

east face of Pokharkan II appeared to have a straightforward snow/ice route winding up around serac barriers, so we established base camp at 4,800m below this face. By then illness and the bitter cold had persuaded David and Steve to leave, so Dick took over the leadership. A close encounter with a snow leopard had nothing to do with their decision.

Advanced base was established in a deep saddle at 5,300m, with a view to out-flanking the southeast ridge and gaining the east face. From this point Toto and I climbed Pokharkan Southeast. Vestigial tracks indicated that one of the French or Belgian expeditions, unsuccessful with their attempts at the main summit earlier in the season, had made the first ascent. From the summit we could see that the east face was feasible, but had doubts that the top we could see was the true summit. However, from the saddle it was possible to access a huge high glacier bay below the south face, and our Sherpa team, inspecting this approach, came back full of enthusiasm. We therefore placed another camp at 5,600m in the glacier bay. At this point the Spilletts became ill, leaving only six of us to attempt the summit.

We set off from our high camp on November 17 but very soon Dick succumbed to the chest infection that had troubled him for some time and was forced to descend. A glacier ramp led to serac barriers at 5,900m, where I was lucky to be able to lead a 10m pitch of steep ice, about Scottish 3. This proved to be the crux of the route. Above a second ice cliff another glacier ramp led easily to the southeast ridge at about midpoint. Buffeted by strong winds, we climbed the ridge to the summit of Pokharkan II. Here, John, Bill, and Toto descended, while Kaji, Martin, and myself continued across a saddle towards the main summit approximately one km. distant. We reached the 6,350m top and a fantastic viewpoint at 2 p.m. There appeared to be no tracks or other conclusive evidence of the mountain having been climbed previously, although we had understood in Koto that a lone Japanese with a Sherpa team believed he had climbed it just two weeks earlier from the north. A Sherpa's description of waist deep powder snow had influenced our decision to make the ascent from the south. In two hours we regained our tents and the following day descended to base camp. The consensus was that the route equated to Alpine AD+.

DAVE WYNNE-JONES, *The Alpine Club*

## MUSTANG HIMAL

*Arniko Chuli, first ascent and survey.* In the summer of 2001, I began topographical research of the mountains west of Lo Manthang and Chharang, and made the first ascent of Arniko Chuli (6,034m). Arniko Chuli is at the northern edge of the range between Lo and Dolpo, on the border between Nepal and Tibet. I was attracted to this mysterious peak for its height, its strange name, and because no foreigner had ever seen it. The Indian surveyors gave the peak a Nepalese—not a Tibetan—name. Aruniko (or Araniko) is the name of a famous artist from Nepal who, in the latter half of the 13th century, went to Tibet to design statues for Buddhist monasteries.

I planned, along with two Nepalese friends—Ang Purba and his wife Pasang Diki (Thame)—to approach Aruniko Chuli from the Dolpo side. On July 3, we left Jomsom at Kaligandaki with five pack animals, and walked to Sangda village along the historical route taken by Sharmana Ekai Kawaguchi—a Japanese priest, the first foreigner to reach Lhasa from Nepal, 102 years ago.

After crossing Geba La, we followed another trail north along Lhanhimar Khola to a nameless pass. Then we descended along a northwestern stream, Sano Kiraphuk Khola. On July 8,

we set up our base camp very close to Chanagor Bhanjyang (5,665m), on the northern border. The next morning, we climbed the pass on the border, and were rewarded with a good view of the Tibetan side.

West and northwest of us, there were four other passes in the northeastern Dolpo: Daknak Bhanjyang (Sena La 5,465m), Jyanche Bhanjyang (5,534m), Kang Kung Bhanjyang (5,564m), and Pindu Bhanjyang (5,600m). The trails from Dolpo to Tibet cross these five passes and converge at the Raka Nadi River. We also saw one of the tributaries of Yalung Tsampo, flowing north. On the eastern two passes, there was no sign of activity nor cattle; blue poppies and other alpine plants were abundant. Presumably, these passes have been abandoned as roads have been built. Old markets have been disappearing too.

On July 10, we left base camp in fine weather. From a small pokari (pond) just below the pass, we walked east and northeast along the border ridge, and after an hour of climbing a gentle ridge of rock and snow, we were on top of Araniko Chuli, surrounded by other 6,000m peaks.

From the highest point, a vast ice field extended east. I confirmed various bearings and elevations of nearby peaks on the Nepalese New Topographical Map (1:50,000), using surveying instruments. But to the northeast, the peaks of the Man Shail group were hidden by clouds. We returned to base camp by another route: straight down a scree slope on the south face of Araniko Chuli, where, unlike on the Tibetan side, there was no snow. Then we finished our research and climbing around Aruniko Chuli in three days, by following an old path directly to Mustang from Chharka, via Ghami Bhanjyang (5,740m), to Ghami.

The second stage of our activity in Damodar Himal started at Ghami. We set up a base camp at the northern foot of Saribung (Selibung or Soribung, 6,327m) following a route via Chharang, Dhi, Yara, and Nakkali Damodar Kund (a sacred place for Hindus). Another party had already pitched a high camp, at 5,720m, on the northwest glacier of Kumlung North Peak (6,378m). In the central part of this huge glacier are the two highest peaks of Damodar Himal: Khumjungar Himal (6,759m) and Chhiv Himal (6,591m). They were both climbed by The Himalayan Association of Japan in 1983. Although the other party had attempted Saribung, they were unsuccessful because of sudden bad weather.

We continued the topographical research in this area—the east glaciers of Bhrikuti Sail (6,361m), and north of a nameless high peak (6,899m) in the east—then we returned to Pokhara, via Jomsom.

TAMOTSU OHNISHI, *Japan (translated by Tamotsu Nakamura)*

## MAHALANGUR HIMAL (KHUMBU)

*Nuptse, south pillar attempt.* The Nuptse International South Face Expedition (a.k.a. the Slo/Can/Am—emphasis on Slo) was concluded at the end of May, 2002. Team members were Marko Prezelj (Slovenia), Barry Blanchard (Canada), Stephen Koch (USA), and myself (also USA) as leader. In support was Barry's wife Catherine Mulvihill and our wonderful cook, known to us as Prakash.

We arrived in B.C. on April 15. Basecamp was on the western side of the Lhotse Nup Glacier, about a two-hour walk from the small village of Chukung. We spent about two weeks acclimating and all members climbed to 6,800m on the 1961 British route—the route of first ascent. On the last trip up that ridge Stephen Koch had a small mishap with a snow cornice