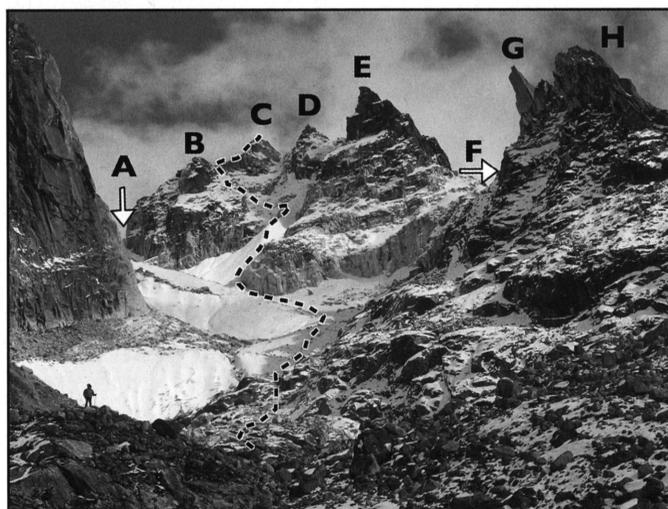


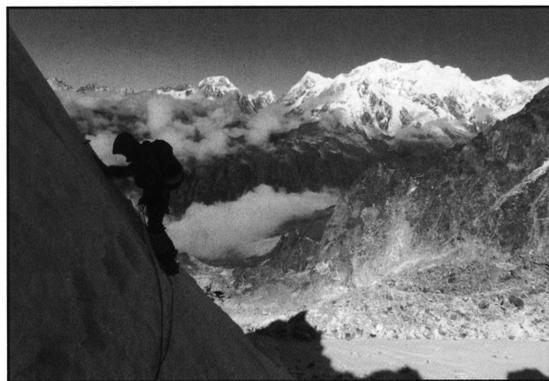
and the final headwall (200m), avoiding the overhanging blue ice that dominates the center of the Gap by the rock wall to its left. While ours is the first documented ascent from the south, and Boustead's claim is as unbelievable as Maestri's claimed first ascent of Cerro Torre, we find no reason to believe Tombazi did not reach the Gap.

ANINDYA MUKHERJEE, *India*

*Bahini Group, Tridesh (ca 5,100m), Soneri Behin (ca 5,250m), and Prabha Behin (ca 5,500m); Jopuno correction.* Between October 16 and November 3 David Kinsella (Australia), Arun Mahajan (India and US), and I explored mountains on the east side of the Thangsing Valley, climbing three summits as alpine-style one-day routes. This area, which we have named the Bahini (Sisters) Group, lies immediately south of



Bahini Group from the east. (A) Lama Lamani-Prabhu Behin Col. (B) Unnamed. (C) Prabha Behin. (D) Unnamed. (E) Kali Behin. (F) Soneri Behin. (G) Churi. (H) Kanchi Behin. *Roger Payne*



Arun Mahajan on traverse during first ascent of Prabha Behin. Behind, on Nepal border, are (left to right) Koktang, Rathong, and various Kabru summits. *Roger Payne*

Lama Lamani (ca 5,650m) and above the Arralang Valley. Julie-Ann Clyma and I had reconnoitered it during an October 2004 trek. The following year, after making the first ascent of Lama Lamani North, we saw a peak to the east that I later I mistook for Narsing (5,825m), an image of which was published on p.118, *AAJ 2008*. In fact this peak is unnamed and shown as 5,526m on the 1:150,000 Sikkim Himalaya map (published by the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research, 2006). The Bahini Group is not shown on the

Swiss map, and as far as we could ascertain, none of the peaks had names or been climbed. We hope the nomenclature we have used is acceptable locally, regionally, and to any interested organizations.

From a base camp at Thangsing, we established a comfortable advanced camp at 4,800m, below a prominent rock tower we called Chowkidar (Sentry). On October 23 we made an acclimatization reconnaissance to the col between Lama Lamani and Prabha Behin (Prabha means radiance, shine, or glow, while Behin is sister). The

latter is the highest summit of the Bahini Group and is probably the one marked as 5,480m on the Swiss map.

On the 27th we climbed Tridesh (Three Lands), which is just west of the Bahini Group. Initially we had to descend from our camp to the base of the peak, which we climbed via its northeast flank on snowed-up rock (PD+, UIAA II-III). From the summit we could see that the east and south sides of the mountain had extensive rock faces, and we had good views of the lakes at Lam Pokri.

Soneri Behin (Golden Sister,) was our second peak, which we climbed on the 28th, retracing our route of the previous day, then heading up to a hanging valley with a small glacier. We ascended this to reach the east ridge via unstable rock. The ridge itself was solid, with enjoyable rock steps (II), and the route had an overall grade of PD+. From the summit we retraced our route down the ridge, then descended a snow couloir on the north side, so making a circular route back to Chowkidar camp. The northwest ridge of Soneri Behin includes another lower summit we called Kanchi Behin (Small Sister) and remarkable rock towers we called Churi (Knife).

The third peak, climbed by Mahajan and me, was Prabha Behin, which felt higher than the map height. We climbed a snow/ice crest in the broad northwest couloir, with a leftward traverse at the top to reach the crest of the northwest ridge. This was mixed and exposed, with sections of technical rock (IV) and an overall grade of AD+/D-. The summit block is small, and required an athletic leap to reach (unnecessarily, as an easy ramp comes up from the south side). The connecting ridge west to lower summits appeared loose initially, but the lower summits look attractive, in particular Kali Behin (Black Sister), which seen from the west is an impressive black tower.

There is a correction to my report in *AAJ 2011*. On Jopuno in 2001 the climbers did not ascend the northwest face. Kunzang Bhutia, Deepak Kumar Chettri, and Sagar Raj actually climbed the right side of the southwest face, and then up the south ridge of Jopuno—a notable effort undertaken with minimal equipment. Having checked with them, it seems they reached a summit on the south ridge that may not be the highest point of the mountain. As I mentioned in *AAJ 2011*, from my knowledge of Jopuno I feel that it was not this mountain that W.W. Graham climbed in 1883. Therefore, until someone traverses the summit ridge or reaches the summit on a clear day, the ascent in 2008 by Jason Halladay and Josh Smith could be the only time the highest point of the mountain has been reached.

What is certain is that there are many summits in Sikkim that can be explored and climbed alpine-style and that access can be arranged through the tourism organizations and Sikkim state authorities in Gangtok. In eight trips since 2004, to peaks in west and north Sikkim, I have enjoyed valuable assistance from friends in the Sikkim Amateur Mountaineering Association (SAMA), and Barap Bhutia and the staff of Sikkim Holidays in Gangtok. Also the Travel Agents Association of Sikkim (TAAS) has done impressive work to increase the capacity and skills of service providers and to develop a structure for mountain rescue, working with SAMA and state authorities. You can approach organizations in Sikkim with confidence, knowing that they can make the necessary arrangements for exploratory treks and expeditions.



Arun Mahajan on crux rock moves, northwest ridge of Prabha Behin.  
*Roger Payne*