

Bad weather kept them in base camp until September 21. Without Sherpa support they made Camp 1 that day at 5,500m and, on the 22nd, started work on the mixed rock and ice face leading to the crest of the ridge. On the 26th they established Camp 2 at a 6,090m col on this ridge.

At 4 a.m. on the 27th the four left Camp 2 for a summit push. The weather was excellent, with neither cloud nor wind. Moving left, they climbed the icy north face for 300m to the crest of the northeast ridge, not far from the summit. On this section they fixed the only rope of the entire ascent. All four reached the summit at 11:40 a.m.

The return to Camp 2 was long because they decided to descend the fluted northeast ridge until it was easy to gain the glacier to the left. Then they walked southwest up the glacier and finally climbed back onto the north-northwest ridge, regaining camp at 11:30 p.m.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY, AAC *Honorary Member, Nepal*

Editor's note: The only previous attempt on this remote border mountain appears to be that made in 1998 by Tamotsu Ohnishi's 14-member expedition. They gave up on a direct approach and instead climbed the west ridge of a summit on the Nepal-Tibet border immediately to the southwest of Changla, hoping they could then follow the frontier ridge north to the main top. They reached what they refer to as Changla Southwest Peak (6,162m) but realized it would take several more days to traverse to the main summit. The highest summit in the Changla Himal is not, as might be imagined, Changla, but Kubi Kangri (6,721m), which lies much further to the south-southeast along the border, and was climbed in 2008 via the east ridge from Tibet by a seven-member Japanese team (leader Atushi Senda).

KANTI HIMAL

Kojichuwa Chuli (6,439m), attempt. Kojichuwa Chuli lies at the head of the Kojichuwa Khola above Mugu Village, and the peak was attempted with little success in 2008 and 2009 by Spanish and Japanese climbers (AAJ 2010). On May 16, after a six-day trek, Ken Fujikawa, Michihiro Honda, Yuta Kawahara, Satoshi Kimoto, and Ayano Suzuki established base camp at 3,600m above Mugu. Subsequently, an advanced base was placed at 4,600m, and Camp 1 at 5,100m, before the route up to the 5,625m col on the northwest ridge was fixed by Sherpas. This ridge forms the Nepal-Tibet border.

On May 24 all except Honda left advanced base and made Camp 2 on the col. They made a summit bid the next day. The ridge presented difficult crevasses and steep knife-edge sections, so the climb proved time-consuming. By 7 p.m. they had only reached a northern foresummit (height unknown). The continuation to the main top was long, steep, and sharp, so they descended.

TSUNEMICHI IKEDA, *Japanese Alpine News*

SAIPAL HIMAL

Saipal (7,030m), northeast ridge to Saipal East Humla (6,925m). In Nepal's geopolitical landscape, the West has a special place. West Nepal was one starting point of the Maoist revolution and forms a perfect example of the dramatic imbalance of economic development and tourism that exist within the country. Climbers and trekkers can be counted on the fingers of one hand, and mountaineering in this remote area has a different dimension from the popular regions of Nepal.

Ironically we nearly didn't get to the Far West; the plane was commandeered at the last minute to evacuate tourists stranded at Lukla. We finally got a flight to Simikot, headed west along the Humla



Bikrum Singh, a young Nepalese guide, enjoying the superb ambience of the upper northeast ridge of Saipal. In the middle distance the fine, triangular snow/ice pyramid is unclimbed Peak 5,638m; the more rocky peak to its left is 5,696m, also unclimbed. In the far distance lie the peaks straddling the Nepal-Tibet border. From left to right; Changla, Gorek, and Kanjiroba Himal. *Paulo Grobel*



Descending to high camp (6,400m) on northeast ridge of Saipal. Immediately behind camp a snow arête leads to the small rocky summit of Rani Himal. In the middle distance is Kairangtse, while the high bulky summit in far distance (Tibet) is Gurla Mandata (7,694m). *Paulo Grobel*

Karnali, and then south up the Kairang Khola, past Chala Village, to reach a 4,276m base camp northeast of Firnkopf (6,730m).

Saipal is little visited, and in the 12 years since the previous ascent, conditions have changed markedly. We attempted the northeast ridge, climbed on only one occasion before by two expeditions within two days of each other in October 1990 (Saipal has only five ascents, the first in October 1963 by Katsutoshi Harabayashi and Pasang Phutar Sherpa, via the south ridge). On October 29 Frank Bonhomme, Frederic Jung, and I stood atop Saipal East Humla. Despite not reaching the main summit of Saipal, only the northeast top, it was my most enjoyable expedition. We realized there is so much to discover in the West: mountains, treks, and especially the people. 2011 has been declared the Year of Tourism in Nepal. If only one percent of the tourists who went to the Annapurna or Khumbu regions could find their way west (or to other forgotten parts of Nepal), then this initiative will be successful, and our climb will have more meaning.

Saipal can be reached in six or seven days from Simikot. The northeast ridge is probably the easiest line, with no objective danger and a superb ridge traverse. It is perhaps V/AD in Himalayan grade. After a glacier approach the steepest section is the ascent of the northwest face of Rani Himal (6,382m), a small rocky summit at the start of the northeast ridge of Saipal. We hit the ridge a couple of rope lengths right of Rani Himal's top and made our final camp at 6,400m (it seems likely that with teams focused on the main summit, the top of Rani Himal has never been reached). We failed because the distance between our top camp and the summit was too long; we recommend installing another camp further along the ridge, just before it becomes narrow. However, lower virgin peaks are accessible from our base camp. Kairangtse (6,233m), Liz Himal (5,950m), and Rani Himal, all north of Saipal, would make fine objectives. Why don't you go west?

PAOLO GROBEL, *France*