



The unclimbed Warsin (South) Face of Saraghrar. (A) Saraghrar South (7,307m: first ascent by Japanese in 1967). (B) Saraghrar South East (7,208m: first ascent by Swiss in 2005). (C) Niroghi Zom (6,600m: first ascent by Japanese in 1967). (W) Warsin Glacier. YVES-ALAIN PETER

GREATER HIMALAYA

PAKISTAN

Sixty seven expeditions visited Pakistan with official permits to attempt peaks above 6,500m. Many others climbed on peaks below that altitude, which for 2005 (and certainly 2006 at least) were royalty free. Out of those 67, 46 attempted the five 8,000m peaks. Of the rest, eight expeditions attempted the popular 7,000er, Spantik (but only three appear to have been successful). The remaining 13 were entirely unsuccessful on their main goal, with the notable exception of the Swiss on Saraghrar, reported below. However, there were some very significant first ascents on peaks below 6,500m, notably in the Trango Group, which attracted much attention.

Following the heaviest winter snowfall in Pakistan for over 40 years, The Government's Meteorological Department issued a warning to climbers and trekkers planning to visit the Karakoram and Hindu Kush during the summer. The authorities warned parties of serious avalanche danger on the high peaks in early season. During winter and spring more than 800 military personnel and civilians in higher villages were reported killed in avalanches, though the true death toll was probably more than twice that number. Greg Mortenson of the Central Asia Institute, who has made nearly

30 visits to the region since 1993, reported more snow than he had ever seen. We begin our report on the summer of 2005 by looking at two expeditions that visited the southern flanks of the Hindu Kush, very close to the Afghan border.

HINDU KUSH

Saraghrar South East

In July a nine-member expedition from the Neuchatel section of the Swiss Alpine Club made the first ascent of Saraghrar South East (7,208m, one of approximately 10 tops that make up the Saraghrar Massif, a vast plateau lying at over 7,000m and defended by relatively steep faces of snow, ice and rock. The team followed the normal vehicle approach used to reach Tirich Mir but at the village of Zondangram hired porters for the relatively short walk north into Base Camp at 3,930m in the Rosh Gol.

The initial plan was to attempt a direct line to the unclimbed South East Summit from the Warsin Glacier to the south. However, once there, they found all lines to be heavily threatened by icefall and rapidly abandoned the plan. This proved a wise decision: shortly after, a huge avalanche, initiated by an earthquake, completely swept the entire approach. Instead, they opted for a safer line further west, climbing the *South Ridge/Face* towards Saraghrar South (7,307m). This last-named summit had been climbed only once before 2005: by Japanese, Hirosada Hara and Yukitoshi Sato, in 1967. The Japanese ascent was made more or

less in Alpine style from the glacier immediately west of the Warsin, a line attempted again in 1999 by a British expedition, which found old and abandoned Japanese equipment. The Swiss route seems to follow the broad snow and ice ridge immediately to the right.

On the 27th June the Swiss team established Camp 1 at 5,076m on a secondary spur running west from the *South Ridge* of Saraghrar South. Camp 2 at 6,147m was set up on the 8th July and after climbing steep (50°) ice couloirs through rocky sections, followed by more gentle snow slopes, Camp 3 was placed at 7,007m (GPS) immediately south of the summit of Saraghrar South.

On the 24th July, Mazal Chevallier, Sébastien Grosjean and Yves-Alain Peter reached the summit of Saraghrar South East by first climbing to a col at 7,224m (GPS) to the west of Saraghrar South. This pass gave access to the main plateau, which the three followed to another col at 7,210m (GPS) north of the South Summit. From there, they were able to reach the base of the South East Summit. The last part of the ascent lay over steep rock and ice slopes, followed by a final, narrow ridge. At the top they enjoyed impressive views of Base Camp 3,300m below.

On the same day Fred Morthier, climbing alone, reached the South Summit for the second overall ascent, following a rocky ridge directly from the col to the west. He then snowboarded down very steep slopes from

Camp 3 to the top of the rocky section above Camp 1. On the 27th July, Corinne Lerch, Martin Liberek and Jean-Michel Zweiacker (the leader of the expedition and member of a Swiss team that attempted a new route on nearby unclimbed Istor-O-Nal North East in 2000) repeated the route to the South Summit. Finally, on the 29th, Marc Bélanger and Zweiacker (again) climbed both the South and South East Summits. The expedition also made the first ascent of a much lower, unnamed peak with a height of 4,950m, situated south of the Saraghrar massif and offering a superb viewpoint. Bélanger and Morthier reached the top on the 25th June and over a month later, on the 29th July, it was climbed again by Grosjean. Morthier made a snowboard descent via couloirs on the north flank.

After the ill-fated Oxford University expedition to the North Western Cwm in 1958, when Peter Nelson was killed during the first ever attempt on the Saraghrar Massif, the following year saw an Italian expedition, led by the well-known writer, photographer and mountaineer, Fosco Maraini, make the first ascent via the North East Ridge, approaching from the Niroghi Glacier to the east. Franco Alletto, Gianfranco Castelli, Paolo Consiglio, and Carlo Pinelli reached the Main Summit (7,349m) after first crossing Saraghrar North (7,040m). They left a statue of St Mary on top and the ascent is recorded in Maraini's classic book, *Where Four Worlds Meet*. This route was repeated by Japanese



High on the South Face of Saraghrar during the first ascent of Saraghrar South East (7,208m) in Pakistan's Hindu Kush. YVES-ALAIN PETER

in 1967 (a different team to the one that made the first ascent of the South Summit), who found the statue still in place.

In 1971, another Japanese team climbed the very difficult rock wall forming the West Face of Saraghrar South West (7,250m). Masahiro Furukawa, Yukio Katsumi, Toshio Nagano and Minoru Nakachi reached the top of the wall and South West II (7,134m), from where Nagano continued alone to the

higher South West Summit. In 1975 and 1977, Jordi Colomer and Spanish friends tried to siege the superb South West Buttress of Saraghrar West (c7,000m). The rock was generally good steep granite and technical difficulties were high, eventually defeating them at c6,350m on this c2,000m wall. The West Summit remains unclimbed. A German party made the third ascent of the Main Summit in 1991 via a

The south side of the Saraghrar Massif seen from an unnamed 4,950m peak. (A) Saraghrar South West II (7,134m). (B) Saraghrar South West (7,250m). (C) Saraghrar South (7,307m). (D) Saraghrar South East (7,208m). (W) Warsin Glacier. (RG) upper Rosh Gol. The line followed on the first ascent of Saraghrar South East is marked, with (C1) Camp 1 at 5,076m, (C2) Camp 2 at 6,149m and (C3) Camp 3 at 7,007m. The route hits the ridge at a 7,224m col and then goes around the back of Saraghrar South. YVES-ALAIN PETER



variant to the original route.

In 1982, a strong Spanish party sieged the first ascent of the difficult South West Buttress of Saraghrar North West (7,300m), with Nils Bohigas, Enric Lucas and Juan Lopez reaching the summit of Saraghrar North West II (7,200m). Two years later the first two named climbers would become internationally famous for their outstanding Alpine style first ascent on the South Face of Annapurna. Saraghrar North West and North West II are respectively the third and fourth peaks west of the Main Summit. The first peak west of the Main Summit, Saraghrar Central (7,330m), appears to be unclimbed, as do Saraghrar West and North West.

Noshaq

A three-member Norwegian expedition led by Glenn Seljassen attempted the south flank of Noshaq (7,492m) above the Upper Tirich Glacier. It is not known which line was attempted but bad weather and conditions thwarted the climb before they got high on the mountain.

The only known route on this peak from Pakistan's Upper Tirich Glacier is the South Ridge, which was climbed in 1971 by the three-man Austrian team of Dieter Eger, Harald Navé and Wolfgang Stefan. The ridge leads to the West Summit (7,250m) and the upper crest was first gained in 1960 from the Afghan side by a Japanese expedition. Goro Iwatsubo and Toshiaki Sakai continued up the ridge before breaking out right across snowfields and reaching the Main Summit directly for the first ascent of the mountain. In July 1971, all three Austrian members reached the 7,400m Central Peak but only Eger and Stefan continued to the highest point. This route does not seem to have been repeated and was only attempted again for the first time in 2000, when a three-person team led by New Zealand guide, Jamie McGuinness, reached 6,500m before retreating. There are two other 'lines' on the South East Face to the right but these do not seem to have been attempted. Interestingly, although the Norwegians seem to have gained permission to attempt this border mountain in 2005, a British expedition planning to attempt the South Ridge in 2006 was eventually denied a permit.

BATURA MUZTAGH

Ya Chish and Batokshi Peak

Simone Moro from Italy and Joby Ogwyn from the USA made the probable second ascent of **Ya Chish** (5,130m) and the probable fifth ascent of **Batokshi Peak** (6,050m) during an unsuccessful attempt on Batura II (7,762m). Batura II is one of the highest unclimbed tops in the Karakoram and the only previously known attempt was in 2002 by a six-man German team via the South Face above the Baltar Glacier. They followed the same route as the 1976

German expedition that made the first ascent of neighbouring Batura I (7,786m: summit reached by Hubert Bleicher and Herbert Oberhofer), but moved left on the upper slopes and were eventually forced to retreat due to bad snow conditions at 7,100m (one of the team, Markus Walter, returned in 2006 but poor conditions forced a retreat).

The Italian-American pair made their attempt in July. Because Ogwyn was delayed by visa problems, Moro went ahead and set up Base Camp at 4,100m on the Baltar Glacier, higher than the spot used by the Germans. From there he climbed a foresummit of Ya Chish, the cornerstone between the North and Eastern Baltar Glacier, to view the route. He decided that the best line followed the 2002 German route up the right side of the Palu Glacier flowing down from the summit of Batokshi Peak, on the right flank of its West Ridge. Ogwyn arrived and the pair made the probable second ascent of Ya Chish (first climbed by Fred Bassler and Alexander Schlee from the 1976 German team). On the 8th July the pair climbed the glacier on Baktoshi, reached its *West Ridge* and placed a camp at 5,900m, not far below the summit. The following day they reached the 6,050m top for a probable fifth ascent. The first ascent was made as long ago as July 1964 by Canadians, Fred Roots and Donald Poole, from the Baktoshi Pass to the north, the second was by the Germans in 1976 (Martin Albanus, Bassler, Bleicher, Hans Jud, Oberhofer and Schlee).

During the descent to Base Camp Moro and Ogwyn took a different line. There was a lot of down-climbing on front points and sections with high avalanche danger. Moro, who was faster, went ahead and was relaxing in camp when he got a call from Ogwyn over the radio. Ogwyn had been hit by an avalanche and thought his ankle was broken. Moro, his cook, and the cook's assistant went to the rescue and helped Ogwyn down the moraine to Base Camp,

from where he and Moro were evacuated the following day by helicopter without having made any real attempt on the main summit.

Dariyo Sar

After their unsuccessful attempt to reach the North West Spur of Rakaposhi, reported elsewhere, Italians, Renzo Corona and Ivo Ferrari travelled up the Baltar Glacier and made the first ascent of the impressive 6,350m Dariyo Sar (a.k.a. Biril Gai Chhok). This peak lies on the west rim of the upper Baltar, between the North and West branches of the Glacier and on the crest of the long ridge running south from unclimbed Beka Brakai Chhok (6,940m) on the Batura watershed. Previously, there had been no really serious attempts on this peak, though in 1998 it was the goal of a British expedition that met with very poor snow conditions. The two Italians climbed the 1,200m *East Face*, a great sweep of snow and ice, over the 10th and 11th August.

Ultar

Yannick Graziani and Christian Trommsdorff attempted the huge unclimbed *South East Pillar* of Ultar (7,388m) from the Gurpi Cwm. Unfortunately, an initial foray to a point a little below 6,000m proved quite eventful and they decided to abandon any further attempt. The French pair chose the month of October, hoping to profit from cold yet settled conditions that can often prevail at this time of year. In May 2000, Graziani visited the Hunza Valley to attempt the same line with Jerome Blanc Gras, Erwin le Lann and Hervé Qualizza. Unsettled weather prevented these four from setting foot on the mountain, though they did manage one or two smaller peaks from the Gurpi cwm, including an unnamed 5,480m peak on the western rim, which they climbed via a fine 500m rock route at TD+ christened Freedom Spirit.

Despite being only a relatively short distance from the Karakoram Highway, Base Camp at 4,200m in the Gurpi Cwm

The vast North Face of 7,788m Rakaposhi rises c5,500m above the Hunza Valley. The obvious, elegant, central spur was first climbed in 1979 by a Japanese expedition. To the right, the unclimbed North West Spur (which slants left up the face from the base of the right-hand foreground flower) received another attempt in 2005. LINDSAY GRIFFIN

