



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.

[Editor's note: See *AAJ 2002* p. 429 and *AAJ 2007* p. 429 for more history of the Kangri Garpo].

Ever since the ACKU made the first ascent of Que-er Shan (6,168m) in a joint expedition with the Mountaineering Association of the Chinese University of Geosciences Wuhan (MACUGW) in 1988, both parties have maintained a good partnership, not only in mountaineering, but also in academic collaboration. In May 2007 ACKU and MACUGW agreed to hold joint expeditions to unexplored areas of Tibet. They focused on the Kangri Garpo mountains, which are close to the heavily restricted border between India and Myanmar. Our 2007 reconnaissance party intended to find possible climbing routes on Ata 3-Sisters (KG-1, Mt. Ruoni, 6,805m; KG-2, 6,703m; and KG-3, 6,724m). These peaks were discovered on the southwest bank of the Ata Glacier during past ACKU expeditions, which were sent to survey peak heights. For example, Mt. Ruoni (Bairiga) has different recorded altitudes: 6,805m on the USSR map, versus 6,610m and 6,882m on old rough Chinese maps. KG-4 (6,290m) and KG-5 (6,300m) are not shown on existing maps but were discovered by these explorers. Positioning and height identification are still pending. We do not know whether the Chinese authorities have made an aerial survey. The Chinese Army supposedly keeps the up-to-date and precise maps of this area, but these are not open to the public. Even though we tried through the Chinese University of Geosciences, we were not granted permission to view the maps. We have also failed to get permission from the Chinese Academy of Science to see surveys of peaks in this area.

On October 3, in unsettled weather, seven members of the joint party—three from ACKU led by Takeru Yamada, and four from MACUGW led by Niu Xiao Hong—with ten yaks left Lhagu and headed to the Ata Glacier via Kogin and Chutsu. Because the stream flowing from the Ata Glacier is blocked by two lakes and a gorge above Chutsu, they detoured and followed a yak trail crossing over the Hyona flat.

The Ata Glacier has unique topography, in that it flows southeast from the divide of the Kangri Garpo mountains and splits into two branches. The south tongue descends into a tributary of the Kangri Garpo Qu. The north tongue drops into a glacier lake, Cuo Cho Hu (4,265m). Our base camp was sited on the east bank of the glacier near the lake (29°13'12.1" N, 96°49'11.2"E ±13m, 4,291m).

One of challenges of a joint party involving different cultures is to overcome cultural gaps and differences in climbing style. On the first day at BC part of the team practiced rope work on the glacier. Meanwhile, others reconnoitered the route to advanced base camp (ABC). Since ACKU had reached the Ata Glacier in 2002 and 2003, we knew just where to put ABC despite the cloudy weather: on the break point of the glacier (29°12'3.2" N, 96°48'42.9" E ±7, 4,391m).

On November 5 we three Japanese members sited Camp 1 on the upper crevassed area (29°11'36.3" N, 96°47'17.3" E, 4,588m). We put on Japanese-style snowshoes to avoid sinking deeply into the snow.

On November 8 a half day of fine weather gave us our only chance to take pictures and look for climbing routes on the south flank of the northeast divide of the Ata Glacier, the highest point we reached in this reconnaissance (4,797m). Three days of snowy weather erased our tracks in the crevasse-labyrinth, as over two feet of fresh snow covered the crevasses. Takeru Yamada decided to return to the base camp on the tenth in dense fog. We had only a few meters of visibility, but we safely returned to ABC without falling into crevasses, thanks to our GPS track-back function and flags.

We tried to measure the height of Three Sisters from the point 29°12'47.9" N, 96°46'39.9" E ±6m, 4,725m, on the Ata Glacier. We used a simple level, scale, and a GPS to get a vertical

view angle on each peak. The heights of the 3 Sisters, calculated using the measured data, as well as the Google Earth peak position, are KG-1 (Ruoni), 6,900m; KG-2, 6,650m; and KG-3, 6,700m.

While we were in the mountains, a large cyclone hit Bangladesh, and a week later, an unusual snowstorm ravaged eastern Tibet and Shangri-La (Zhong Dian). We had expected good weather during the first week of November, but this year it did not happen. [Editor's note: We were unable to secure photos of publishable resolution in time for the *AAJ 2008*. However, we have posted Takeru Yamada's original report with photos and a map at www.americanalpineclub.org/AAJ.]

TAKERU YAMADA and TATSUO INOUE, *Alpine Club of Kobe University, Japan*

HIMALAYA

Everest, exotica. Centuries ago European theologians debated the question of how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. The modern equivalent might be how many climbers can stand on the summit of Everest. We may soon find out, as the numbers rise dramatically. The authorities in Beijing said last November they would limit the number on the mountain this spring and raise their fees. They raised the fees, all right, by \$1,000 per climber, but as to numbers, they allowed hundreds to move up and down throughout the season, even while a very large Chinese team made a trial run to the summit with Olympic-style torches and tested the torches' performance at 8,850m. Only one climber is known to have been turned away: the mayor of Prague, Pavel Bem, was refused entry into Tibet at the Nepalese border because he displayed a Tibetan flag in front of the Chinese embassy in Prague and met the Dalai Lama several times. So he and his teammates went around to the Nepalese side, and he climbed it successfully from there.

A vast number of men and women did summit Everest this spring: 597 compared to 458 last spring and 305 the spring before that. An experienced leader of commercial expeditions on the north side, Russell Brice, attributes the large number of successes on his side this season—287 climbers—to the fact that the trail was very fast, which enabled so many climbers to move up and down rapidly, in some cases to descend all the way from summit to advance base camp on the same day, and many unskilled climbers to reach high altitudes and even to succeed. The route was fast because it was stamped down by Brice's Sherpas when they were fixing the ropes to the top at the end of April; then light snowfall froze the route. When climbers came along after the Sherpas, they moved on top of a thin layer of snow covering the frozen trail.

Among the astonishing total 597 who managed to summit Everest was the newly crowned oldest person, Katsuske Yanagisawa of Japan, who was 71 years and 63 days old when he climbed to the top on 22 May. He dethroned another Japanese, Takao Arayama, who was a mere 70 years, 225 days old last year.

A Briton, David Tait, who intended to make a double traverse with a Sherpa—up the north side, down the south, back up the south side and down the north—found he was too tired after descending the south side and would need a long rest before going back up again; he stopped there. He explained later that in his training for Everest, he had neglected to train for his descent, and his knees felt it. Anyway, his single traverse was “great, fantastic.”

A party of three Filipinas and three Sherpas followed Tait the next day in their own north-south traverse. Now traversers are boasting of being first from their country, just as