

summiteers were Hirotaka Imamura and Nozawai (on the 6th) and Tomoyuki Furuya, Hiroshi Iwazaki, and Fumihiro Ogiwara (on the 8th). This may be only the second or third ascent of the Original Route (the exact line followed by the successful Korean-Sherpa team in 1991 is unknown).

TAMOTSU NAKAMURA, *Japanese Alpine News*

Raksha Urai, attempt. Hubert Fritzenwaller's five-man Austrian expedition failed at ca 5800m on one of Raksha Urai's unclimbed summits (assumed to be the Rakshi Urai III as mentioned by the British party below). The team gave up on the east face in mid-May.

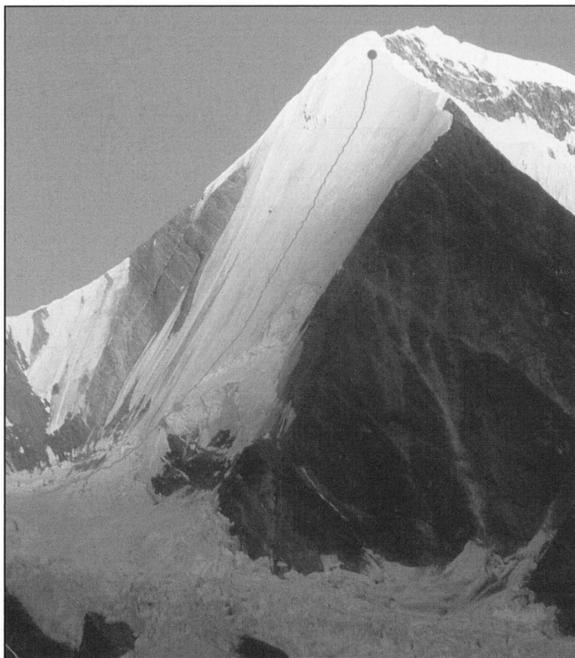
ELIZABETH HAWLEY

Raksha Urai, attempt. During the post monsoon Phil Amos, Jim de Bank, myself and Simon Woods (all UK) together with Bryan Godfrey (New Zealand), and Graham Rowbotham (Canada) explored part of Far West Nepal with the intention of making the first ascent of Raksha Urai (6593m). The team travelled for three days by bus from Kathmandu to the road head near Deura, then walked for 12 days up the Seti Valley. This area has been rarely visited by Westerners, with only one trekking group and three previous expeditions known. All previous expeditions to Raksha Urai have been turned back by poor conditions low down on the mountain.

Base camp was situated on the east side of the range at 4100m, with easy access to all four of the Raksha Urai peaks. The weather throughout was perfect and progress was relatively rapid for the first week. The team elected to try Raksha Urai III, which had also been singled out by the previous expeditions (who refer to it as Raksha Urai IV) The most likely route of ascent was the east flank and the 900m southeast face.

After a period of acclimatisation and load carrying up to 5400m, Amos, Rowbotham, Woods and I set out for an attempt on the mountain, while de Bank and Godfrey elected to explore the western flank up the Salimor Khola. The latter pair were turned back by an impenetrable gorge on the second day, but it was felt that if a way could be found up the valley, access to the higher peaks would be very good.

On October 8, we four left base camp and climbed to a 5000m advanced base situated at



Raksha Urai III closer up. The slope is 60 degrees, and the high point was 6500m. *Adam Thomas*

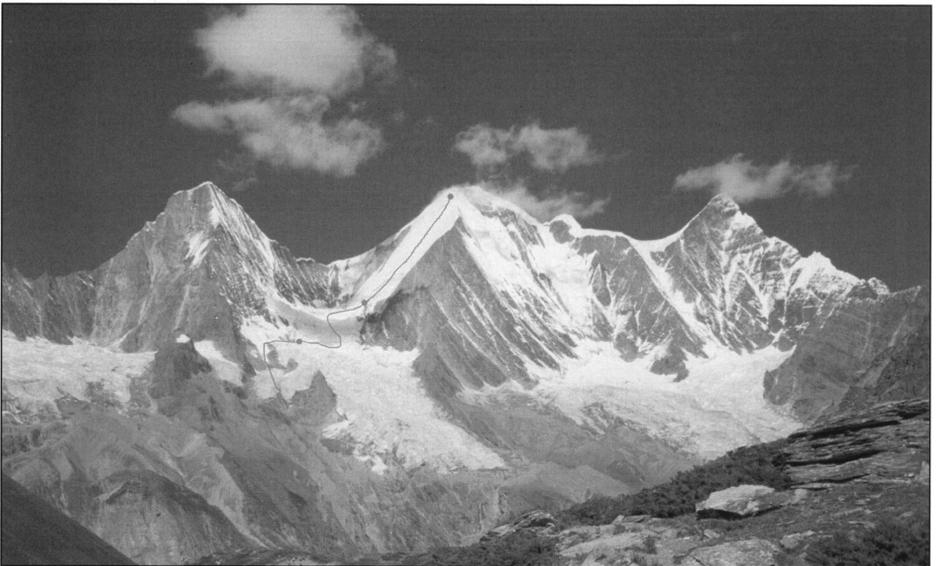
the start of the glacier. On the 9th we arrived at Camp 1, where we had previously cached loads. We spent the following day carrying and acclimatizing up to a cache at 5800m. On the 11th we all climbed easy ground to a high camp at 5900m, situated on a large serac about 100m up the southeast face. We spent the rest of the day resting and acclimatizing. However, a small storm then delayed the summit attempt for a further day. Meanwhile de Bank and Godfrey had returned from their explorations and were coming up to join us, just one day behind.

At 3 a.m. on the 13th the four of us set out for the summit. After climbing for 13 hours up continuous 60-degree ice of varying quality, we hit deep, unconsolidated snow just 50 meters from the summit ridge. There was evidence of an avalanche to our right and as we had not been able to stop on the face for food or liquid, we decided it was best to descend. We estimated that we were less than 150 meters from the summit, reaching a height of 6500m (set by GPS fix).

A difficult night followed. It took nine hours to make the 12 rappels of 60 meters each necessary to descend, using mainly Abalakov Threads and ice screw anchors. Temperatures dropped to -20°C and we had major problems with ice screws freezing up. At 1:00 a.m. on the 14th we were finally greeted at our high camp by de Bank and Godfrey.

Realizing that under the present conditions we were not able to climb the mountain, all six of us retreated to base camp and spent the next week recovering and exploring. During this period we made possibly the first western visit to the Urai Lagna (5200m), a pass on the Tibetan border. We walked out to Chainpur from October 22-30 and flew from there to Kathmandu.

The 1997 German expedition defined the range as having six peaks, which they numbered from south to north as Raksha Urai I to VI. However, we are convinced the peak referred to by the Germans as Raksha Urai I is in fact Dhaulagiri/Dhaulasiri or certainly part of the Dhaulagiri Group, as it is not visible from the main valley and is separated from the other Raksha Urai peaks by a considerable distance. Also, Raksha Urai VI referred to by the Germans is, in our opinion, yet another separate mountain a little north and some way east of the main



Raksha Urai III. The team estimates (via GPS positioning) that they were within 50 meters of the summit ridge and less than 150 meters from the summit when they turned around due to avalanche danger. *Adam Thomas*

range. We therefore suggest the most logical nomenclature for the Raksha Urai Group to be four peaks (I to IV) from south to north, so the Germans' II now becomes I, etc. We also feel that Raksha Urai III, which we attempted, is higher than the quoted 6593m for Raksha Urai and more like 6650m.

All four peaks of Raksha Urai would make for superb high-standard alpinism in a beautiful and remote area. There are also other possibilities in the region, although any trip would necessarily be a long and serious undertaking. More information can be obtained from myself at adamclimb@btinternet.com or from our website at www.virginsummits.org. The expedition won both the Helly Hansen Mountain Adventure and the Lyon Equipment awards in 2001.

ADAM THOMAS, *United Kingdom*

Dhaulagiri, ascents, attempts, and tragedies. On October 12 the Spanish climber, José Antonio 'Pepe' Garces, the leader of a small Spanish-Italian expedition to the Normal Route up the northeast ridge, was killed when he fell to his death from ca 8050m on the summit ridge. His body could not be recovered. On the same day his fellow team member, Silvio Mondinelli, reached the summit. (*Editor's note: 44-year-old Garces was a prolific 8,000m collector and just a few months previously had summited K2. Prior to this he had climbed Everest in 1991, Cho Oyu in 1997, Gasherbrum I and II within one week during 1999, and Manaslu in 2000. He had also reached the Central Summit of Shishapangma.*)

On the much more difficult east face, which has only been climbed by nine people, three Japanese disappeared sometime after October 14. The four-member team first went to the northeast ridge to acclimatise and Hideji Nazuka continued to the summit on his own, reaching the top on the 11th. His fingers became frostbitten and he immediately left the mountain. Forty-six-year-old Nazuka has now climbed nine of the 8,000m peaks, with some of these achieved by outstanding routes, such as the first winter ascent of the southwest face of Everest (1993; his second ascent of Everest), the first ascent of the northwest face of K2 (1990), and the northeast ridge of Kangchenjunga (1991). The remaining three climbers, Masashi Fukumoto, Ryushi Hoshino, and Yukihiko Shinagawa, moved down to the base of the huge east face, which they hoped to climb to an exit on to the northeast ridge at 7500m.

The trio were watched by another Japanese party led by Ryoji Yamada. This party was actually part of the same expedition as Hoshino and friends but Yamada's team had no intention of attempting the east face. Team members saw the east face climbers start up early in the morning of the 12th with three days' food. They later saw them make two bivouacs. Yamada himself watched them on the third day, the 14th, and reported that at 10:00 a.m. they had only reached 6400m or 6500m. "They were moving very slowly, were very tired and not in good condition," he observed. If Hoshino and team-mates had managed to reach the ridge at 7500m as planned, they would probably have been alright, as Yamada had left a camp there for them, stocked with a good supply of food.

Yamada and his party departed base camp on the 16th, leaving only a cook. The latter came back to Kathmandu alone on the 22nd or 23rd and told the trekking agent that the Japanese had not returned. He also added that on the 18th and 19th there had been very heavy snowfall with strong winds around the summit. Yamada was still in Kathmandu when the cook returned and on the 24th he flew by helicopter to Dhaulagiri to search for the missing men. From the air Yamada could see no trace of the climbers nor any signs of avalanching on the face. He concluded that they must have fallen before they reached his ridge camp. Hoshino was 33