

goatherder with whom they shared base camp.

Woods and Jeffery then departed to join another expedition (see below), while Thomas and Amos returned to the Ochiri Glacier for further reconnaissance. They identified a good objective, but with the injury to Thomas's shoulder and the prospect of a tricky descent, they decided to attempt an alternative route near Uddin Zom. Unfortunately, this attempt was thwarted by poor weather, and with the deadline for their return looming, they cut the trip short by two days.

It was felt there would be some scope for further exploration of the valley and the surrounding area. All mountains are in the 5900- to 6000-meter range and so are perfect for small, self-funded groups. There is still plenty to explore, and many unclimbed mountains are left in the Hindu Raj.

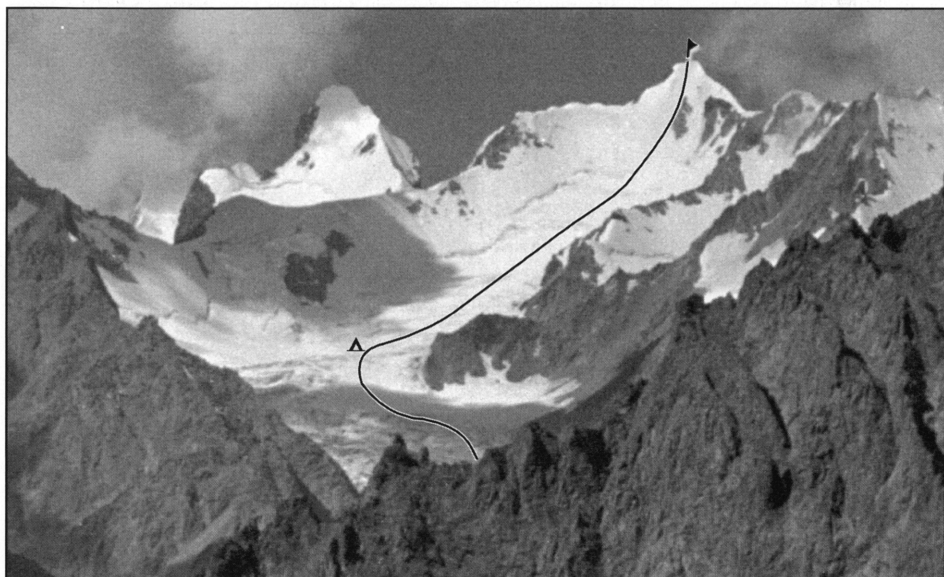
SIMON WOODS, *United Kingdom*

### Batura Muztagh

*Khan Sar and Sahan Sar, First Ascents.* In August, a six-man international team visited an unnamed glacial system above the village of Bhort in the Ishkoman Valley region of northern Pakistan. The team consisted of Graham Rowbotham and Tom Gleeson (both Canadian), Bryan Godfrey and Jock Jeffery (both New Zealanders), and Britons Peter Ford and Simon Woods.

The Ishkoman Valley constitutes a geographical divide, with the mountains on its eastern side in the Karakoram and those explored by this expedition on the western side, in the less-known Hindu Raj Range. Although not visible from the main valley floor, a cluster of peaks had been spotted from base camp during the 1999 Karambar Expedition (see *AAJ* 2000, pp. 323-326) and seemed to offer good opportunities for first ascents.

As is usual during the climbing season, access via the Ishkoman Valley was made diffi-



*Sahan Sar, showing the line of first ascent (Ford-Godfrey-Jeffery-Woods, 2000).* SIMON WOODS

cult by widespread seasonal flooding. After much river crossing, the team eventually established a fine base camp at a seasonal shepherd's settlement named Doaw Jrabe at approximately 3600 meters. After a brief period of reconnaissance, the team attempted an unnamed 5708-meter peak and quickly established an advance base camp at 4200 meters and subsequent camp at 4800 meters. Unfortunately at this point, Gleeson's tent was hit by a large boulder, badly fracturing his arm. This, coupled with deteriorating weather, resulted in a wholesale retreat from the mountain.

Following Gleeson's evacuation to Gilgit, the team made a second attempt on the peak and on August 24 were successful in making the first ascent via the east face. The route required three camps above base camp and, although the main icefall was partially avoided by following a line to the west, summit day involved difficult route-finding through extremely heavily crevassed terrain. The upper face was initially found to be very avalanche prone, but subsequent exploration eventually revealed a more stable line leading almost directly to the summit. The mountain was christened "Khan Sar" after the expedition's cook.

After a brief rest, the team attempted a second peak to the west of Khan Sar. Due to the slightly more accommodating approach, an advance base camp was dispensed with, and the team established Camp I some distance above the main icefall at ca. 4700 meters. From here it was a relatively easy day finding a route through a chaotic section of glacier that led to the upper glacial bowl and Camp II at ca. 5000 meters. On August 30, the summit was attempted. From camp, it was a short approach to the foot of the north face, which was found to be of an accommodating angle and in reasonable condition. Progress was swift, with the face leading to a short section of heavily corniced ridge and a fine summit. The peak was christened Sahan Sar (after the expedition's second cook). Although the height is not entirely clear from the maps, altimeter readings and comparisons with Khan Sar would suggest it to be ca. 5500 meters.

After a period of rest during poor weather, the team attempted a final mountain, this time in an adjacent valley. The only means of approach from Base Camp was to climb a face and join the east flank of Sahan Sar at a height of ca. 5200 meters, cross a small plateau, and then drop down the opposite side of the peak. After returning to Camp I on Sahan Sar, the team successfully negotiated the initial face, but once on the plateau found that the descent into the adjacent valley would be via an exceptionally steep and unstable gully system. This was judged too objectively dangerous to be reasonably attempted, so after a night on the plateau the team returned to base camp and subsequently left for Gilgit on September 10.

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*Nico Sar, First Ascent.* On August 12, 2000, Amy Rice and Walter Keller (U.S.) completed an alpine style onsight ascent of a previously unclimbed peak that they christened Nico Sar. Nico Sar (ca. 5800m) is located in the far western Karakoram on the border with the Hindu Kush at 36° 33.917' N, 74° 09.399' E. The ascent is believed to be the first climbing to take place on the Borth Glacier, a little-known area above Imit in the Ghizer district of Pakistan. Nearby landmark peaks are Kampire Dior and Koz Sar, both found on the large adjacent Karambar Glacier. The Borth Glacier features several unclimbed peaks ranging from 5700 to 6300 meters. The tallest peak, shown on the Swiss map as Swat Maras, is readily accessible from the south side of the glacier. The upper Karambar Glacier provides an alternate approach to climb Nico Sar from the north.

Base Camp (4750m) was located on the Nercherkin Glacier, a steep side glacier branching north from the Borth Glacier, at the juncture of an icefall and the lower terminus of a gla-