

number of new ascents from the S side of the At Bashi range. In August a group climbed from the Mustabbes river, climbing peaks Stefan (4480m, PD), Bashnya (4690m, AD), Darshana (4570m, AD), and Beersh Berkut (4600m). Another group in September from the Kensu valley climbed 11 new peaks/routes including the S ridge of Sumashedshaya (4510m) at D+, the E ridge of Pik Ara (4595m) at AD, the N ridge of Ekilik (4496m) at AD-, and a new route on the highest peak Kensu (4757m) via the S ridge. Active in the same range in August 2009 were Sally Brown, Eddy Barnes, Sari Nevala and Vanessa Wills, climbing from the Kaeyndi valley. The party made probable first ascents of Dove Peak (4311m), Crow's Nest (4155m), Chook Mountain (4063m) and Icarus (4537m), all at PD- / AD+. They also climbed the new ice route *Wills-Brown Couloir* (D, 70-80°) to the ridge between Shark Peak (4249m) and Crocodile Peak (4352m).

An interesting recent development in this part of Kyrgyzstan is alpine rock climbing in several accessible venues, all explored by Pat Littlejohn and Adrian Nelhams with various teams. Prominent amongst these is the Son Kul canyon, which has limestone routes potentially up to 900m, with around 20 routes climbed to date – up to 8 pitches and British E2. Routes reported in 2009 include the N ridge of the main 3450m summit, with steep HVS sections, and *Manaschi Rib* on a smaller subsidiary peak, also at HVS with 14 pitches plus 150m of scrambling. The 600m ridge to the right of this yielded *Friendly Buttress* at V-. Shifting to the unexplored east side of the canyon, over the river, Pat found *Eastern Spine* with some 5a pitches. The hardest route was in another canyon further west – *Striker* (E2 5c), climbed by Pat with John Vlasto. Geoff Hornby and David Barlow also visited the Son Kul area in 2009 and report climbing a 650m HVS, a 100m E2 and a 200m VS.

Littlejohn's parties have also explored two further alpine rock venues. The Nomad Domes area near Arashan has seen a number of 3-pitch routes developed. The Tash Rabat valley north of the At Bashi range also appears to have good potential; the 2010 ISM party climbed five limestone routes up to 500m and HVS standard.

Elsewhere in Kyrgyzstan, in August 2008 Mikhail Kleslo's Czech team made the first ascent of Korumdy East (6384m) in the eastern Zaalay Pamir.

DICK ISHERWOOD

Pakistan 2008-10

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2008

One of the most notable ascents in Pakistan during 2008 was an alpine-style new route on the Rakhiot (NW) Face of **Nanga Parbat**. Italians Simon Kehrer, Walter Nones and Karl Unterkircher first acclimatised by climbing two subsidiary peaks on the NE ridge of **Chongra South** (6448m) and **Chongra Main** (6824m), the latter via a new route to make only the second ascent of the mountain. They then embarked on the Rakhiot Face by a line up its centre below the Silver Plateau. After some steep ice climbing they reached a snow shelf at 6300m where Unterkircher, searching for a tent site, fell 15m into a crevasse carrying the party's only rope and satellite phone in his sac. (How many of us have come close to doing this?) His companions found him dead, and managed to retrieve the rope and phone, though not his body. As they were feeling relatively good themselves, they decided, after a conversation with Unterkircher's agent in Italy, to continue. They reached the Silver Plateau at 7500m and descended the 1953 Buhl route, with some variations, partly on short skis, which they had carried up the climb. They were eventually rescued by helicopter from 5400m. Their 3000m route was graded IV-V, M4+, with ice up to 70-80°, and was named for Unterkircher, a very experienced Himalayan and Karakoram climber.

On **K2**, the weather in July was unusually bad so expeditions were backed up and things became crowded on the Abruzzi Spur route above the Shoulder, with no less than 10 groups hoping to reach the summit at the same time. There seems to have been some confusion over the fixing of ropes up to and through the Bottleneck, largely done by Sherpas and high-altitude Pakistani porters, but in the end 18 climbers from six parties reached the summit on 1 August. An avalanche then removed most of the fixed rope. Several people died in falls and another sérac fall claimed four more. In all 11 climbers were killed, the worst year for fatalities on K2 since 1986, when 13 died.

The Russians Valerie Babanov and Viktor Afanasiev climbed new routes on both **Broad Peak** and **Hidden Peak**. Their route on Broad Peak followed a steep buttress well to the left of the original route, through a steep sérac barrier at around 7000m, and traversed to join the original route in its upper part. Their climb on the SW face of Hidden Peak took a new



171. The summit snow ridge of Batura II (7762m). In the background is a rare photo of the summit of Batura I (7785m). (University of Seoul expedition 2008)

line, largely on ice, and left of the 1983 *Polish route*, to join the 1977 *Yugoslav route* at 7200m on the SW ridge. They also planned another new route on Gasherbrum II but decided they were a bit too tired.

Two Polish climbers made an alpine style traverse of Hidden Peak, from south to north, starting up the Spanish 1983 route on the SW face and joining the original American 1958 route high up, after four nights in one camp waiting out bad weather. They reached the summit after 10 days and descended to the north, presumably on or close to the *Messner/Habeler route*. They had planned to continue their traverse over Gasherbrums II

and III but had to descend due to lack of food and fuel.

Batura II, at 7762m one of the highest unclimbed summits left in the world, was finally climbed, after many attempts, by a Korean party from the University of Seoul, led by Kim Chang-Ho, in part to mark the university's 90th anniversary. The climb took the S face above the Muchuhar and Batokshi glaciers, and involved a steep 700m rock headwall. They used 2400m of fixed rope.

The American Kyle Dempster climbed the impressive 1300m W face of **Tahu Rutum** (6651m) in the Hispar Mustagh solo – really solo, as he had no support at all for seven weeks. He started up 640m of steep ice then climbed on rock, using a continuous loop technique with 280m of rope, sleeping on a portaledge, and hauling his gear. After 21 days on the face he reached 6500m on the final ridge in darkness and high wind, decided not to continue to the summit, and descended in more bad weather, taking two days to abseil down the face and three more on the snow-covered glacier,

all with no food, to reach his unmanned base camp. This seems to have been one of the more extreme solo adventures of recent years.

Two Slovenian climbers, Dejan Miskovic and Pavle Kosjek, climbed a new line on the NE face of the **Mustagh Tower** (7284m), from the Younghusband Glacier, up steep ice, snow and mixed ground at a standard of WI5 M5. They reached the top of the face at 6900m in one long day and bivouacked in a snow hole, then gave up on the summit in poor weather and decided to descend the 1956 French route on the SE ridge. While soloing down, Kosjek fell through a cornice to his death, carrying their only rope. Miskovic did still have the satellite phone, however, and called Slovenia for help before the batteries died, then descended to 5400m where he was eventually picked up by a helicopter. This is the nearest yet to an alpine style ascent of the Mustagh Tower.



172. The Korean route on the north-west face of Spantik (7027m), 2009. (Kim Hyung-II Collection)

A Norwegian party of four repeated the famous Norwegian 1984 ascent of the **Great Trango Tower** over 30 days. The climbing, in often poor conditions, was very difficult, but unlike the first ascensionists they did manage to descend alive.

Three other Slovenians made the second ascent of **K7 West** (6858m) following the first ascent by Steve House and companions a year earlier. Three other climbers in the same group attempted a steep route on the rock pillars of the S face, reaching 5700m.

2009

Fewer parties climbed in Pakistan in 2009, due to security concerns. It was also a very heavy snow year in the Karakoram. No one reached the summit of K2 but there was, at least, only one fatality. There were several ascents of Nanga Parbat, Hidden Peak and Gasherbrum II, but only one success on Broad Peak.

Five climbers from a large Austrian/Canadian group climbed a new route on the Diamir Face of **Nanga Parbat**, covering 2300m of new ground and joining the 1962 *Kinshofer route* at 7250m. They continued to the summit, looking for a comrade who had ascended the *Kinshofer route* with a Korean party and become separated from them. It transpired that he had fallen toward the Mummery Rib to his death.

Spanish climbers Alvaro Novellon and Oscar Perez made the first complete ascent of the NW ridge of Latok II (7108m), which had many previous attempts going back to 1987. They reached the summit after four



173. Aymeric Clouet traversing the south-east face of the Ogre at around 6300m in 2009. (*Julien Dusserre*)

bivouacs and descended the same route. Perez fell on an unstable snow slope and pulled Novellon off too, but their rope snagged on a snow crest. Perez was severely injured and Novellon, after trying unsuccessfully to lower him, descended alone, using a cut rope for many short abseils. He called his climbing club in Spain, which mounted a rescue effort but bad

weather prevented them reaching Perez, over a week after his fall. Their ascent was graded VI 6a M6.

Two Czech climbers, Jiri Pliska and Ondrej Mandula, made a new route on the SW face of **Latok IV** (6456m) above the Baintha Lukpar glacier in a single day in July. They took a steep line left of the Japanese 1980 route, which was the first ascent of the peak. The Czechs descended by the same route, in deteriorating weather from just below the summit and above all the difficulties.

A French team (Aymeric Clouet, Julien Dusserre and Jerome Para) attempted the **Ogre (Baintha Brakk, 7285m)** by its SE face from the Choktoi glacier. After two days of steep mixed climbing they reached the base of the final steep rock wall on the east ridge at around 6250m, then made a long traverse left to the SE ridge. They then had to retreat from the foot of the final tower at 6800m in bad weather, descending this ridge, which was first climbed to the same point by Canadians Jeff Relph and Jon Walsh in 2006 but has not so far been completed to the summit.

Three Korean climbers made a new route on the NW face of **Spantik** (7027m) to the right of the 1987 *British route* (the *Golden Pillar*). They climbed in alpine style and took seven days, grading it VI W14 M8. As on the British route, some of the climbing was very insecure and good belays were hard to find. They descended by the SW ridge further right, the descent used by the British and by others since, and first climbed upwards by a Japanese party in 2004.

Pat Deavoll from New Zealand made a solo first ascent of Karim Sar (6180m) in the Batura Mustagh after her companion became ill. The route, on the south-east side of the mountain, above the Shilinbar glacier, involved steep rock and ice, and some bad snow conditions. She climbed it in a long day, up and down, from a camp at 5100m.

A Canadian party attempted the so far unclimbed East Summit (c 6900m) of **Pumarikish** in the Hispar Mustagh, but were deterred by avalanches and instead made the first ascent of **Khani Basar Sar** (6441m) by its SW rib, taking 24 hours from a bivouac at 4800m.

On the rock towers of the Baltoro, Tomas and Alexander Huber, with two companions, made a completely free ascent of the famous *Eternal Flame* on the 6251m **Trango Tower**, a route first climbed in 1989 by Kurt Albert and Wolfgang Güllich. The first ascent was largely free but did use a bolt ladder on one pitch near the top. The Huber route bypasses this at a standard of 5.12d, and an altitude of around 6000m. As the climb was already named they gave names to their individual new free pitches, which is perhaps a novel practice in the big mountains.

In the Charakusa valley above Hushe a Swiss party made the first ascent of **Farol Far East** (6200m), a rock peak which had seen several previous attempts. They fixed some rope on its east ridge and found more difficult rock (6c+ M6+) near the summit, which they reached on the Swiss national day, 1 August.

Also in this valley, an Italian team attempted a new route on the impres-

sive SW pillar of **K7 West**, climbing at up to 7b A2, but descending from 5700m, fully 1000m below the summit. There are now three partial routes on this pillar but none has reached the 6200m sub-peak of K7 West, let alone the main summit.

2010

Relatively few parties managed to climb in Pakistan in 2010, due to the security situation and also to the catastrophic floods, which affected not only the lowlands of the country, but also the Indus valley as far up as Ladakh.

On **K2** there were no successful ascents this year. The Swedish climber and extreme skier Fredrik Ericsson was climbing with Austrian mountaineer Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner on the Abruzzi Spur when he slipped somewhere above the Bottleneck and fell over 3000 feet to his death. His plan, believe it or not, was to ski down from the summit. Kaltenbrunner, who is trying to become the first woman to climb the fourteen 8000m peaks without oxygen, turned around and safely climbed down to camp four on the shoulder and then continued down to base camp.

The Austrian climber Christian Stangrl claimed the only ascent of K2, in what appeared to be a remarkable solo push, but was doubted by several people and eventually admitted that he had not been very near the summit at all. He seems to have turned back below the Abruzzi Shoulder. His account included a sighting of a snow leopard somewhere well above the base camp, which in itself is highly improbable. The Austrian media have nominated him for the 'climbing lie of the decade' – though this decade has a way to go.

In August two Russian climbers, Vjacheslav Ivanov and Oleg Koltunov, finally succeeded on the steep granite west face of **K7 West**, though it is not clear at the time of writing whether they continued up the difficult mixed ridge to the summit 600m higher. An Italian pair attempted the same face but retreated after 10 days when their portaledge was destroyed in a rock-fall. They then climbed a steep 900m new line on the W face of **Farol West** (6370m).

The Pakistan authorities are putting up their peak fees for 2011, though not by very much. The 50% discount that has been applied to most of the high Karakoram peaks since 2002 has been cut to 40%, which means, for instance, that a K2 permit for up to seven climbers will now cost \$7200 instead of \$6000. Peaks in Gilgit, Ghizar and Chitral (except Spantik) are offered at 90% off for anyone brave enough to go there. Peaks below 6500m still require only a \$50 per person trekking permit, which is very liberal compared to China, India or Nepal.

For those interested in the **Hindu Kush** a new and detailed sketch map of the Tirich Mir massif at a scale of 1:70,000 is now available from a Spanish source, including a panoramic sketch of the mountains based on a photograph taken by Kurt Diemberger.

For more information, visit www.sгим.drac.com

HARISH KAPADIA

India 2009



174. Zaskar peaks, L to R: Pk 5780, Rungofarka (6495m) (on Rungofarka glacier) and Lingsarmo (6955m) (on Lingsarmo glacier). Taken from a chorten near Gelmothungos. (Harish Kapadia)

The best news of 2009 was that the Indian government opened 100 new peaks for climbing. Though the notification came in early 2010, the process was undertaken throughout 2009. It is almost 17 years since a number of new peaks have been opened to climbers. All the peaks are in the Zaskar and Ladakh area. Many of them are along the road which runs from Kargil-Sankoo to Padam. This passes Panikhar, Parkachik, Ringdom, and the Pensi la to reach Padam. South of this road lie several smaller valleys which are on the watershed between Zaskar and Kishtwar. The peaks that lie in these valleys like **Gelmothungos**, **Chilung**, **Durung Drung**, **Hagshu** and **Nun and Kun** (both above 7000m) were open but now many other approaches to these peaks are possible. **Lingsarmo (6955m)**, a high peak in the Nun-Kun massif is now open. In the Shafat glacier, peaks opened include **Rungofarka I (6495m)**, **II (6395m)**; **Chilung nala**, **Chiling Pk I (6253m)** and **II (6349m)**; **Hagshu valley Peak 6515m**; and in the Durung Drung valley **Peak 6485m**. Moreover, due to the road passing by the mouths of these valleys one only has to step down from one's trans-