



AAC Publications

First Ascents of Mt. Kamasu, Mt. Kozerog, Pashalsta Peak

Kyrgyzstan, Jamantau Range

The four-man team of Joe Prinold, Virgil Scott, Dominic Southgate, and Samuel Thompson began their expedition to the Jamantau Range, just north of Arpa Valley and west of the At-Bashi, on August 24. After a 12-hour drive from Bishkek, they camped at the road head, and then, with the assistance of locals with horses, walked to base camp at 2,968m (40°56'25" N, 74°30'15" E), just to the northwest of Mt. Kamasu (4,505m). This unclimbed peak was the primary objective of the expedition.

Scott and Thompson attempted Kamasu on September 1. After a bivy on scree just below the foot of the glacier, the two started up the initial glacial slope (30°) on the northwest face at 4 a.m. As the steepened they started placing screws every 30 meters, still moving together. The glacier then reached an icefall and was climbed on its right side, where the ice was smooth and continuous, forming the crux of the route. Four pitches were made up the steep ice (70°). A traverse left then regained the glacier and a shelf at ca 4,000m). Above, they followed a snow ridge to the summit (Alpine D). There was very little névé on the route—the vast majority was bulletproof ice, proving rather tiring on the calves! The descent was by downclimbing and Abalakov rappels, mostly following the ascent route.

Separately, Prinold and Southgate attempted Kamasu via the northeast ridge. After 1,100m of ascent, mostly on fairly steep scree slopes, they bivied on the ridge at ca 4,100m. The next morning easy ground led to a 60m snow slope of about 45°. At the top of this slope was a sheer drop of about 50m. An abseil could have allowed a continuation along the ridge; however, it was decided that it would not be possible to reverse this abseil on the descent. Given a lack of ice screws, a descent down the steep glacier route taken by the others also would not have been possible, so Prinold and Southgate reversed their route to return to base camp that afternoon.

On September 6, Southgate and Thompson attempted Peak 4,475m (40°54'20" N, 74°33'42" E). An overnight bivy was made at the top of the valley northwest of the peak (3,450m) about 100m below the start of the northwest-facing glacier. They began climbing the northwest glacier at sunrise. There was a thin layer of snow on the glacier, but otherwise it was hard and at times brittle ice, at approximately 60°–65° angle. The first 700m was a mix of pitched climbing and simul-climbing, with a belay point every 80m or so when ice screws ran out. This led to an easier snowy summit ridge, with a steep bergschrund at the very top. The main summit was reached after 10 hours climbing and 1,000m of ascent. It was slightly west of that shown on the Soviet maps, and the summit height measured by altimeter was 4,450m. Descent followed the same route, taking seven hours and requiring 11 abseils with Abalakov anchors on 60m ropes. The summit is believed to be previously unclimbed, and the team suggested a name of Mt. Kozerog. The difficulty was approximately alpine grade D+.

Prinold and Scott made two attempts on the triangular Peak 3,861m (40°55'10" N, 74°29'16" E) before succeeding on September 8, starting from a bivy at 3,340m. The two climbed the left (southeast) arête on this rocky peak. About 10 pitches (no more than VS) plus simul-climbing led to a satisfyingly pointed summit. The peak, believed to be previously unclimbed, was named Pashalsta Peak. The trip was supported by the Alpine Club and the British Mountaineering Council.

Information supplied by **Virgil Scott**, U.K.

Images



Mt. Kamasu (4,505m). The first-ascent team climbed the long glacier system on the northwest face and then a snow ridge to the summit (1,000m, D).



Climbing on Mt. Kamasu.



Climbing on Mt. Kamasu.



The route on the northwest side of Mt. Kozerog.



Attempt and route (southeast ridge) on Pashalta Peak.

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