

On the 3rd Luke and I made a foray to the Koji La. According to local yak herders this was an ancient but little-used trade route. Now no yaks can cross the rocks on the Nepalese side, rocks that have been exposed by recent glacial recession, so it is only passable on foot. We got the impression that a few smugglers use the pass in summer, and we found prayer flags at 5,300m. The areas immediately north and west of this pass are the sources of the great Brahmaputra River.

On the 4th Luke, Nick, and Phil left advanced base and established Camp 1 at 5,750m. Relentless winds and heavy drifts of snow were the norm for the next few days, but the three managed to climb the main snow gully in the granite face of Rongla South to 5,810m and deposit equipment. On the 6th the weather worsened and Luke took advantage of being the only member with skis to return to advanced base for more supplies. We decided that while Nick and Phil retreated over the col, Luke would rescue the gear from the face. Having done this Luke took the opportunity to solo Pk. 5,984m on the frontier ridge west-southwest of Rongla South. He climbed the north ridge over relatively compacted snow with some rocky bands. On the summit he was pummeled by strong winds. The following day, the 9th, the three woke to perfect conditions and, making an early start, climbed back to the col and up the icy south ridge of Pk. 5,930m, another border peak just south of Pk. 5,984m. I came up from base camp the same day and with Phurba and Prem removed advanced base. We left the area the following day, reaching Gamgadhi on the 14th. From here we were able to get a Twin Otter flight on the 17th to Nepalgunj, followed by a scheduled flight to Kathmandu. It had proved to be an exceptionally worthwhile exploratory expedition into little-known territory.

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## KANJIROBA HIMAL

*Shey Shikhar, first ascent.* The 41-year old Japanese mountaineer Katsuhito Fujikawa made the first ascent of Shey Shikhar (6,139m), an elegant peak in the Dolpo region immediately southeast of the Kanjiroba Group. In 1995 American Geoff Tabin was offered a permit for Shey Shikhar from Tso Karpo Lake to the north. However, on entering the Tso Karpo valley above the large lake of Phoksumdo, he found that an approach to the mountain (marked as Junction Peak on some maps) would be suicidal from this direction and instead turned to the highest peak in the valley, Tso Karpo Kang (6,556m). This peak directly north of Shey Shikhar had first been climbed from the south by two Japanese in 1971 (though it was not added to the official list of permitted peaks until 2002). Tabin's expedition made the second and third ascents, via the southwest ridge and via a more direct route up the southeast face. The team also made the probable first ascents of a mountain to the southwest they called Bahini Kang (6,100m) and, to the east, Kang Yaja (5,962m), via the south ridge.

The well-traveled Japanese explorer Tamotsu Ohnishi reached the Tso Karpo Lake in 2003 but was not able to make a serious attempt on Shey Shikhar due to bad weather. He planned to try the east ridge from a base camp at a little over 4,200m, noting that there was a 200m rock wall that looked steep and loose.

Katsuhito Fujikawa reports setting up base camp at 4,700m on August 20. He climbed directly from this camp to the crest of the east ridge at 5,500m, overcoming a loose rock face at an angle of around 50-60°. The crest above was steep, narrow and about one kilometer in length,

with precipitous drops on both sides, before he reached the summit. Fujikawa appears to have made the climb in one push on the 23rd, leaving base camp at 3 a.m. and returning at 9:30 p.m.

LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *Mountain INFO, www.climbmagazine.com*

## UPPER DOLPO

### PANZANG REGION

*Chamar Kang, probable first ascent.* After a long trek around northern Dolpo following in the footsteps of the great Japanese explorer Ekai Kawaguchi, a seven-member Osaka Yamanokai (Osaka Alpine Club) party, led by Tamotsu Ohnishi, arrived at Tinkyu in the Panzang Khola and on September 19 set up base camp at Kangtega Sumna (4,550m), between the 5,564m border pass of Chukang La and, to the south, the 5,466m Kella La.

The next day they traveled west into the valley known as Tinje, from where they planned to attempt Chamar Kang (a.k.a Changmar Kang or Kang Tega, 6,060m, N 29°14'10", E 83°21'48"). From here they climbed to the crest of the north ridge at 5,886m but then descended to a col at 5,720m to set up a high camp for the night.

On the 21st Toshitsugi Irisawa, Koichi Kato, Ohnishi, and Chhepa Sherpa left the camp at 6:15 a.m. and set off up the northeast face. They climbed this snow-and-ice slope of 45-55° in nine pitches by front-pointing, using double ice tools and 60m ropes. A further four pitches led to the summit, which they gained at 2 p.m. By 3:30 p.m. all four had regained the high camp, and they returned to base camp just after 7 p.m. Worsening weather accompanied them as they climbed down the route of ascent [Ohnishi originally believed that this peak had been climbed previously, but there are no reports of this, nor did he find any evidence—Ed]. The next day Kaori Inaba and Koji Mizutani repeated the ascent.

TAMOTSU OHNISHI, *Japanese Alpine Club*

## ANNAPURNA HIMAL

*Varaha Shikhar (The Fang), second ascent, east face to south ridge.* [Photo on page 4.] Gangwon University Korean Expedition made a new route up the Fang (7,647m), via the 1,400m east face to the south ridge. The only previous ascent of this difficult mountain on the rim of the Annapurna Sanctuary southwest of Annapurna I was made in 1980 from the west, outside the Sanctuary, by an Austrian expedition. Connecting the east face to the south ridge from inside the Sanctuary had captured the attention of Korean teams since 1986. Gangwon University expeditions attempted this route unsuccessfully in 1991 and 1997.

The expedition left Korea on September 1 and spent seven days beginning September 4 acclimatizing in the Langtang, where they climbed Naya Kanga (a.k.a. Kangja Chuli, 5,844m). After this the team of Choi Chan-gyu, Hong Seong-wook, Kim Yong-gil, Lee Jong-heon, Lee Hak-young, Park Bong-ha, Park Hong-gi, Park Su-seok, Song Il-ho, Yu Hyun-jong, Yu Jae-hyeong, and Sherpas Dapjen, Geljen, Swana, Tshering, and Wangdi was helicoptered to a 4,600m base camp below the Fang, arriving on the 17th. Due to over a meter of fresh snow and a large crevasse, it was necessary to establish a temporary camp before eventually siting Camp 1