



The first ascent line on Manamcho (6,264m) as seen from high on Peak 5,935m, Steve Burns climbing. Ian Cartwright

*Manamcho (6,264m), Peak 5,935m, first ascents.* When I was climbing Kajaqiao in 2005, neighboring Manamcho looked so good that I had to go back to the Nyanchen Tanghla East. It's not so much that the climbing is top quality, but that the overall mountaineering experience is. The combination of soft snow and deep bureaucracy is enough to put most people off, which preserves a sense of solitude. Out of the 160 or so 6,000m peaks here, only about four have been climbed. And the peaks are spectacular. It must be a bit like the early Alpine Club pioneers found the Alps. A virtually untouched range, with Matterhorns still unclimbed. Here, though, there is the added touch of exotic cultural interest. Local people commented to us that they had only seen white people on their satellite TVs. It's a strange place. One month's caterpillar fungus (Chinese medicine) hunting gives the men enough money to spend the rest of the year as idle rich, revving motor bikes along dirt tracks 250km from the nearest tarmac.

Our team of four—Steve Burns, Ian Cartwright, Paul Ramsden, and I—intended to climb Manamcho and explore to the northwest, which we knew contained spectacular peaks that had not been clearly photographed. Previous teams had visited in September–November, but we chose pre-monsoon in April. Winter snow was still prevalent, and our 2005 base camp was choked with ice. However the mountains appeared to hold less snow than post-monsoon. Ankle-deep snow in Lhasa shortly after we left did not bode well, but in fact the weather was primarily fine, although during one week out of the four we were in Tibet there was heavy snowfall every day. On balance, the months of March and September are probably best.

Learning from our mistakes in 2005, we brought snowshoes, which proved invaluable. After acclimatizing, Paul and I crossed an extensive snow plateau. A reconnaissance led us to focus on the northwest ridge, which had been attempted by Phil Amos and Adam Thomas in



Paul Ramsden leading on day three during the ascent of Manamcho. *Mick Fowler*

2005. They had retreated from 5,880m in the face of strong winds and heavy snowfall. We were initially blessed with better air conditions, and passed their high point on our third day out from base camp. Thereafter, the climbing was mainly snowed-up rock, at about Scottish grade IV. We bivouacked two more times before reaching the summit area. By now the weather had deteriorated badly, and we spent a miserable night on a nose-to-tail ledge, enduring two feet of snowfall during the night.

Morning brought frighteningly strong winds and made the final 75m the most challenging on the route. It was a pity not to be able to see the magnificent view that there must be on a fine day. Instead, we got the hell out as soon as we could by rappelling non-stop back down the route of ascent and wading through waist-deep new snow to a gear dump we had left on the glacier. A further day of knee-deep wading on snowshoes took us back to base camp seven days after leaving.

Steve and Ian had less luck. Having acclimatized and decided to have a go at point 5,935m to the north of Manamcho, they reached 5,700m before Steve began to feel ill. Frustration turned to elation as the ensuing descent and recovery occupied the bad weather period; by the time they were ready to climb again, glorious blue skies had returned. Two days from base camp took them to a good tent platform, and from there snow slopes and mixed pitches of AD or so brought them to the summit, from which they enjoyed a panoramic view. Manamcho and Kajaqiao dominated the eastern horizon, while to the west were the unclimbed peaks surrounding the Manam Valley. Paul and I had a few days to explore at the end. Our main interest was the Manam Valley, which is dominated by Manamcho (meaning "Buddha of Manam"). The valley was one of the most beautiful we have visited, and sports several spectacular 6,000m peaks.

MICK FOWLER, *Alpine Club*

## KANGRI GARPO

*Ata Glacier, reconnaissance.* The Alpine Club of Kobe University (ACKU) has been pursuing unexplored mountains for the past several decades. Our new target is the Kangri Garpo Mountains. More than thirty 6,000m peaks in this range remain unclimbed. In 2002 we found an approach to the main peak of the Ata Glacier, Mt. Ruoni (6,805m), the highest point in the 280km Kangri Garpo Range. In 2003 ACKU sent a climbing party led by Kazumasa Hirai (the first summiter of Chogolisa, in 1958) to attempt Mt. Ruoni from the Ata Glacier, but the party failed at 5,900m on the northeast flank because of bad weather and dangerous conditions.