River.

It would be three more days of hiking big loads through heat that had me question whether we were actually ascending into the high Himalaya.

The Kijai Nala is notorious for difficult travel but, we found the locals and goat trails to be reasonable and beautiful although, we were informed by a local herdsman during the

second morning of our approach that a leopard had killed one of his prized cows only a hundred meters above our camp. Still, the occasional snake, monkeys and even a flying squirrel made for good company as we made progress up the steep Nala toward mountains we travelled from the other side of the world to find..... but still could not see.



On the third day, we had to cross a bridge that pushed the limits of what our porters felt was within their pay grade. The final result was our gear, not much past the bridge, laid to rest in a spot that would have to do as our Base Camp.

Even though it was miles away and, thousands of feet below where we were hoping to set up, it was hard to be anything but psyched! Big smiles and waves of encouragement from the Nepali crew left us alone with the two Indian friends that would stay with us at camp to support our expedition. It was simply time to “get to work”.



Over the next two weeks, we slowly unlocked the mysteries of the approach. Weather was a bit “too perfect” with temps well into the 80's, and the mountains spoke loudly and often. Spontaneous rock fall, collapsing seracs and the absence of ice on the lower half of Arjuna all helped us to narrow our focus toward an acceptable objective. Racked up for a “fast and light” mixed rock and ice route, (in other words, not having the gear or time for a big wall route), the unclimbed South face of Brammah II seemed like the best fit. Starting just above 17,000', the 4300' wall that made up the technical part of the Southern aspect seemed to have most of the elements we were hoping for. We just had to find our way to the base, a prospect that was not as straight forward as a simple hike to the wall.

It took 2 full days and involved a “run for our lives” under an overhanging serac band that, like us, spent the warm afternoons sweating until collapse. But, when we did eventually reach the hanging glacial at 17k to get our first view of the South Face, we were psyched to see a few options that not only looked logical, but fun, big and adventurous. As the afternoon heat built, the clouds did as well and the mountain again came alive. One of the most attractive lines was repeatedly scoured by numerous rock and ice avalanches which, narrowed our choices and increased our conviction to start early.



The first morning, we simul-climbed 1000' in the dark while the sky was continually strobed by lightning flashes from a distant storm, intensifying the ambience of our position. By late in the afternoon, thin ribbons of blue ice bisecting short rock steps (welcome reprises

from endless 70 degree, calf burner alpine ice) led us to a ridge line bivy that I would have paid for. We had the best views in the house and a very welcome rest after a long day on the move in heat we'd never experienced in the high mountains. We were at exactly 20,000' and right on schedule.

The next day started off with an epic sun rise while traversing a “good morning” pitch through fun mixed ground leading back onto the ice-face proper. A 500' band of orange and gold granite seemed to guard the summit slopes but upon a closer inspection, the ramping “sneak” that we'd hoped to find was indeed there. The chimney and crack system created a weakness that had us hooting and hollering with pure psyche. To emphasize the point, Chris took off his gloves in the warm temps to “bare-hand” the last cruxy boulder problem, looking down to laugh out loud.

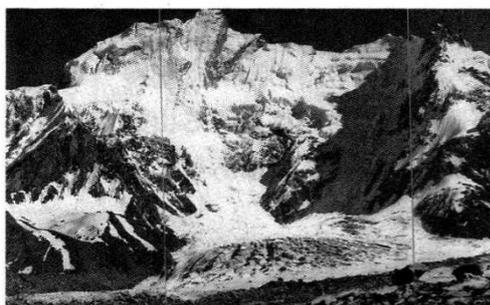
As the day wore on, we ascended and traversed the summit slopes to the South-East. Starting to feel like bonking might be for dinner, I was relieved when I finally built a belay in a rock band that I felt confident was close the top. I couldn't see the summit from the overhanging rock band but, I “knew” it was there. Less than 60m further, the rope stopped moving and when I joined Chris, we sat together smiling, surrounded by one of the most dramatic horizons either of us had ever seen, and could go no higher. Pointy, raw and rugged peaks were lit up by the last rays of the sun in every direction and barely a breath of wind interrupted our silence as we took it all in.



After rappelling more than a thousand feet, we arrived at the top of a steep, broad ice face just before midnight and were officially “cooked”. While chopping seats into the ancient, bullet hard ice to sit in for the night, more lightning strobed the sky and I couldn't help but to look over at Chris, my friend and brother for more than 15 years, and consider our surroundings. We were in one of the most remote spots on the planet, at 20,000', at midnight, and we were both completely worked but – we were friends and on a hell of an adventure. I remembered at that moment that profound experience and the deep seated friendships we form in the mountains are the true summit.



First ascent of south face of Brammah II 6486m, Kishtwar  
 "Pneuma" VI A14, M4, 1300m, 2016  
 (Jeff Shapiro)

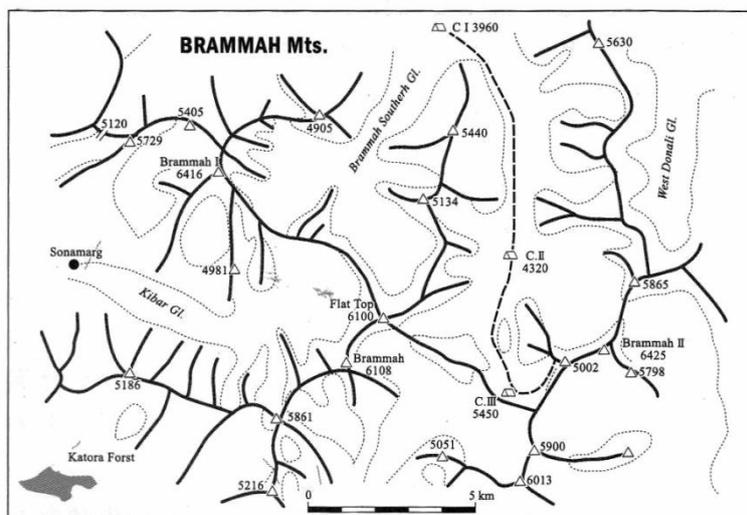


Brammah II was first climbed by Japanese Sapporo Alpine Club (Hokkaido) via the west ridge from Brammah Glacier on September 17, 1975.

Hideo Yokoyama & Shizuo Noku stood atop.

Route taken is shown on a sketch map below.

(from JAC Tokai "Indian Himalaya" edited by M. Oki)



KIMIKAZU SAKAMOTO  
**Exploration of Mulung Tokpo 2016 in Zanskar**  
**-Indian Himalaya-**

Since 2009, I have been exploring Southern Zanskar of Indian Himalaya to find the veiled unclimbed peaks. I explored Giable Nala, Lenak Nala, Reru Valley, Temasa Nala, Gompe Tokpo and Haptal Tokpo. We are pleased that thirteen expedition parties already challenged the virgin peaks in the Southern Zanskar which I introduced in my exploration records.

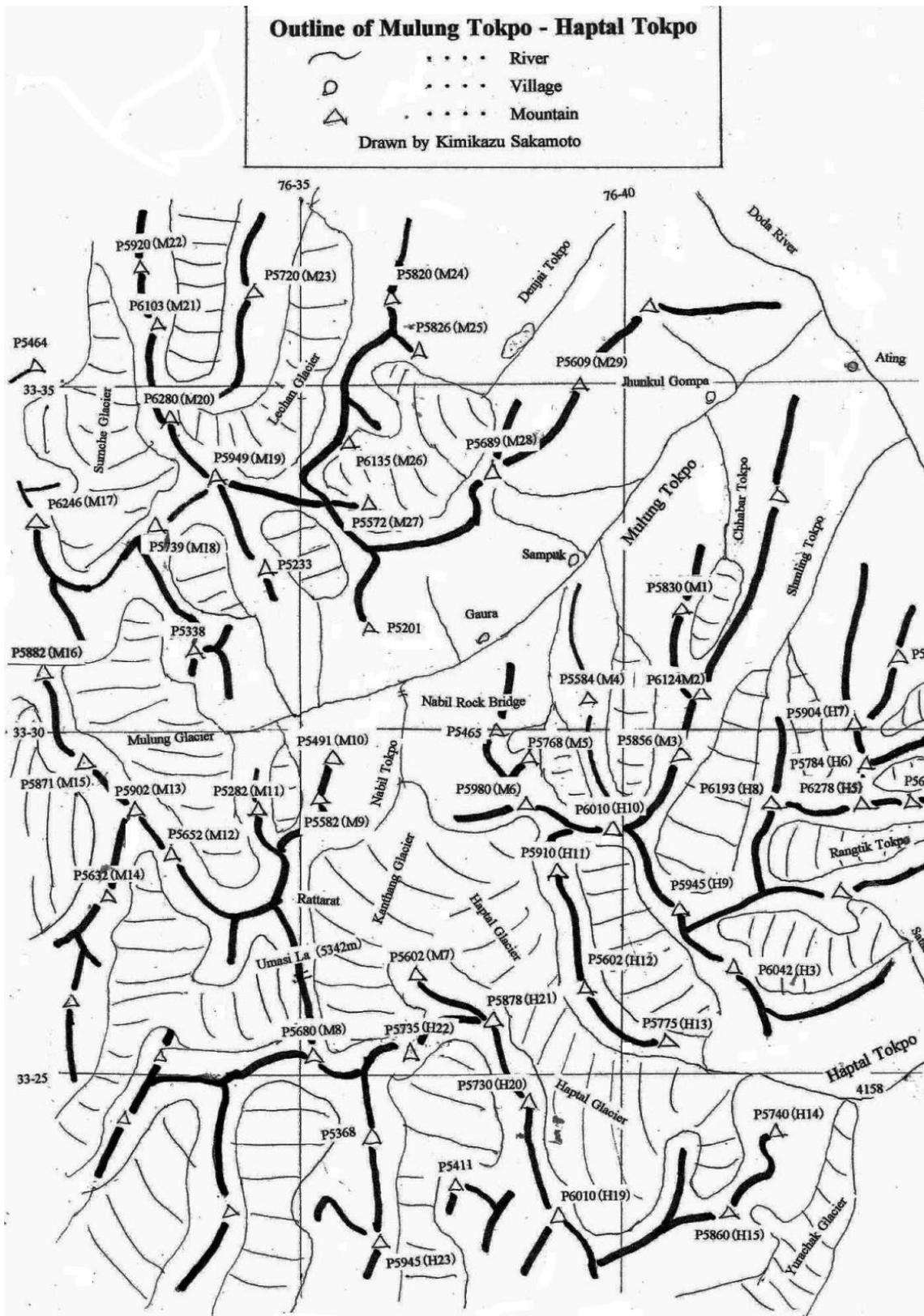
During August 3rd~ 27th in 2016, I went to Mulung Tokpo with Akira Taniguchi and Toshio Itoh to explore Mulung Tokpo which is located in the north west of Padam, one more north valley from Hapatal Tokpo. In Mulung Tokpo, there are not so many 6,000m peaks, but all peaks in this area have no climbing record according to the information of IMF (Indian Mountaineering Foundation).

We arrived at Delhi on August 3rd and reached Padam on August 8th via Kargil by a chartered car after spending two days in Leh for acclimatization. On August 9th, we stayed at Padam to visit Thonde Gompa and Karsha Gompa to pray for our safe exploration.

On August 10th, we visited Jhunkul Gompa by car. Then, we started our trekking from Tokhta Bridge near Ating Village and pitched our tents on the left side of Mulung Tokpo, just opposite side of Jhunkul Gompa. We expected to see P5830(M1) and 6124(M2) on the top of Chhabar Tokpo, but we could not peep the inside of this branch because of the high rock wall with the waterfall. On August 11th, we moved to Sampuk.

We saw P5491(M0) and P5582(M9) in Nabil Tokpo which is going up to Omasi La. On August 12th, we trekked to Gaura just before the junction of Nabil Tokpo and Mulung Tokpo. Our trekking pace was very slow, as I had a sprain in my right ankle. We expected to see P6010(H10) at the top of the un-named left side branch of Mulung Tokpo, but we could not see this peak because the branch was blocked with high rock wall. However, we could enjoy the nice view of P5902(M13), P5871(M15) and P5882(M16) in the Mulung Glacier.

On August 13th, we had a hiking to the glacier tongue of Mulung Tokpo. There are the beautiful small lakes just before the glacier tongue. Three peaks in Mulung Glacier, M13, M15 and M16, are very attractive and will surely fascinate many climbers. We



hope some climbers will challenge the unclimbed peaks in Mulung Tokpo in near future.

Originally, we planned to spend three days to explore Nabil Tokpo by carrying up our tents. But we were obliged to change our schedule because of my right ankle sprain.

On August 14th, Akira Taniguchi, Toshio Itoh, Tsewang Yangphe (our guide) and Gyamtso (our kitchen stuff) went up Nabil Tokpo as one day hiking. I gave up joining them, because I judged that I could not climb up the steep slope at the entrance of Nabil Tokpo. They left Gaura camp site early morning and came back around 5pm.

They went up to the spot just before the junction of Haptal Glacir and Kanthang Glaicer. They saw the challenging peak P5878(H21) in Haptal Tokpo and P5602(M7) at the junction with Kanthang Glacier.

We enjoyed the leisured several days in Mulung Glacier and went back to Padam on August 19th. After we visited Chiling, we came back to Leh on August 24th. This time, we could not see any 6,000m peaks, but we were very happy to see several attractive veiled virgin peaks in Mulung Tokpo area. We hope some climbers will challenge these unclimbed peaks in this valley at no distant date.



**Jhunkul Gompa**



**P5878 (H21) and P5602 (M7) in Haptai Glacier**



**P5878 (H21) in Haptai Glacier**



(left) P5902 (M14), (right) P5781 (M15) in Lulong Glacier



(left) P5582 (M9), (right) P53491 (M10) in Nabil Tokpo

EDWARD HANNAM

**First Ascent of Xialong Rezha 5625m in Ge'nyen Massif**  
Shaluli Shan Range – West Sichuan Highlands



Genyen Massif panorama view east face



Xialong Rezha west face. Pitches 1 – 4 continue obscured below the fin of rock.  
12 pitches, Russian alpine grade 5A (Scottish IV, M4, some pitches run out, some  
simu-climbed or soloed). 650m. descent by rappelling the route. Photo: Rob Baker



Joe Puryear, with Mt Ge'nyen itself first climbed via south face in 1988 by a team of the Himalayan Association of Japan. That our trip coincided exactly with the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the deaths of Charlie Fowler and Kristine Boskoff wasn't lost on us.

The western side of the Ge'nyen mountains is accessed via 4 days travel along the Sichuan-Tibet highway from Chengdu via Kangding, Xinduqiao, a town of Litang and the border town of Batang, then a small road over a 5000m pass almost unknown even to the locals. 25km from the upper Yangtze that forms the administrative border, Xialong Rezhe is prominently visible from the small hamlet at the end of the road, the name translating as 'place of big horned animals and large boulders',

We planned to do a first ascent with no additional support, something developed over many previous trips to western Sichuan/eastern Tibet. going into undocumented terrain completely self-sufficient, our only limitation was the loads we could carry, acclimation and the weather, having banked on the dependable early winter window directly after the last squall of the south Asian monsoon and before the first snows arrived. This year didn't disappoint, with an unbroken string of 15 days without any form of precipitation.



**(left) Where the wild things are. Xialongrezha from the edge of town. Photo Alex Tang**  
**(right) BC I at 4200m was sunny, tranquil and warm. Photo Rob Baker.**

BC I was several kilometers from the village thru a beautiful pine and lichen forest to a sunny vale at 4200m. a pastoral delight, with clear aquamarine rushing streams, flocks of pheasants and lazy yaks, we did sorties higher up and after 3 nights to consolidate decided to move the entire BC up to 4900m rather than just a light 'assault bivvy'. This involved heavy carries up several kms of marsh, boulder fields and scree.



**BC II below Xialongrezha at 4900m. Photo Mitch Murray.**

BC II was a true high Tibetan location; stark and lunar. By a small glacially fed lake, the high moraine and room-sized boulders showed no signs of visitation aside from thirsty antelope and small, colourful birds. The difference between direct sun and shade was a +20c and -10c differential that bookended each day.

From vantage points along the approach it was clear the premium route on the west



face was the jilted central couloir. We juggled thoughts about various other route alternatives but confirmed the central couloir after a recce day onto the glacier beneath. As the route was steep, our acclimation at threshold and the amazing weather window getting on, we

lead in blocks, seconding together for speed. With good team work, good rock and solid snow this worked efficiently.

**(above picture) Ed below the traverse to the upper pitches around 5350m.**

**Photo: Rob baker.**

After soloing the 90m glacial snout to the couloir's base cone, Mitch powered us thru the next 3 pitches, then Ed lead up to and around where the couloir changed direction, including a long double pitch with a vigorous traverse. This was followed by Rob launching up 5 run-out pitches on lessening snow quality that ended in a pitch dug thru to the slab below to the cornice on the summit ridge. a further half pitch by Ed confirmed the sketchy snow and serious fall potential, leaving the bizarre summit formation unclimbed out of respect for sanity and local Tibetan lore.



**(left) Xialongrezha summit stack, across dangerous granulated snow over seamless granite slabs. We left that to the gods of another time. Photo Ed Hannam.**

**(right) Mitch & Rob at the final anchor, 5610m, with BC II just visible at the lake 700m below. Photo Ed Hannam.**

The couloir presented no good options for bivies so all 12 pitches were climbed in a single push, non-stop effort on new terrain.

Experience from previous trips had us carrying an array of alpine pro, but we ended up using a time-proven rack of small to mid cams and wires, beaks and pitons and an occasional screw. aside from the upper two pitches the snow was excellent, with ice a mix of glacial and alpine. rock in the western cluster is A grade granite, fissured with finger to hand width cracks splitting contiguous slabs and faces topped wild gendarmes, gargoyles and features.

Chopping thru the cornice we could see eastwards into the main Ge'nyen area, with 6200m Mt Ge'nyen and other +5500m peaks clearly visible. Westwards, in the other direction, we could make out long ranges of robust peaks over 6000m beyond the closed Tibetan border.

At 16:00 we began the many rappels that would get us back to camp at 22:00.

Continuing the good weather streak we spend the following day laying on sun-warmed granite boulders and eating, before starting the heavily loaded return to the village where we were welcomed by the local monk and school kids. Returning to Batang we consumed the hotels entire supply of roast duck.

The team consisted of organizational legend Zhang Jiyue, sharp-end expert Alex Tang (China) and climbers Mitch Murray, Rob Baker & Ed Hannam (Australia).

This trip was entirely self-funded, with no sponsors, no grants, no awards and no film deals, though special thanks go to Sea to Summit for their sleeping mat solutions, and to Cilogear for producing the unique packs that made the unsupported nature of the trip doable.

DEREK BUCKLE  
**Bolivia's Royal Mountains**  
**The 2015 AC Expedition to the Bolivian Andes**



**The Kasiri group, Chico on the left and Pk5694 in the centre, Photo: Derek Buckle**

The three of us were simply following our noses. We clearly had to go up, but exactly where was anyone's guess. Juan Carlos, our local agent, had suggested Jathi Khollu, a 5,421m peak in the Hampaturi range of the Bolivian Andes, as a two-day fill-in as part of our expedition, but even our drivers did not know exactly where it was.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this should not have been surprising since the driver of one of the two Landcruisers even struggled to find his way out of La Paz! As was typical for most of Bolivia, we had no reliable maps of this area and were trying to navigate using Google satellite images downloaded onto mobile phones.<sup>2</sup> With the road, such as it was, rapidly terminating, desperate measures were called for in the form of a *campesino* tending her llamas near the hamlet of Palcoma. Fortunately, as a local she knew the way.

Despite the warmth of the valley, 18<sup>th</sup> June was not one of our clearer days and all but the lower mountain slopes were blanketed by heavy cloud. The road-head was obvious enough, as it was cleft by a water eroded chasm, and a well-worn track led to our proposed camp site at the far end of Laguna Jachcha Khasiri at 4,710m. It was an attractive spot but would have benefited from a cloudless view. By this stage the active members of the team were a diminishing group. Altitude problems had forced Hugh to return home early, Rafal was suffering digestive problems and Ken had injured his ankle. Although still fit, Lili decided to stay with Ken while Peter continued to acclimatise further around the camp.

It was still misty when we (Nick, John, Derek) left camp at 4.00am the next morning

intending to climb the established route on the SW face of Jathi Khollu. The initial climb over the terminal moraine past a small *laguna* was relatively straightforward as there were few other places to go, but when we reached the glacier the options in the dark and mist seemed endless. Climbing unroped, we chose to keep left where Nick kicked an impressive line of steps in the 40-45° slope just right of a rocky rib until this exited at a fine snow arête. At this point the cloud magically evaporated to reveal the summit block just 300m or so to the right. Traversing steep snow under an intermediary rock tower and a 30m scramble over steep, unstable shale then led to the airy summit. By this stage it was obvious that we had not followed the usual route, which was some distance to our right, but had approached the summit from the opposite side. Subsequently we found that we had climbed a variant of the Gully Route first recorded by C Clarke, P Meehan and G Beisly in July 2013.<sup>3</sup>

Undoubtedly there is a first time for everything, but climbing a rarely visited 5,000m peak without a map, not knowing exactly where it was and in relatively thick mist, was certainly a novelty. As we topped out above the cloud base, however, the summit views were spectacular - Mururata (5,868m) and Illimani (6,439m) dominated the south-eastern horizon while hundreds of unrecognised peaks rose to the north-west. It was a good recommendation by Juan Carlos and making the second ascent of the Gully Route was a major bonus.

But our expedition had its origins some time earlier. In 2014 the Alpine Club had a successful trip to the Peruvian Andes<sup>4</sup> and I had always fancied going to Bolivia. Not long after the idea of visiting the Cordillera Real was muted it attracted significant interest and we soon had a full team of eight people. Our President, Lindsay Griffin, hoped to join us but eventually Club and other commitments obliged him to withdraw. Fortunately, not before introducing us to his friend and local activist Gregg Beisly and suggesting the rarely visited Kasiri-Caldaza area as a key focal point.

### ***Condoriri Group:***

At 3,600m La Paz comes as a shock to those more accustomed to life at sea-level so on arrival at the end of May the first few days were spent visiting the main tourist attractions, including Tiwanaku and the Isla del Sol on Lake Titicaca, before taking a short climb up to Huayna Potosi base camp at 5,130m. Feeling reasonably well acclimatised after three days in and around La Paz, on 4<sup>th</sup> June we relocated to our first climbing venue; the Condoriri base camp by Laguna Chiar Khota. Even though this

involves only a relatively short walk-in from the road-head, we chose to take full advantage of the available mules and *arrieros* to help with the load carrying. Now administered by a friendly ranger/camp-guard, over the years this camp has transformed into a very respectable location that is equipped with 'flushable' toilets and potable running water delivered from an *in situ* pipe. Added site security and the pleasant overall ambience more than outweighed the modest overnight fee of around £12 for the group.

By 5<sup>th</sup> June six of the team were ready to climb the shapely and attractive Pequeño Alpamayo (5,370m), a smaller and less demanding version of its better known Peruvian neighbour. In two ropes of three (Lili, Ken, Derek & Nick, John, Rafal) we chose the normal west-southwest ridge route (Alpine AD) that first traverses Tarija (5,060m), an intermediate peak, before gaining the impeccable snow arête leading to the final snowy pyramid and summit. After such a magnificent climb we reluctantly returned to base camp the same way. At this point there was considerable debate over what to do next. Undoubtedly, Condoriri (Carbeza de Condor, 5,648m)<sup>5</sup> is the region's gem and several members wanted to attempt it. The question was whether to do so in a single day from base camp or to establish an intermediate camp? Eventually three of us (Nick, John, Derek) opted for the two-day approach that ascends what is generally regarded as the 'scree slope from hell' to camp at 4,680m on a series of level rock platforms abutting the glacier.<sup>6</sup>

Early on 7<sup>th</sup> June we left this high camp to follow a well-worn track etched into the steep glacier until it was possible to traverse right under the southwest ridge to reach a hidden 60-70° ice-topped couloir leading directly to the ridge (AD+). At this point a truly magnificent steep snow crest led inexorably to the compact summit which we attained almost simultaneously with two small guided parties that had made the ascent directly from base camp. It was a superb climb with tremendous panoramas and well worthy of the many accolades that have been used to describe it. Planning to return to La Paz the next day we dismantled the high camp on our return before descending to base camp the same day.

On the same day Rafal and Hugh climbed Pirámide Blanca (5,230m) by way of the normal PD snow route from the west. Still hampered by his poor acclimatisation, it was a challenging day for Hugh, and personal altitude records for them both. Meanwhile Ken and Lili attempted what quite possibly was an unclimbed mixed route

on Pirámide Blanca's west face. Only the last few metres defeated their efforts when they were faced by unstable, dangerous rock close to the summit and were forced to abseil the route.

Unfortunately, plagued by severe gastric problems Peter was confined to the area close to camp for much of our stay at Condoriri, although he did manage to travel a bit further afield on the last day when he started to improve. As we departed from base camp fairly early on 8<sup>th</sup> June the outbound track still had several stretches of hard ice where it was shaded that caused significant problems for the laden mules. Although sure-footed on most ground, mules are unaccomplished ice-skaters and several animals were clearly unhappy on this terrain. The majority, however, managed to cross with varying degrees of elegance while one lost confidence entirely and finally landed broadside with hooves flying in all directions. It was only with a struggle that two of us eventually got him back on his wobbly feet while the *arriero* simply looked on rather bemused!

#### ***Kasiri-Calzada Group:***

Our second and main objective was to explore the region between Kasiri and Calzada to the northwest of La Paz. Mining activity in the area has led to marked improvements to the rough road crossing the Kasiri-Calzada pass and, with care, it is now driveable using 4 x 4 vehicles. Suitably refreshed by two nights' recuperation in the city, the team departed on 10<sup>th</sup> June for the 5 h drive to a camp actually on the col at 5,070m<sup>6</sup> sited conveniently close to a cluster of small *lagunas*. Hugh came along for the ride, but he was clearly unwell and had earlier decided to go back to La Paz and await our return in seven days time.

On account of its more difficult access, the Kasiri-Calzada area is rarely visited and most guides and locals really have no idea where it is. Moreover, there is little or no detailed record of the climbing that has been done from the col, although it is unlikely that any of the neighbouring summits and tops have been left untrod.<sup>7</sup> Since access from both sides of the col is so much easier nowadays we considered it prudent to hire a camp guard for the whole of our stay. Perhaps this was a wise precaution as we did see several mule trains crossing the pass and, surprisingly, met one vehicle close to the col at a little after 4.00am just as we started out on one of the climbs. One can only guess which of the two was more taken aback by the encounter.

With most of us anxious to get to grips with climbing Calzada (5,634m) two separate parties set off by different approaches on 11<sup>th</sup> June. Ken and Lili were the more successful party, completing a more or less direct route on the west face; climbing first rock then the steep glacier and finally mixed ground to gain the ridge which was followed to the summit (AD+). They returned the same way, abseiling the steeper sections. Meanwhile John, Rafal and Derek attempted the obvious northwest ridge while Nick was forced to descend with stomach problems. After climbing the initial broken ground to the ridge this was followed at a modest angle (AD, III) until a steep, exposed granite tower some 50m or so short of the summit eventually blocked further safe progress. Retreat was a disappointment, but in this instance we chose discretion over valour. One abseil led back to easy ground and a return to camp.

Following an easy exploratory day, four of us (John, Nick, Rafal, Derek) climbed directly up the steep southeast face of Pt 5,662 (a south-eastern outlier of the Kasiri group) until it was possible to cut up right to gain the prominent south-southeast ridge overlooking base camp. Continuing along this corniced ridge led to the fore-summit (Pt 5,662, AD) from which a short traverse led to a second, higher top (Pt 5,694) which was separated from the main Kasiri massif by a steep, substantial drop. We returned the same way.

Having set their sights on an interesting snow dome (Pt 5,649), a little beyond Calzada, Ken and Lili again traversed the now familiar boulder-field on Calzada on the 15<sup>th</sup> June to reach the northwest ridge. From here they dropped down to and then crossed the northwest glacier to a steep (to 80°) slanting couloir giving access to the ridge and subsequently the snowy summit (AD+/D).<sup>8</sup> They descended the same way. On the same day, Nick, John and Derek attempted the long northeast ridge of Kasiri Chico (5,542m), which was accessed *via* a steep snow gully rising from the valley running southeast from the ridge. The ridge itself consisted of unconsolidated shale yet lacked technical difficulty until about one-third distance when a steep tower around 5,300m blocked further safe progress. Once again a graceful retreat was called for with a single abseil to attain the glacier a few hundred metres ahead of the ascent gully.

With our allotted time in this area coming to an end we returned to La Paz prior to our brief visit to Jathi Khollu, mentioned above, but in the meantime Hugh continued to suffer altitude problems and had reluctantly decided to fly home early. Ken also left for the UK soon after, but his early departure was previously scheduled. It was now Rafal who succumbed to gastric problems so he chose to remain in La Paz until we

returned after the next foray to Chachacomani.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Chachacomani Area:***

After some deliberation our diminished group (now just five people) decided to focus on Chachacomani (6,074m) as the last major objective. The plan was to climb one of the standard routes on the southeast face, but once again in the absence of an accurate map we were reliant on local advice for the most appropriate approach. Hitherto there were known access problems from the south on account of local villager hostility, but we were assured that this was no longer an issue. Accordingly, on 21<sup>st</sup> June, we drove north from La Paz *via* the hamlet of Chachacomani to the road-head from where we had prior arranged mules and porters. Trekking 13 km along the long, rather bland valley of the same name then led to our first camp at 4,540m beneath a significant headwall.<sup>6</sup> As mules could travel no further, three porters were enlisted to carry our equipment the next day; first up the headwall and then leftwards to reach a rocky area at 5,230m<sup>6</sup> adjacent to a vast glacier. It was not an ideal place to camp, but we could at least get glacial meltwater. By now, however, we were somewhat concerned that the impending face in front of us bore no resemblance to the photograph that we had of Chachacomani's southeast face. Not only that, the sun clearly appeared to be in the wrong place, so something was evidently amiss!

It was eventually deduced that we must be beneath the southwest face and that access to the southeast face was impossible from our position. Moreover, the porters had emphasised that we should climb the glacier in a north-northwest direction from our camp, starting at a point marked by a cairn. It all seemed rather unsatisfactory so a decision was made to start that way and essentially see what happened. Peter again decided that he would not accompany us so the rest of the party left in the dark a little after 5.00am on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June to trek north-northwest up the easy-angled glacier until we fortuitously converged with the tracks made by previous parties. Following these roughly eastwards eventually led to the west ridge which was followed to the airy summit (PD). It was a technically easy, albeit long, day involving an 11km return trip back to the high camp, so our earlier decision to spend an additional night at high camp was fortuitous. When the porters arrived early the next day we descended past the low camp to collect mules for the long walk back to the car and our return to La Paz.

### ***Huayna Potosi & Illimani:***

Initially we had decided against Huayna Potosi (6,088m, PD) but Rafal was by now

brimming with energy as he had missed out on Chachacomani and was keen to do another climb. Nick also had energy to spare so the two of them went up to Huayna Potosi base camp at 5,209m on 25<sup>th</sup> June from where they easily completed the climb to the summit and back to La Paz the next day; just in time for the team's celebratory meal prior to the journey home. Peter, on the other hand, had been building himself up for an ascent of Illimani (6,439m, PD) and had several extra days available to attempt this. On the 26<sup>th</sup> June therefore he arranged a guide for the three day climb, which he successfully completed.

**Summary:** In June 2015 a team of Alpine Club members comprising Hugh Alexander, Nick Berry, Derek Buckle (Leader), John da Silva, Rafal Malczyk, Ken Mulvany, Lili Mulvany and Peter Yuen spent a month climbing in Bolivia's Cordillera Real. In addition to climbing the classic peaks; Pequeño Alpamayo, Pirámide Blanca, Condoriri, Huayna Potosi and Illimani by their standard routes, they also visited some of the lesser known regions, including the Kasiri-Calzada, Hampaturi and Chachacomani areas where they successfully climbed Calzada and its adjacent snow dome Pt 5,649, the Kasiri outliers Pt 5,662 and Pt 5,694, Jathi Kholu and Chachacomani itself.

#### **Reference and Notes:**

1. Both the spelling and heights of Bolivian mountains are highly variable and dependent on the source. Those used by Yossi Brain in *Bolivia, a Climbing Guide*, Cordee, 1999 have been adopted wherever possible.
2. The Austrian Alpine Club publishes two excellent 1:50,000 maps of the Cordillera Real; one to the north covering Illampu and another to the south covering Illimani. In addition, the US Defense Mapping Agency publishes a series of less useful 1:100,000 topographical maps (series H632) that are available free on-line.
3. See <http://www.boliviaclimbinginfo.org>
4. D Buckle, *Alpine Journal*, 117-125, **118**, 2014
5. Literally *Head of the Condor*, so named because of its shape as seen from afar.
6. GPS height
7. See J Neate, *Mountaineering in the Andes*, RGS-IBG Expedition Advisory Centre, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, May 1994

8. R F H Hunter (*American Alpine Journal*, 510-513, **13**, 1963) describes the same or a similar couloir on the northwest face of Calzada.
9. Sir Martin Conway's Chisel Peak.



**Climbers on the classic WSW ridge of Pequeno Alpamayo, Photo: Derek Buckle**



**John and Nick descending Condoriti SW ridge,**



**Snow Dome ascent gully, Photo: Ken Mulvany**