

*Chon-Turasu Valley, attempt on Koroleva and ascent of Molodezhnyi.* In August I climbed with Graham Holden in the Chon-Turasu Valley of the Western Kokshaal-Too. We reached our 3300m base camp by Ural Truck in a problem-free three-day drive from Bishkek. We intended to climb new routes on Pik Dankova (5982m) or Pik Chon-Turasu (5728m), but a reconnaissance showed the lines on the east side to be rather serious, so we switched to the southeast ridge of Pik Koroleva (5816m) via Pik Tsandera (ca 5400m).

We acclimatized by attempting unclimbed Pik ca 5400m south of Pik Alpinist, turning back on the convoluted summit ridge in deteriorating weather. We were then confined to camp for several days as heavy snow fell in the mountains. As the weather cleared on August 17 we waded through the fresh snow to make a determined attempt on Pik Koroleva. We endured two stormy nights on the high col at the base of Pik Tsandera before continuing up enjoyable mixed climbing on the ridge. Despite the lowly 4A grade given to this ridge on its 1969 first ascent, we were brought to an abrupt halt by a loose rock tower at ca 5150m. As a consolation, on August 22 we made the first British ascent of Pik Molodezhnyi (5338m), via the northeast ridge.

During our stay we met two teams from the Moscow Railway Institute, one having trekked over passes and the other having unsuccessfully attempted piks Dankova and Chon-Turasu. Both teams planned to walk over the Borkoldoy Massif to Kara-Sai.

Potential new routes remain in the Chon-Turasu area, but many

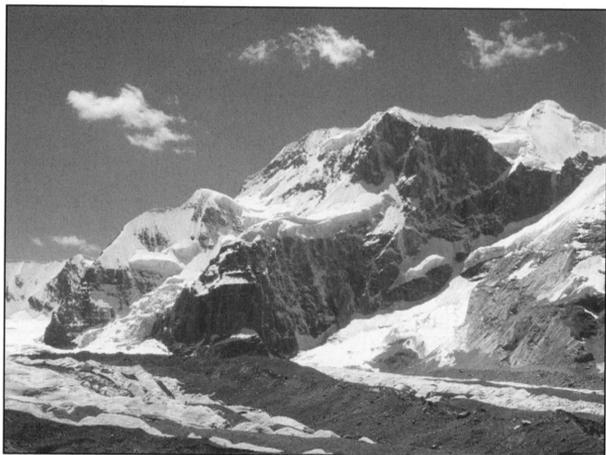


Top: Trapez, Chon-Turasu Glacier, and Alpinist, from ca 5400m on the summit ridge. Middle: Molodezhnyi and Alpinist from upper valley below Tsandera. Molodezhnyi northeast ridge on the left, and circa 5400m in the center. *Paul Knott (3)*

(including the outstanding 2,000-meter-high east rib of Pik Koroleva) are more committing than existing lines.

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*Kyokkiar and Sarybeles Mountains, first ascents.* In August-September John Allen (UK), Peter Berggren (Sweden), Hilda Grooters (Holland), Tim Riley (UK) and I all climbed in the Gori Sarybeles and the Khrebet Kyokkiar of the far Western



Dankova from the northeast. Paul Knott

Kokshaal-Too. We were almost certainly the first mountaineers, either local, Soviet or Western, to visit these ranges of 4000m peaks on the Chinese border. We traveled by truck in one long day from Bishkek to Chatyrtash, an abandoned settlement in a border valley. Two local soldiers rode by to check us out and we discussed approaches to our range. We had to cross the Ak-Sai river, then kilometers of foothills into the Kyokkiar. We decided to drive along an established road south of the range to get a different view. Three hours later the track petered out but there in front of us appeared another ridge of steep sided, snowcapped summits, rising straight out of a broad grassy valley.

We made camp and spent the next few days climbing four peaks in what was labeled on the map as the Gory Sarybeles. Three routes were straightforward and the easiest to their respective summits, while the other reached one of the two most strikingly sharp summits along the ridge. We never touched the numerous rock faces, which offer countless more routes.

We then decided to shift venue back to the Kyokkiar to give us enough time for exploration. Half a day after leaving the Sarybeles, we were guided to a yurt on the banks of the Ak-Sai, where there was a family with horses for hire. With a price agreed and a number of horses gathered, we were guided into the range along hunters' trails and left at a camp which clearly wasn't the one we'd intended.

The next two days were spent scouting a route to transfer our camp to the main valley, where we found a clear mountain stream. Our tents were surrounded by steep limestone walls hundreds of meters high. After a reconnaissance up the main valley toward the higher summits, Pete, Tim, and John moved camp to below a 1300-meter face, while Hilda and I climbed an easy summit up a side valley in a day trip from the main camp.

Tim, Pete, and I made an attempt on the high face, failing at 4600m due to lack of daylight. During our retreat we had to abseil 100 meters down glacier-smoothed slabs, which would block an ascent to the upper glacier.

With Tim and Pete keen to explore the valley that Hilda and I had previously visited, we transferred camp in poor weather, pitching our tents below one of the combs we had viewed while climbing the mountain in this valley. The next day a late start and higher than anticipated difficulties prevented a planned ascent of a couloir, which I had estimated at Scottish III/IV.