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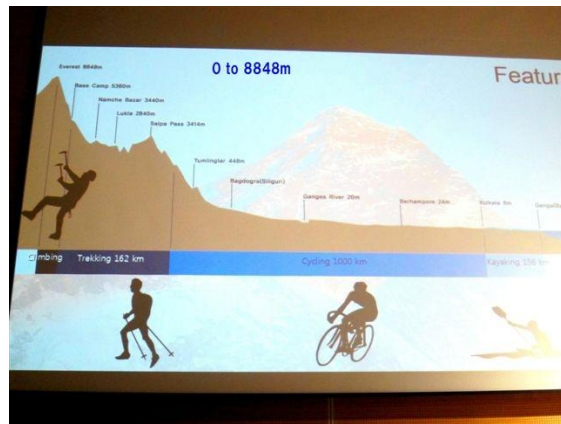
The world's first climber to conquer the summit of Batura Sar in Pakistan

- The successful ascent of 8,000 meters mountains without oxygen
- An unmatched explorer of Pakistan who succeeded in climbing 14 Eight-thousanders. (14 peaks all of which are over 8000 meters)

Korean Strongest Climber



Chang-Ho KIM lecture, 49 years old



“0 to 8848m” 2013 Project

“0 to 8848m” Project (Partner: Sung-Ho SEO 34 years old)

Indian Ocean-Bay of Bengal – Kolkata (Calcutta)-----	Kayak	156 k m
Kolkata—Nepal-Toumlingtal-----	Bicycle	893 k m
Toumlingtal—Everest BC-----	Trek	162km

[Summiting Everest without oxygen]

From Indian Ocean to Everest BC-----40 days

Climbing Everest-----40 days

Chang-ho KIM completed climbs of 14 8,000m peaks in 7 years 10 months 6 days. His record is 38 days earlier than Polish, Jerzy Kukuezka.

(His partner was lost at 7,950m on descent.)

Chang-Ho KIM’s main records

1993 – Great Trango Tower (6,284m, Karakorum) ascent

1996 – Gasherbrum IV (7,925m, Karakoram) east face new route attempted

2001 – Khache Branga (5,560m, Karakorum) 1st ascent
Honboro Peak (5,500m, Karakoram) 1st ascent
Shikari (5,924m, Hindu Kush) new route 1st ascent
2001 – 2002 Solo expedition in Karakoram and Hindu Kush Ranges
2003 – Delhi Sang Sar (6,225m Pamir) solo 1st ascent
Atar Kor (6,189m, Hinduraji) 1st ascent
Haiz Kor (6,105m, Hinduraji) 1st ascent
Bakma Brag (6,150m, Karakoram) 1st ascent
2005 – Nanga Parbat (8,126m, Pakistan) Rupal face ascent)
2008 – Batura II (7,762m, Karakoram) 1st ascent
2013 – Himjung (7,126m, Nepal) 1st ascent
Completed 14*8,000m w/o oxygen

Interview

These are the expressions that best represent the climber Kim Chang-ho. Kim Chang-ho who has set an outstanding record in the field of climbing has a constant challenge to climb and discover new paths while climbing.

One winter morning, my colleague reporter and I visited Kim Chang-ho's office to have an interview with him. He welcomed us like old friends and the interview started in a warm atmosphere sipping coffee that he prepared for us.

Since when did you get interested in climbing and start to climb mountains as a lifelong activity?

I had an interest in climbing since I was young and began to climb mountains with a will as I joined a mountaineering club in the University of Seoul (UOS). I started climbing mountains of great altitude when I was a freshman. Never did I imagine that my passion for climbing would lead me to succeeding in reaching summits of numerous mountains.

Wow! Mountain climbing now accounts for a great part of your life. Some people say that there needs to be a correlation between one's major and one's dream. How did your major, International Trade, have an influence on climbing in your life?

I now major in the Department of Business Administration at the UOS after the department of International Trade disappeared from the curriculum of this university. Anyways, International Trade enabled me to expand knowledge of geography and this further helped me to climb various mountains.

Mountaineering of Coexistence

Short-lived Vision of the Korean legendary mountaineer Kim Chang-Ho

Author: OH Young-Hoon (young.oh@ucr.edu)

Choi Hong-Gun, former president of Corean Alpine Club, grew worried that his trekking companion Jung Jun-Mo didn't return to the Gurja Khani village (2620m), east of the Dhaulagiri range, western Nepal. Both planned to visit the basecamp of Korean Gurja Himal (7193m) south face expedition, and yet Choi, due to a headache from altitude, stopped in the village and waited for Jung's return. Early in the morning of the next day, October 12, 2018, he sent to the basecamp (3576m) his guide, who delivered a breaking news: all nine individuals in the basecamp—five Koreans and four Nepali staff—were found to be dead.

The bodies were found scattered around below the camp as far as about 500m. Many have inferred the cause of the accident to be the blast of an avalanche occurred while everyone



Figure 1 Piulet d'Or recognized Kim's climb of Gangapurna in 2016. Photo from Kim Chang-ho archive.

sleeping. The Google Earth image shows a massive serac at the edge of the upper plateau on 5900m to the west of Gurja Himal's summit. It broke off, so does the hypothesis go, and seconds later blew away the basecamp straightly down the wall. While no one will probably ever be able to confirm the exact cause of the tragedy, history has it: in 1997 a tremendous blast of an avalanche catastrophically struck at the end of the successful Ganagawa expedition to Skil Brum (7360m) near K2, when six including the leader Hiroshima Sanro died and seven injured.

Kim Chang-Ho, the expedition leader at the age of 49, was a star mountaineer in South Korea. He completed climbing all fourteen 8000m peaks in 2013. He did so without breathing bottled oxygen and, though not specifically intended, in the shortest-ever period of seven years and ten months—until Nirmal Purja of Nepal broke the record in October 2018. Less known but more significant is that he climbed formidable new routes and gathered superb first ascents in Himalaya and Karakoram. Peaks and faces he opened a new route include: Shikari (5928m, 2001) in the Yasin valley, Khache Brangsa (5560m, 2001) in the Arandu valley, Nanga Parbat's Rupal face (8125m, 2005), all in Pakistan, Gangapurna's south face (7455m, 2016), Gangapurna West's south face (7140m, 2016), both in the Annapurna range in Nepal, and Papsura's south face (6451m, 2017) in India. With the Gangapurna ascent he and his two colleagues earned the Piolet D'or award in 2017, firstly ever as Korean.

The list of his first ascents is even more impressive and includes: Batura II (7762m, 2008) in Pakistan, Himjung (7140m, 2012) in Nepal, both with partner(s), an unnamed peak (6006m, 2002) near the Lugsarsar pass, Delhi Sang-i-sar (6225m) in the Chapursan valley, Atar Kor (6189m), Haiz Kor (6105m) both in the Chiantar range, Bakma Brakk (6150m, or Bukma peak,

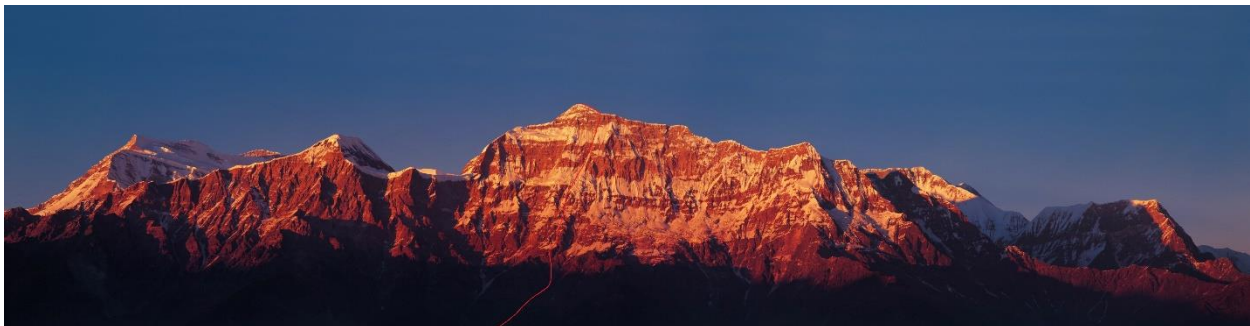


Figure 2 South face of Gurja Himal and Kim's planned route. Photo by Cho Jin-Su.

2003) in 2003, all alone and in Pakistan. It is noteworthy that he strove for and maintained excellency in all three subgenres of contemporary Himalayan mountaineering: the fourteen-peak bagging, the high-altitude wall climbing, and the lightweight approach.

In 2018, Kim planned to climb Gurja Himal's untouched 3800-meter-long south face in the alpine style. This climb was part of what he called "Korean Way Project," an unconfined series of Himalayan climbs he embarked from 2016. The project aimed to climb a new route on a mountain, with no external assistance. Interestingly, Kim specified the following three criteria in the choice of climbing destination: the potential merit of exploration in the entire travel, the mountain's significance in the local culture, and the planned route's naturalness. This stylistic, innovative approach to mountaineering stems from his own mountaineering philosophy that distinctively concerns the ethics of relationship, or what he called "mountaineering of coexistence." I believe, however, that he was, and still is, both most acclaimed and least understood within the community of Korean mountaineers as well as among the larger public. Thus, I think it deserves to take a careful look at how the three decades of Kim's mountain journey contributed to the making of his visionary approach to mountaineering.

Early period

Kim was born in Yecheon, a rural town around the center of the Korean peninsula, September 15, 1969. Except for notable athletic aptitude he showed in his junior-high-school handball team, he was relatively a quiet student with little outstanding character. In 1988 he entered the University of Seoul. As a freshman he temporarily joined a student club that concerns philosophical and social issues, and another for the campus newspaper publisher. Yet once he joined the university's alpine club, he fell deeply into the world of climbing and mountaineering.

In the 80s, university alpine clubs across South Korea offered a distinctive niche for those unable to find from elsewhere a solution for sociopolitical and existential crises. South Korea's collegiate culture in the late 80s reached the culmination of two decades of civil conflict for democracy. Common among university students were lively debates and strong moral convictions for fellow citizens' rights and wellbeing. On the other hand, the drastic economic advancement and relative wealth combined with the nationalistic agenda had bolstered a firm

ground for the explosive boom of Himalayan expeditions. Financially as well as ideologically supported by well-off graduates and outdoor corporations, most university alpine clubs were eager to send undergraduate members to the Alps, Yosemite, Denali, and most notably the Himalaya.

In the 90s, Kim, then a fine climber racking up 5.12s on rocks, participated in two Karakoram expeditions organized by University of Seoul Alpine Club: Great Trango (6286m, 1993) and Gasherbrum IV (7925m, 1996). Kim in both expeditions climbed at the forefront. Meanwhile, his competent climbs often exhibited recklessness. An audacious penchant characterized Kim's as well as part of his club's approach to mountaineering, and it was seldom regarded anomalous or unwarranted within the grandiose alpine-club culture in his generation. In the impregnable east face of Gasherbrum IV, for example, Kim's pair climbed up to 7450m. The leader Kim faced an impasse: the rocky face was crystal solid, with no crack to secure protection. "Let the rope go if I got a fall!" shouted the gutsy young Kim to his belayer. Years later Kim referred to this and other moments in the 90s as "my immature younger years when I pursued only great achievements on mountains."

Pakistan exploration

In no sense Kim garnered special attention until the summer of 2000 when he ventured a monumental, unprecedented project of exploration to Karakoram. Before this, he worked at a small outdoor company for two years, and then devoted one full year to study Karakoram geography and climbing history. And he left for Pakistan, alone. In total of about 1700 days from 2000 to 2004, Kim surveyed virtually every mountain range across Karakoram, Hindukush, and Pamir in northern Pakistan. He walked every mid- and large-sized glacier, crossed numerous passes across, thoroughly investigated and took photos of mountain formations and almost every known or unknown peak that seemed to him noteworthy for climbing. In several cases he was first to step in the deepest side of remote glaciers, or second to the first Western explorers in the nineteenth century. Also, he collected local names of the peaks, passes, and glaciers, and meticulously compared them with those in several different maps of the regions.



Figure 3 Kim Chang-ho studying a map on the top of a pass in Karakoram, 2000. Photo from Kim Chang-ho archive.

He read books and reports on Karakoram exploration, in English and Japanese; collected about five thousand books mostly on the particular subject; and picked up words of nine local languages used around northern Pakistan enough to communicate with villagers and herders. While in villages, he labored for and stayed with the residents, enabling himself to converse long hours in order to collect geographic information and regional myths associated with the mountain landscape surrounding.

We know this because he published some of his findings and experiences in the format of travel report series in *Monthly Magazine Mountain*, from 2002 to 2006—he from then on published many other climbing reports in this magazine. Prose beautiful, climbs astounding, knowledge erudite, experiences ghastly. Laconic and unassuming, however, he hardly boasted or exaggerated his feats, remaining for years a man poor and unpopular. He further shared his findings with many Korean expeditioners, suggesting new peaks to climb, giving advice for climbing strategy. In 2013, for example, with two colleagues I made the first ascent of Amphu I (6740m) in Nepal, and to this Kim's suggestion and advice were crucial.

One of the vignettes that shows how meticulous he was to his explorative climbs was when he had to name two peaks he made the first ascent in the Chiantar valley, Hindu Raj (a mountain range between Hindu Kush and Karakoram) in 2003. The two peaks are 6189m and 6105m high each. The first peak is labeled in Tsuneo Miyamori's map published in 2001 as "Suj Sar SW," pairing with a 6177m-peak named "Suj Sar NE." In Kim's view this naming was inappropriate. These two peaks are, in his view, completely separate and independent from each other, thus unnatural to classify them in the same group. Also, Kim observed, "Sar" means peak in Wakhi language, which was no longer used in the villages where the peak is viewed. Instead, Shina is the vernacular language. In Shina, a distinct peak is called "Kor." The second peak Kim climbed was labeled in the map as "Koh-I Haiz." Descending from the peaks to the village, Kim consulted a local expert on their naming. Since each peak is located closely to Atar Sar and Haiz Gah, Kim and the informed villager came up with new names: "Atar Kor" and "Haiz Kor," respectively.

While only a handful of mountaineering chroniclers over the world might guess the significance and magnitude of his collection, no systemic survey has yet been done to the tremendous amount of his leavings including books, journals, rolls of films and in particular the digital database of 2.4 terabyte. As far as I know, in the mountain ranges in northern Pakistan no one has ever ventured a geographic exploration in such a massive scale and in such a meticulous manner, nor anyone or any institution has accumulated mountaineering geographic information of the area in such comprehensiveness and detail. At the time of his death, Kim also kept a detailed plan of climbing for the next five years—which included projects hotly coveted currently, such as the winter K2, as well as climbs on peaks completely unknown to the outside.

Changing attitude

The ordeal of Pakistan exploration fundamentally transformed his attitude toward mountaineering in a way that appreciates relationships with the other. The trips were beyond arduous: he fell into a crevasse numerous, his ankle sprained, the jeep overturned, starved many days, suffered from desolation and hallucination, bandit-attacked and murder-threatened. It was herders, farmers, housewives, village children who came first to give him a helping hand.



Figure 4 Members of The Gangapurna expedition on the top of Insu peak in Seoul, 2016: Kim Chang-Ho (center), Choi Seok-Mun (left), and Park Jeong-Yong (right). Photo from Kim Chang-ho archive.

Realizing how egocentric he was to mountains Kim learned a valuable lesson on the importance of relationship and appreciation and gradually began to consider obtaining and harmonizing with local knowledge and wisdom an integral part of mountaineering in remote places.

Moreover, he realized how mountaineering can bring about a moment of purification and bliss beyond proclaiming the self. In 2005, after ninety days of exhaustive and dangerous climbing in siege tactics on the Nanga Parbat's sheer Rupal face, Kim stood on the top with late Lee Hyun-jo (who perished on Everest southwest face in 2007). Through the radio, Lee sobbingly chatted with one of his close friends at the basecamp, saying, "Bro! It should've been much better if you're here together ..." This struck Kim. Trudging toward the basecamp after descent, Kim reflected upon his own egocentrism in the context of expedition, noting, "What I've just climbed was an imaginary Nanga. This mountain is full of selfish desire. What could then be the true Nanga to me? ... Standing on the summit gives no pleasure nor any meaning whatsoever when lacking this: the true Nanga begets only when I return alive with my teammate."

He began to climb the fourteen giants, not necessarily because he coveted the title. The still young and relatively unheard-of Kim shined to the eyes of Hong Bo-Sung, the leader of Busan Alpine Federation's fourteen-peak project. Under the leadership of Hong—a studious leader and a person of understanding—combined with Kim's skills and experience on high mountains, Busan Dynamic Hope Expedition subsequently excelled on 8000m peaks in many regards. Highly pragmatic in the approach, the expedition continued to form a small team of three to four, barely relied on external supports such as Sherpas and oxygen tanks, traveled and climbed in extreme efficiency by virtue of encyclopedic research on each peak. The whole project completed in mere five years and four months (2006-2011).

Mountaineering's Others

Although Kim apparently preferred a lightweight style of climbing in the Himalaya, he also appreciated virtues of a larger expedition. It may result in bringing about more meaningful climbing experiences. In contrast, the alpine style favors minimalism. In this concept, the autonomy of climbing, which constitutes the core value of the sport, is thought to be divided and reduced when accompanying someone else. Securing the man-versus-mountain frame, solo climbing is therefore the ideal in the alpine style.

Most Korean alpinists have rejected this simplistic individualism. All mountaineers are different, and an excellent combination can bring about wonderful joy and genuine glory. As a leader Kim's art of teamwork sought harmony, expected to avoid undermining individual autonomy but amplify it instead. "What each member wishes to achieve makes up what the expedition wishes, and vice versa," Kim used to say. In 2013, I joined his Everest expedition, his last of the fourteen-peak climbing. With the title 'From 0 to 8848,' Kim and his usual partner in the Busan expedition, late Seo Seong-Ho, aimed the highest mountain starting from the Bay of Bengal, solely on human power. The duo kayaked, cycled, hiked, and climbed to the top without oxygen. Meanwhile, there were three more in the group. They too had their own goals depending on their experiences and wishes: one for Everest without oxygen, another with oxygen, and I for Lhotse without oxygen.

Since as a team we aspired to secure one another's safety, Kim scheduled the four Everesters climbed one day earlier than I did so that if anything would happen on the summit day I might be able to come rescue. And this is what actually happened. All four successfully reached the top; however, the oxygenless Seo grew very tired. The accompanied Sherpa radioed on Seo's condition to me then staying at Lhotse's highest camp, preparing for the night's summit attempt. Instead, I, *as planned*, climbed the slope of Everest, helping Seo walk down to the South Col that night. While sleeping in the camp, nevertheless, he passed away for exhaustion.

Kim didn't ignore Seo's wish to create an organization that helps younger generations climb Himalayan mountains by means of financial and other supports. Consequently, Korea Himalayan Fund was born in the year of Seo's death. The rest of us in the Everest expedition donated and began to serve as the committee members. Kim defined the fund as to aid those who attempt a climb that is "creative and progressive." It accepts no donation from one who is not currently an active mountaineer, especially a corporation, because in Kim's view sponsorship may spoil the purity of mountaineering. When sponsored, said Kim, the outcome is generally favored over mountain experience and mountaineers could easily become imprudent out of fueled ambition. While, sponsored or not, no mountaineer will ever be free from the desire for achievement, they, Kim emphasized to me, must place priority on the desire to "taste the mystique of mountain and mountaineering." Unfortunately, however, most Korean mountaineers thus far did not, according to Kim. As one of Kim's few institutionalized legacies, Korea Himalaya Fund is based on his view of mountaineering that is fundamentally both personal and social.

In his later years Kim appreciated thoughts of Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer Arne Næss (1912-2009). Næss is considered the founder of "deep ecology," a view that all things are nothing but the self and therefore must be pursued as the ultimate goals themselves. Kim's take on his thought is "to follow nature's right way," that is, "climbing and exploring in coexistence" with other climbers, nonclimbers, and those in the past and in the future—all combined to form the "nature."

Once I asked him why he included “Korean” in the title of his climbing project. To me it seemed not only bluntly nationalist but also achievement-centered, running counter to his own philosophy. Yet his response defied the naïve dualism of individualism and nationalism. He said, “The corrupted nationalism remained in me as well.” Being now arguably the most eminent mountaineer in South Korea, Kim also carried an ethical responsibility of sharing the “right way” with his fellowmen. And for this he *must* prove his approach successful, and successful internationally. “Makgeolli (Korean rice wine) is too an alcohol good enough, but why must (western) wine?” Kim asked himself. When he was awarded the Piolet d’Or in 2017, he regarded the fame as the Korean mountaineering community’s collective key taking off the decades-old shackles of craving for international recognition. It was an exorcism for all Korean mountaineers living and dead, at last opening for next generations a door for real freedom of thoughts on the mountains.

Thus, he regarded himself as an apostle rather than the Messiah. The truly “futuristic” mountaineer, he said to me, was not himself but Choi Seok-Mun. Five years junior to Kim, Choi had been Kim’s most favored climbing partner, previously with on Khache Brangsa, Shikari, Bublomotin (“Ladyfinger”, 6000m), Batura II, Paine Central, Gangapurna, and Gangapurna West. Tackling 5.14s as well, Choi is arguably “the best Korean mountaineer” as referred to by Kim. Choi shares most of Kim’s ethics and visions of coexistence, but also Choi has been actively sharing them with others by organizing climbing festivals, opening new trad routes, and writing on climbing ethics. While Kim is gone, his passion and visions on the mountains remain indelible to the minds of a few. Curious to see how they will grow in the future.