

BALTORO MUZTAGH - OTHER

Muztagh Tower, southeast ridge (French Route), attempt; possible first ascents of surrounding peaks. Our expedition began when I developed an obsession with the unclimbed and rarely seen northeast side of 7,284m Muztagh Tower. The team comprised I (a Scot working in Switzerland) as leader, deputy leader Steve Brown (American), climbers Nicolas Bernard (France) and Philippe Oberson (Switzerland), and high-mountain trekkers Patrycja Paruch (Poland, medic), Markus Schneider (German), and Markus Stratmann (German). The team was rounded out by Akhbar, our cook, assistant cook Javed, and liaison officer Lt. Haseeb Ullah.

A streamlined Islamabad-Skardu-Baltoro approach put the squad in base camp on June 9, our sixth day out from Askole and 12th in Pakistan. The camp was located at the confluence of the Younghusband and Biange glaciers, at the foot of the southeast ridge of Muztagh Tower. The heavy Karakoram winter and cold spring was turning into an unstable summer, and while the team's weather forecasts contained detailed information relayed by satellite telephone from a free U.S. web page, they turned out to be hopelessly inaccurate for all but the most general trends.

Oberson and I found a route up the Younghusband icefall and reconnoitred the flat upper basin to within 2km of Moni Pass. There we found a location for an advanced base camp below the northeast face. Bernard and Brown performed a vertical reconnaissance of the first rock peak on the long southeast ridge, electing not to complete the last 15m of their route up a pinnacle, which fell off less than a week later. We established advanced base just before the arrival of a week of good weather, which saw Brown, Oberson, Paruch, Schneider, and Stratmann climb a foresummit of Pt. 5,850m, directly above camp, and then Schneider, Stratmann, and I climb Pt. 6,001m (Tsetse on the Swiss map) by its south ridge. This ascent, completed on July 18, involved snow climbing at 45°, followed by a descent to the west. From the top we obtained a perspective view of Muztagh Tower's north face. Monstrous cornices on the southeast ridge and seracs threatening the true north face and north ridge (which rises from the Moni Pass) left two available options: a snow/ice line with two rock steps way over to the left, which ascended to the col on the southeast ridge between the Black Tooth (6,719m) and Muztagh Tower; or the poorly defined northeast spur falling directly from the summit with a steep rock barrier between 6,600m and 6,900m. For either route to be feasible, the face would need time to dry.

Schneider, Stratmann, and I continued acclimatizing by tackling a peak on the ridge separating the Biange and Godwin-Austen glaciers, climbing a long slope of hardened avalanche debris to steeper exit gullies. Stratmann was forced to turn back due to inadequate crampons, but Schneider and I reached the summit of Pt. 6,345m on July 21, finding it to be a fine vantage point. There was a unique view of Muztagh Tower, with its southwest and northeast ridges in profile, plus a full Baltoro panorama. Meanwhile Bernard, Brown, and Oberson turned their attention to the Biange Glacier icefall above base camp, in an attempt to make the second ascent of the 1956 French route on the southeast ridge. Two night-time outings resulted in a passage through convoluted terrain to gain snow slopes, at 5,500m, below the Black Tooth.

With the return of unstable weather the trekkers departed, and Oberson and I retrieved much of the technical gear from advanced base. As there were no large accumulations of snow on the mountain, the four other climbers made an attempt at the French route, turning back on the snow face below the Black Tooth, due to illness and exhaustion. A second bid, which

reached the same point, was stymied by the arrival of the heaviest snow in two weeks, despite an optimistic forecast.

With time running out, Oberson and I made a final attempt on August 4. We climbed the icefall by night and continued over snow and ice faces to a shoulder, at 6,000m, on the southwest ridge of the Black Tooth. We then climbed, through a snowstorm, up a broad snow slope to the right of the giant serac barrier on the south face. At ca. 6,300m, on the inclined snow terrace above the edge of the serac, avalanche conditions forced a retreat.

On the descent I led down a long snow slope directly to the upper Biange. While crossing a low-angle ice slab, Oberson slipped, pulled me off, and we went for a 100m skid. Although Oberson was unhurt, I sustained impressive facial scratches and a back injury, which was later diagnosed as two compressed vertebrae. Fortunately, I was able to descend unaided, which was convenient, as were too high for helicopter evacuation. I was later assisted through the icefall by Brown, Bernard, Akhbar, and assistant sirdar Mustafa, the last two also high-altitude porters.

The expedition concluded with an immediate walk-out, a bus to Islamabad, administrative wrap-up, and medical attention in Europe. The team members thank Wil and Alta Brown, Dima Geshkenbein, Monika Hronska, and Colin Monteath for their generous assistance.

BRUCE NORMAND, *Switzerland*

Savoia Kangri, southeast face, attempt. A seven member Japanese expedition led by Koichi Ezaki attempted unclimbed Savoia Kangri (a.k.a. Summa Ri, 7,263m), just west of K2. The peak had only been attempted twice. In 1982 a team of Czechoslovakians living in Switzerland reached 6,550m on the 1,800m southeast face above the Savoia Glacier, and in 1998 a British team climbed a bow-shaped couloir through the triangular rock buttress left of the Czech Route, then followed the right edge of the big south-facing ice slope above to gain the upper southeast ridge. They climbed the ridge to 7,000m, before retreating in deep unstable snow. The Japanese opted to attempt the British line.

They established base camp on the Baltoro below Angel Peak, at 5,100m, and an advanced base on the Savoia glacier, at 5,300m. On July 25 the team placed a temporary camp at the start of the bow-shaped snow couloir, and on August 7 situated Camp 1 high in the gully, at 6,100m. The same day members climbed another six pitches to 6,300m, close to the top of the couloir, but thereafter were unable to regain this high point.

TAMOTSU NAKAMURA AND THE JAPANESE ALPINE NEWS

K2 - correction. Iván Vallejo was part of the Spanish film crew from the “Al Filo de lo Imposible” TV series, as reported in *AAJ 2005*, p. 352. However, Vallejo is not Basque but Ecuadorian.

MARCELO SCANU, *Argentina*

Broad Peak, southwest face. At 11:30 a.m. on July 25 Sergey Samoilov and Denis Urubko from Kazakhstan stepped onto the summit of Broad Peak (8,047m) after a remarkable ascent of the previously unclimbed southwest face. The two climbed the 2,500m route alpine-style, in six days. On the lower part of the face they had to overcome two steep rock bands, the first at ca.