

alternative was a direct ice-blobbed line, which looked at least WI 9 and neither of us wanted to throw ourselves at it before exploring the hidden corner option.

On the 14th we were at the base of the route by 7 a.m. An awesome chandelier led to more open ground, where we moved together for two pitches before making an 80m left to right traverse below the huge overhanging rock band. Bracey led the fifth pitch, continuing round to the corner, hoping to see hidden ice. "It should go but it looks hard," came Bracey's shout. I followed in excited anticipation: that it "should go" was good news but I wondered what the Bracey version of "hard" would entail.

The corner was vertical, mixed, and similar to the crux sections of climbs like the Beaumont on the Petites Jorasses. After 50m of M5 I constructed a belay at the top with all four of our pitons. Bracey led the next pitch at M5+, after which two more pitches of 50-60° snow and ice led to a spot where we could erect our hanging bivouac tent.

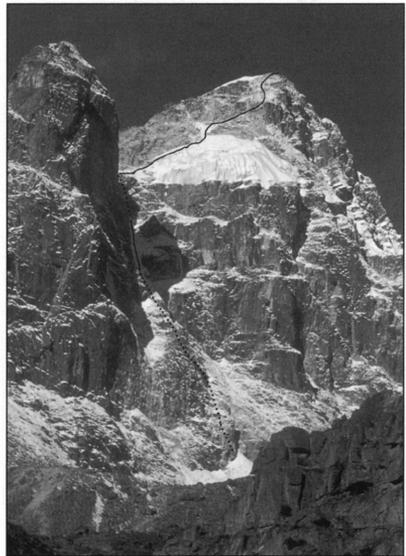
After an uncomfortable night, Bracey led pitch 10 at WI 5, running out of rope and making us move together for 10 steep meters before he could find a belay. Four more pitches, largely of unremitting, iron-hard, glass-coated ice at WI 4 and 4+, gave way to a pitch of unconsolidated snow and loose blocks leading to the ridge. The view was spectacular, the belay non-existent. Our 16th pitch led west up the ridge to a coffee-table-sized summit, which we reached at around 12:40 p.m.

The descent was four and a half hours of smooth and trouble-free rappelling, largely from Abalakovs competently constructed by Bracey, and we were back in Gokyo by 6:45 p.m. We christened our ca 1,000m route Snotty's Gully (WI 5 M5+) in memory of the late Sue Nott. Were it situated in the Alps, there would be regular queues at its base.

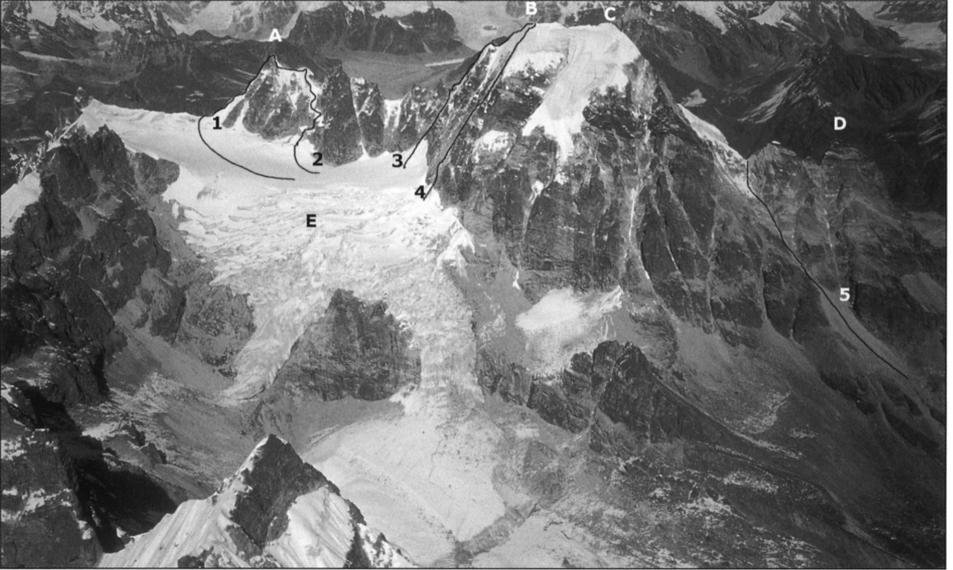
NICK BULLOCK, UK

*Dawa peak, possible first ascent of west ridge; Pharilapcha, first ascent of east face via The Oracle Night.* Three years after I first climbed Pharilapcha (6,017m) via a new route, Bonfire of the Vanities, on the north face (AAJ 2004, pp. 398-400), I was back. With Jean-Luc Bremond, Hervé Degonon, and Cécile Thomas I wanted to climb the long ridge that runs from Pharilapcha to Dawa peak (5,920m), a complete east to west traverse of the Pharilapcha group. We warmed up and acclimatized on Dawa peak, climbing the elegant west ridge. On November 10 this gave us eight pitches up snow and mixed ground to the rocky summit, which looks like a table. Although we are not sure whether this route was previously unclimbed, we named it Meditation Ridge (AD, WI 2 M2). From the top we climbed down the east ridge for 15 minutes, then at a large rock pinnacle descended a big snow gully to reach the glacier to the south (35-50°).

It's important to me that my Alpine and



The east face of Pharilapcha showing the line of the first ascent: The Oracle Night. Sébastien Constant



The south side of the Pharilapcha group in the Khumbu: (A) Dawa peak (5,920m), (B) Pharilapcha West (6,017m), (C) Pharilapcha East, (D) Machermo (5,766m), (E) Machermo Glacier. (1) West ridge (Meditation Ridge). (2) Descent from west ridge. (3) Original route up the northwest ridge (first official ascent by a 10-member Brazilian-Croatian-Russian-Slovenian team with Sherpa support in 2003). (4) The Bridge of Lost Desire (ca 350m, WI 3 M4, Constant-Mercader, 2003). (5) The line of descent followed by the French from the 5,650m col after their first ascent of Pharilapcha's east face. *Sébastien Constant*

Himalayan ascents are in a lightweight style with minimal equipment. Steve House has shown us new ways to be creative and I admire his thinking. In addition, a lightweight style allows you to move location, or change mountain or route, if your proposed climb is in bad shape. When we arrived in Machermo, we discovered snow conditions to be rather unstable and because our pre-trip preparations had not been the best, we decided not to attempt the long traverse as originally planned, but to go to the start and see if we could complete a route on the east face. I try not to allow ambition make me forgot that staying alive is more important than reaching the summit.

We started from Machermo on November 14 and reached the bottom of Pharilapcha's east face, which lies in a hidden cirque between the villages of Machermo and Gokyo. The following day, in an 18-hour stint from our camp below the face to the village of Machermo, we climbed The Oracle Night (750m, TD-, WI 3+ M4), a line snaking up the left side of the face to reach the 5,650m col that separates Machermo peak (5,766m) to the east from Pharilapcha to the west. This section gave climbing up to M4 with a few sections of WI 3. From the col we climbed the left side of a glacier to reach a mixed ledge at its top. We traversed this ledge right and then climbed up via amazing mixed terrain with excellent granite to the vicinity of the eastern foresummit of Pharilapcha. From here a sharp snow ridge led to the main summit, which we reached late in the afternoon. There were impressive views down the north face and incredible glowing colors on Everest and the surrounding peaks as we started our descent.

Using head torches, we down-climbed to the 5,650m col and then descended the south couloir (rock and snow to 55°), heading west at the bottom to gain the valley between Pharilap-

cha and Kyajo Ri at 5,200m. From there it was four hours to Machermo village, where we spent the night in a lodge, freezing despite wearing our goose down suits that we had carried with us. Two days later we collected our tents from the bottom of the east face and then spent our last two weeks exploring future possibilities.

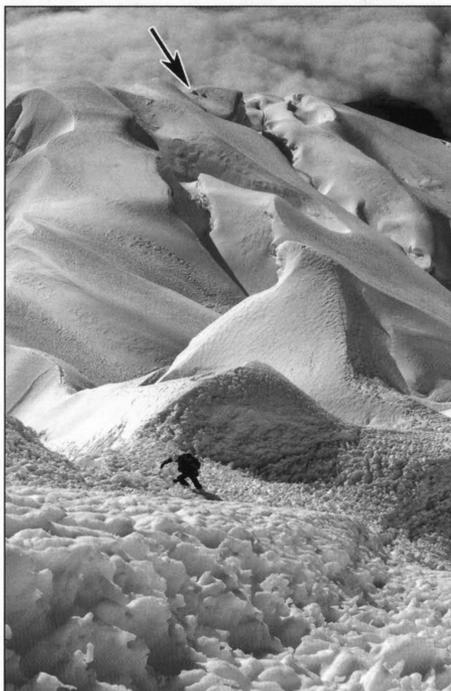
SÉBASTIEN CONSTANT, *France*

*Tawoche, east ridge, winter ascent.* For the first time in 62 years it snowed in Kathmandu. This same storm also dumped more than a meter of snow in the Khumbu, making for an interesting few days. It was February 2007 and Kristoffer Erickson, Seth Hobby, Adam Knoff, Ross Lynn, Renan Ozturk, and I were on a Mammut-sponsored winter expedition to do some new routes on 6,495m Tawoche. Prior to this we had all been part of the Khumbu Climbing School, acting as instructors for the 60 Sherpa students that signed up this year.

We set up base camp at just over 5,000m, high above the village of Pangboche. From there we had easy access to the unclimbed southwest ridge, the south ridge, and the whole east side of the mountain. After making a reconnaissance Adam, Kristoffer, Ross, and I set off for the east ridge, while Renan and Seth went for the south ridge.

The rocky east ridge snakes to the glaciated upper section of the mountain. Climbing in teams of two, we soloed, simul-climbed, and pitched the 1,000m rock ridge, which offered everything from loose scree slopes to dazzling pitches of 5.9 climbing in mountain boots. Everest loomed above our heads the whole day, the ever-present jet steam nuking off the summit. We climbed from base camp to ca 6,000m in just 12 hours, then bivouacked in temperatures of nearly  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Above the bivouac lay 500m of  $70^{\circ}$  ice and ridge climbing to the summit. The four of us topped out at 10 a.m. on February 4 in clear skies and westerly winds. We descended the same day by rappelling the southeast face between our line of ascent and the original route [possibly the so-called Japanese couloir—Ed.]. Halfway down, a snow-storm moved in and made further progress slow. Approximately eight hours after reaching the summit we arrived back at base camp from a 36-hour round trip.

During our ascent we found an empty gas canister at ca 5,500m, which had been stashed in a crack on a perfect ledge. A little above 6,000m, after the “exit pitch” that allowed us to gain the upper glacier, we discovered a large snow picket lying in the snow. This was the only evidence of gear on the ascent. We concluded the picket probably originated from a previous party descending the east



Ross Lynn working through penitents on the upper east face of Tawoche during a winter ascent. The arrow points to the camp at ca 6,000m. *Kristoffer Erickson*