



AAC Publications

Winter 2012–2013 overview

Pakistan

Although difficult weather conditions shut down all but one expedition attempting 8,000m peaks in Pakistan, a Spanish pair succeeded on the lower Laila Peak above the Ghondogoro Glacier.

Laila (6,096m), well seen on the standard trek from the Baltoro Glacier over the Gondokhoro La to Hushe, is one of the most spectacular snow/ice peaks in the Karakoram. After one attempt that came close to the top, José Fernandez and Alex Txikon reached the summit on February 18, 2013, having made a grueling push up the west face from their top camp. Earlier, the pair had plowed a trench through deep snow to reach Camp 1 at 5,200m, then in improving weather arrived at Camp 2 (5,600m) the following day. They then took 10 hours, battling through snow reported to be sometimes chest deep, a temperature of -35°C , and winds estimated to gust 60 km/hour, before reaching the summit. Another four hours were needed to return to Camp 2, where they reunited with two other team members.

Laila had several ascents before the "first official" in 1997 by an Italian team via the northwest ridge. The original ascent had been made 10 years earlier by Andy Cave, Tom Curtis, Sean Smith, and Simon Yates (U.K.), during a productive trip to the Hushe region, which also saw the first ascent of Namika (6,400m). They climbed Laila by the great snow and ice slope of the west face.

Elsewhere four teams were attempting the first winter ascent of Nanga Parbat.

Daniele Nardi and Elizabeth Revol attempted the Mummery Rib in alpine style, and on their final push were pinned down by 100 kph winds and temperatures reported as -48°C . With no improvement forecast, they descended, Nardi suffering from frostbite. Nardi's brief report on this unclimbed line, first attempted in 1895, can be found [here](#).

An American-Hungarian team attempted the northeast face (well left of the existing Diamir Face routes) via the line tried in 2000 by Hanspeter Eisendle, Hubert and Reinhold Messner, and Wolfgang Tomaseth, which stopped on joining the 1978 Czechoslovak Route at around 7,500m. Hungarian Zoltan Acs left early due to frostbite, and David Klein and Ian Overton were unable to make much progress before abandoning their attempt. Poles Marek Klonowski and Tomek Mackiewicz, on their third Nanga Parbat winter expedition, were attempting the Schell Route on the Rupal side. From a bivouac above the Mazeno Gap, Mackiewicz made a bold solo attempt on the summit but turned back at around 7,400m.

The fourth team was actually one man; the little-known Joel Wischnewski from France, attempting a highly ambitious solo climb of the southeast pillar. When nothing was heard nor seen of him for some time, his agent in Pakistan launched a search. Three experienced Pakistan mountaineers climbed up the lower part of his proposed route, but never found any trace of the Frenchman.

The historic first winter ascent of Broad Peak, and subsequent tragedy, is reported [here](#).

In some ways one of the most impressive proposals was made by four Russians who planned to climb a new route on the west face of Amin Brakk in the Nangma Valley. Although only 5,850m in altitude, Amin Brakk has a ca 1,250m sheer granite wall: the largely sunless (and that's in summer)

west face. Eugeny Dmitrienko, Andrew Glen, Sergey Grachev, and Alexander Shabunin planned to try a new big-wall line starting left of the 2000 Spanish route, Sol Solet ("Sun, little sun"; 6c+ A5). They established a large equipment stash a few pitches up their proposed route, only to have it destroyed by avalanche. They had no option but to abandon the attempt and leave for home.

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Images



Looking south down the Gondokhoro Glacier from Gondokhoro La, a memorable view for those making the Askole–Baltoro Glacier–Hushe trek. The prominent ice spear left of center is Laila, and the winter ascent was made via the right skyline, the west face as seen in profile.

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