

# CLIMBING IN BIAFO AREA

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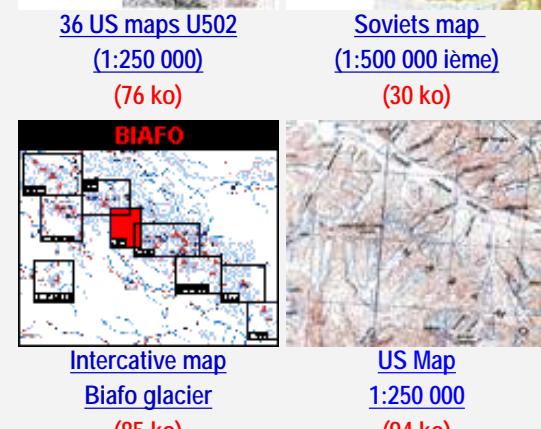
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[Satellite image](#)

[Biafo glacier  
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## Unnamed Big Walls --c6,000m-:



A big wall is 1000m of high rock spur is a minimum 80° steep. These spurs have a semi-official name: Hassan Peak or Gum peaks. It's approximatively 1500 meters high.

## Hispar pass -c5,151m-:



On left bank of Hispar glacier, the pass was always difficult and dangerous: the Hispar glacier is crevassed, and the upstream reservoir of Biafo too vast. In the medium of XIXème century, a band of plunderers lost themselves in a storm between Nagar and Askole.



## Sokha pass (Sokha La):



The existence of a glacier without emissary on the other side of Sokha pass had been constant with insistence by Fanny Bullock-Workman against W.M.Conway. H.W.Tilman, disillusioned, finished the myth in 1937 when he crossed the pass and walked on the glacier and, two days later, bathed in the hot and sulfurous springs of Bisil in the Basha valley.



## Biafo & Hispar glaciers :



Respectively 58 and 68 kms long, Biafo & Hispar glaciers cut a big way in the heart of central Karakoram and constitutes one of the longest extent icy place out of the polar areas. H.Godwin Austen map the Shigar glaciers in 1861 and went up Biafo glacier but this super glacial motorway remained largely ignored before the arrival of Martin Conway 31 years later. Conway was the first to cross Hispar pass the 18th of July 1892. This mission and

the description of the places attracted the Workman Bullock which remain forever associated with the first explorations of this area. Biafo and Hispar were attended for a long time by Askole and Nagar local people: they however imposed 120 kilometers of hard walk on the glacier, complicated, painful and dangerous. Until the middle of the last century, Nagaris and Hunzakuts people have to cross Nushiq La, the western pass from Hispar to Arandu and down the valley of Basha towards Shigar, Skardu and beyond. Baintha Brakk dominates, one of the great bivouacs to the left bank called Baintha (Brakk means in Balti " the rock mountain"). The glacier of Biafo is moving at the 200m speed per year. The Hispar glacier run down the foot of a the highest group of mountains in Asia, the Hispar Range. Its movements of rise and erosion be the more active of world.

The first ski crossing of the Karakoram range over Hispar pass was made by G.Rowell from Panamik (Nubra) to Gilgit (Hunza).



## Solu & Sokha glaciers :

A small and primarily female group of British mountaineers planned to spend the second half of July 2000 exploring the Hucho Alchori Glacier north of Arandu. Base Camp was reached but as a result of the previous lean winter and almost continuous rain while they were in the region, feasible lines on accessible peaks were incomplete and threatened either by stonefall or avalanche. No climbs were completed but the team did find evidence of a camp, which they surmise must have originated from the Bullock- Workman expedition in the early 1900s. This glacier system was also visited in 1959 by Tony Streather's British Army expedition, which climbed a peak (provisionally named Gloster Peak) on the Hispar watershed.

Dave Wilkinson returned to old haunts last summer with a visit to the Arandu (see redakh Brakk, Shek Chakpa Basha River) Valley in the company of fellow British mountaineers, Bill Church, Gus Morton and Stewart Muir. The objective this time was a fine, pointed snow peak of c5,800m towards the head of the valley that rises east from the village of Zil towards the flanks of the Ganchen Massif.

Dave Wilkinson continued his exploration of the largely unknown glacier basins accessed from the Arandu Valley with a small expedition to the Solu Glacier immediately south of the Hispar. With fellow British climbers Ken Findlay, Paul Hudson and Karl Zientek, Wilkinson established Base Camp on the 22nd July at c3,850m a little way above the herdsmen's encampment of Sugulu and three days' march from the jeep road at Bizi. Although briefly visited and mapped during Shipton's 1939 expedition, there were no known reports of previous mountaineering activities from the Solu Glacier. However, en route to Base Camp the British party heard from locals that an expedition had visited the valley several years before and climbed peaks from the glacier basin west of Singulu, Unfortunately, information on who they were and exactly where they went was extremely sketchy.



## Snow Lake (Lukpe Lawo/Lukpe Balto) -c5,000m-:



The highest section of the Biafo glacier is created by two other glaciers, almost flat: Lukpe Lawo, in the North and Sim Gang, the East. Martin Conway christened this vast snow-covered place which he discovered from Hispar pass "Snow Lake". It's 45 km<sup>2</sup> makes a very impressive Arctic there. In 1937 B Tilman with his faithful E Shipton noticed the traces steps of possible yeti. They were approximately 20 centimeters wide and were spaced by about 50 centimetres, were round without trace of foot or of heel, 3 or 4 days old and were steep approximately 30 centimeters. Baltis porters affirmed that it was the smallest yeti, which eat human, the other nourishing rather yaks. Tilman perhaps was unaware of that these steps could come from bears steps which there remains only in the North of the Biafo and Hispar glaciers, on the Panmah glacier and around. It is possible to see vultures, ibexes and bharals on the accesses of the Biafo and Hispar glaciers, a little downwards. Baltis name of this Arctic place is "Lukpe Lawo" or "Lukpe Balto". Snow Lake, far from the crowded Baltoro is very wild, expeditions are still rare to see, even the less intrepid trekkers, when he sits down to admire sunset at Baintha camp or on the bank of Snow Lake, it can feel as a true worthy follower of Conway, Shipton, Bullock or Duke of Abruzzi.

From the Snow Lake, we can see the full majesty of the Northern Baintha Brakk (7285m), one of the major problems of Karakoram. The Bobisgir (6416m) close the North-western angle of the Panmah range (Panmah which means "the arc shooting", in reference to its characteristic form).



## Unnamed summits ~c6,000m-:

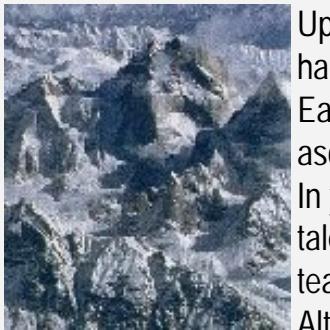


There is still innumerable mountains without name in the area and whose summits remains still virgins. These summits separating the glacier of Biafo and Hoh Lungma valley in the South-East Sosbun Brakk : they do not reach

6000m, the rock is generally poor, but they are very impressive, powerful attraction of the unknown of virgin summits in a secret area.



## Baintha group (Ogre's group) -c6960m/c7,285m- :



Up to the beginning of 2001 almost 20 expeditions, many involving world-class mountaineers, had tried the Ogre by various routes, most concentrating on either the elegant South or South East Pillars. Few had come within 300m of the summit and no one other than the first ascensionists had managed to stand on the highest point.

In year 2001, four expeditions attempted 7285m Baintha Brakk last summer and although talented groups from America, Austria and Slovenia all failed, a three-man Swiss-German team achieved the highly coveted second ascent of the peak after an interval of 24 years.

Although no new ground was climbed, their success was arguably the most notable mountaineering achievement during the entire 2001 season.



### Baintha Brakk I (Ogre I) -c7,285m-, south face :



Four attempts had already been made on the formidable Ogre, the highest mountain in the Biafo Glacier region, when Doug Scott gained a permit for 1977. The assault was initially a two-pronged affair, with Paul 'Tut' Braithwaite and Scott aiming for an Alpine style ascent of the elegant rock prow forming the South Pillar, while Mo Anthoine, Chris Bonington, Nick Estcourt and Clive Rowland concentrated on a more conventional fixed roped ascent of the Southwest Face. After climbing a relatively safe icy rib through the avalanche threatened Southwest Face, Bonington and Estcourt took off for a very bold attempt at the lengthy traverse towards the Main Summit. Four days later they returned unsuccessful, though as a consolation they had managed to bag the lower West Top.

An injury to Braithwaite put the South Pillar out of the question, so after all team members had retired to base to lick their wounds, Scott joined Antoine, Bonington and Rowland for a traverse over the West Top and along the connecting ridge towards the Main Summit. On the 13th July, from a snowhole at c7000m, Bonington and Scott set out for the summit in a lightweight bid without bivouac equipment.

Tricky climbing led to the final tower, which was nearly vertical granite for over 100m. The long second pitch involved very demanding free and aid climbing (VI and A2) and included a giant pendulum movement at half-height to gain a second crack system. Above, several more hard pitches led to the summit, which the pair reached just before dusk. Subsequent events would probably overshadow what was possibly the hardest technical climbing achieved above 7200m at the time.

Not long after, while attempting to make a diagonal rappel from just below the top, Scott slipped and made a huge involuntary pendulum across the wall, slamming into a rocky corner on the far side and badly breaking both ankles. From now on the descent would be a fight for survival, or as Scott reflected, 'so that's how it was going to be; a whole

new game with new restrictions on winning'.

After a night out in the open with no equipment, the two continued rappelling and were eventually met by Antoine and Rowland, who escorted them back to the snowcave, Scott on hands and knees. The four were then trapped for more than 24 hours in a fierce blizzard, after which, with no food remaining, Rowland made a superb effort, leading the team through atrocious weather over the West Summit and down to a second, much poorer, snowcave. The next day the storm was, if anything, worse but the three fit climbers battled down, escorting a sliding or crawling Scott towards two flattened tents left at the West Col. If things weren't already bad enough, they suddenly took a turn for the worse after Bonington fell, breaking two ribs and badly damaging his hand. It was now left to Antoine and Rowland to get the party off the mountain before it became too late. Four days later, when Scott finally crawled over the moraine above Base Camp, his clothing torn to shreds, his knees raw and bloody, Braithwaite and Estcourt had already left, having given up the party for dead. Scott was subsequently carried for three days by local porters to the nearest village, where a helicopter was able to evacuate him. However, a bad landing put the aircraft out of action and Bonington was forced to wait another week before he could be flown to safety. The 1977 ascent has undoubtedly become one of the highlights of British mountaineering but only confirms that when operating at the highest levels, climbers often tread a very fine line (the line of the first ascent of The Ogre (7285m) by Bonington and Scott in July 1977 was repeated for the first time by the German-Swiss trio of Huber, Stöcker and Wolf in June 2001).

In 1996, Shigeru Nagasawa and his five Japanese compatriots from the Kanagawa Himalayan Club were hoping to make the second ascent of the original 1978 British Route on Baintha Brakk (The Ogre) but gave up in August. The individual ages of team members spread from a mere 19 to 56. They were apparently planning to fix up to 3,000m of rope on the mountain.

During summer 1997, The 7,285m Ogre had two more unsuccessful attempts on its flanks during the summer. Twenty five years old Jan Mersch and 28 years old Jochen Hasse, who were part of the German group on Latok II, retreated at around 6,250m from the frequently tried South Pillar. The pillar itself (25 pitches up to VII and A1 ending at about 6,400m) was first completed in 1983 by the French, Fauquet and Fine, who retreated from a height of almost 7,000m on the 50 snow slopes below the final rock dome of the Ogre. Hasse had reached a little higher on the same line in 1993.

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In 2001, prior to this activity a two-man Italian team of Alois Brugger and Hans Kammerlander was at Base Camp, planning an Alpine style ascent of the Original British Route before Kammerlander moved on to attempt a ski descent of K2. The pair were on the mountain in early June, having established an Advanced Base below the face at 5,000m. Their best shot took them to 6,200m but the weather was unsettled and the route threatened by snow and serac avalanche. They retreated from their high point (below the plateau) on the 21st. A second foray up to Advanced Base on the 24th showed more than half-a-metre of fresh snow lying as low as 5,000m and with time running out, the pair reluctantly decided to dismantle the tent and abandon any further attempts, departing Base Camp the following day.



## Baintha Brakk I (Ogre I) -c7,285m-, South pillar :



The South Pillar was first climbed to the upper snowfields in 1983 by the French, Michel Fauquet and Vincent Fine. This pair continued up towards the summit, reaching an altitude of 7000m (a height that until last year had never been equalled on this line) before bad weather forced them down. The 6,400m top of the South Pillar had been reached three times since, in 1990, '95 and '97 and some near misses achieved in other years, but only the Germans, Lentrottdt and Wittmann, in 1990 appear to have continued above with a serious attempt on the summit. After some aid low down on the crest (A2) the pillar gives free climbing with difficulties variously rated from 6a/6b to 7a depending on the quantity of aid used. The well-known Huber brothers from Germany tried the route in 1999, failing to get above 6,000m but reportedly climbing the pillar free to that point.



## Baintha Brakk I (l'Ogre I) -c7,285m-, Southwest face :

In year 2002, Japanese mountaineers almost succeeded in a new and dangerous route up the South Face but after a bold push on the upper slopes, they were thwarted within a handshake of the top, unable to climb the final 10-15m to the highest point. Since then the Southwest Face has become much more dangerous due to serac activity and, therefore, rarely attempted.



## Baintha Brakk I (l'Ogre) -c7,285m-, North face :



These big North face that we can see well from the Snow Lake is stil a big problem for climbers (still virgin).



## Baintha Brakk I (Ogre I) -c7,285m-, East summit (c7,150m) :



This is a route that has been attempted on numerous occasions from the Choktoi Glacier, the best effort coming in 1991 from the Americans Mike Colombo, Tom Nonis, Steve Potter, Mimi Stone and Brinton Young, who climbed the initial rock pillar at 5.9 and two points of aid, then reached a point c30m below the East Summit before being forced down by a bad storm, which subsequently continued for six days. The route has an objectively dangerous approach to the c5,650m col at its base but once on the pillar the climbing is relatively safe and on sound granite to a large snowfield at around half-height. Above, lies more snow, ice and finally difficult mixed climbing on the south flank.

In 2001, a very strong four-man Slovenian team, comprising Urban Azman, Tomaz Jakofcic, Silvo Karo and Peter Meznar, attempted the unclimbed South East Pillar leading to the virgin East Summit (7150m). The Slovenians arrived at the 4,600m Base Camp in the middle of June and spent the next month attempting the pillar. They managed to climb the difficult 700m rock section above the col and reached a high point of c6,350m at the base of the large snow field but very bad weather drove them down.



## Baintha Brakk I (Ogre I) -c7,285m-, South-East ridge :



The South East Ridge of the Ogre leading to its unclimbed East Summit has been attempted on a number of occasions by various nationalities, with perhaps the best effort coming from the American team of Buhler, Crecelius and MacMillan in 1993 :

With MacNae out of action from the first week due to an unfortunate altercation with a crevasse, Richard Cross, Matt Dickinson, Adam Jackson, Al Powell, Nick Williams and Julian Wood made steady progress in climbing the icefall above the Choktoi Glacier to the col at c5,650m and fixing some of the rock buttress above. The icefall proved particularly difficult and serious. Due to a food shortage caused by raiding ravens, most of the team dropped down to Base Camp on the 7th

August, leaving Dickinson and Powell to spend the next four days completing the c700m buttress (British E1 and A2), leaving the difficult sections fixed (thanks to a large cache of new rope abandoned by a previous expedition). On the 12th, as the rest of the team started up from Base Camp, the pair made a summit attempt from the 5,650m col and reached the foot of the final gully (c6,900m) two days later. Above the buttress they followed the diagonal snow ramps and climbed tricky mixed terrain (some Scottish VI) to reach this high point perhaps only one day away from the summit. The gully above looked hard, though certainly feasible but the arrival of a big storm prevented any attempt. The pair sat out two days at their top bivouac before being forced down due to lack of provisions. Two metres of snow fell during the next week and Powell plus Jackson decided to head for home. The rest stayed at the col hoping for an improvement but eventually decided to abandon any further climbing on the 26th. They spent the next three days stripping the route of tentage and fixed rope including a significant amount of gear left by the previous expeditions. The last four members reached Base Camp on the 29th, with Dickinson having spent a remarkable 28 continuous days on the route at or above the col.



## Baintha Brakk II (Ogre II) -6800m-:

In 1981, a three-man Japanese team comprising Noritoshi Isayama, Taihei Kato and Yukio Toji, attempted the South East Pillar. This 800m very steep narrow rock ridge was reached by a 1,000m long icy couloir on the South Flank. It leads to the West Summit, from which the Japanese planned a lengthy traverse of the connecting ridge to the Main Top. Climbing on the pillar in rock boots, they reached c6,400m before retreating.

In 1982, it was the turn of British climbers, Brian Hall, Paul Nunn, Andy Parkin and Al Rouse. They made several attempts on the still unclimbed Ogre II, one of which followed the Japanese attempt. However, just above the exit to the icy gully, Nunn's crampon disintegrated the team retreated.

In 1983, Koreans Han-Gyu & K.Dug-Yong reach the difficult summit of Baintha Brakk II (c6,960m), exposed to icefull dangers coming from the 2 sides of the glacier before the big face (Bowling Alley).

In august 1994, Alexander Huber in a german climbing expedition (leader Mersh) attempt the North ridge down the Ogre II, reaching 6,600m.

The ridge appears to have remained untouched until 2000 when an attempt by Maurizio Giordani's five-member team of accomplished Italian rock-climbers was defeated by a combination of high technical difficulties, lack of time and bad weather. The Italians fixed the approach couloir, placing 15 bolt anchors for rappel. They felt the climb to be very serious and technically difficult, providing a challenging objective to future parties.



## Baintha Brakk II (Ogre II) -c6,960m-, "Death Alley" route:



The approached used by the 1978 Japanese attempt on the Ogre and by the British who attempted Ogre II in 1982 and by the Koreans who eventually climbed the latter in 1983.

## Baintha Brakk III (Ogre III) -c6,960m- :

Maurizio Giordani's five-member team of high standard Italian rock-climbers was defeated by a combination of high technical difficulties, lack of time and bad weather on the South East Ridge of what they refer to as the unclimbed Ogre III. This is the name given by the Italians to the West Summit of Ogre II (6,960m), which in their opinion is a distinct top separated by two or three days' climbing from the Main or Central Summit ascended in 1983 from the northwest by a Korean expedition. The South East Ridge had previously been attempted in 1981 by a three-man Japanese team, that climbed an icy gully on the South Face to reach the steep upper buttress of the ridge. Climbing in rock boots on the upper pillar they reached c6,400m before retreating.

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Arriving at their 4,400m Base Camp on the Uzun Brakk Glacier in June, the Italian team acclimatized and by the 17th had fixed 1,000m of rope up the approach couloir to a col at the start of the steep rocky section. They found ancient fixed rope and garbage from the Japanese attempt but it is unclear whether they climbed the same gully system or one further to the right. The upper 800m+ pillar is very steep and appears to have a difficult final rock band barring access to the summit slopes. Maurizio Girardi and Emanuele Pellizzari reached a similar high point to the Japanese in 1981 before forced down in a storm. They removed all their equipment from the mountain except for 15 rappel anchors (each a single bolt plus karabiner) in the gully. Later this same pair attempted a new route on the nearby Ogre's Thumb but retreated after five pitches (VII maximum) in a snowstorm. The expedition cleaned the lower glacier of all sorts of rubbish, from abandoned wrapping to shovels and tents, then hired two extra porters to take it all back to Skardu. The South East Ridge of Ogre III is a very serious and technically difficult climb, which will prove a challenging objective to future parties.

In 2000, 34 years old Thomas Huber was back, this time with his partner from the successful new route on Shivling, Iwan Wolf (aged 28), and fellow Swiss, Urs Stöcker (aged 24). The team arrived at Base Camp (4,500m) on the 7th June to find three Americans, Hans Johnstone, photographer Ace Kvale, and Mark Newcomb, already at work on the South Pillar. The atmosphere appears to have been less than cordial and deciding that both teams could not work in harmony on the route, Huber and friends decided to concentrate on the unclimbed Ogre III, for which they also had permission. Their successful ascent, in itself a very major achievement, is reported below.

On the 30th June, as the Swiss-German team was making its summit push on Ogre III, Johnstone and Newcomb, reached the top of the South Pillar (fifth ascent) and bivouacked. On the 1st July they headed up and across the large snow/icefield towards the summit tower but were caught in a snowstorm and retreated. They descended to Base Camp and then left for home. This gave the Swiss-German team a second chance. After a suitable rest the three left their 5,000m Advanced Base (Camp 1) on the 8th July, climbed the 300m couloir to the notch on the pillar crest (which they found more dangerous from stonefall than on previous occasions) and fixed 10 pitches, including the crux, which Huber, now well-acclimatized, was able to redpoint at VIII+. Next day Stöcker and Wolf fixed rope to the proposed site of Camp 2 at 5,900m, where they established a portaledge. A bad storm now moved in, the climbers retreated and subsequently were unable to regain the portaledge until the 18th. On the 19th Huber, Stöcker and Wolf climbed eight more pitches and established the portaledge (Camp 3) at 6,200m. The following day they reached the top of the pillar in five more slabby pitches and then climbed the icy crest above to make Camp 4 (a bivouac under the portaledge fly) at c6,500m. To the end of the rock section they had climbed 26 roped pitches. A 2am start on the 21st saw the three climbers ascending rightwards across the giant snow/ice field, reaching its apex at 8.30am. In strengthening winds they tackled the summit buttress, following the line taken in 1977 by Bonington and Scott. Difficult mixed ground led to the three hard rock pitches, on which the Alpinists discovered old pegs and confirmed the grade



as VI and A2, with a long and tricky pendulum. Huber was impressed by the climbing, which although by today's standards would not be considered very hard, took place in parallel sided cracks eminently suitable for Friends which, of course, were not available to the original ascensionists. The three reached the highest point at 3.30am and on the following day rappelled 800m down the South Pillar to arrive safely back on the glacier by mid-afternoon.



## Barbanchen -c5,700m- :

Dave Wilkinson returned to old haunts in 1999 with a visit to the Arandu (Basha River) Valley in the company of fellow British mountaineers, Bill Church, Gus Morton and Stewart Muir. The objective this time was a fine, pointed snow peak of c5,800m towards the head of the valley that rises east from the village of Zil towards the flanks of the Ganchen Massif.

After climbing Shek Chakpa (see Shel Chakpa), Church and Morton now had to depart for home but Muir and Wilkinson were able to climb another peak during their remaining time in the area. Barbanchen (c5,700m) is situated on the South Ridge of Ganchen (6,462m) and was climbed on the 19th August from a camp at c4,800m on the northern branch of the glacier in the main valley. The summit was reached after a relatively straightforward climb of Alpine AD standard via the glacier slopes on the West North West Flank.

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## Biacherahi Towers --c5,700/c5,850m- :



The history of climbing on the Biacherahis is complex and uncertain but has mostly been carried out by climbers whose main objectives were either the Ogre or Latoks. Biacherai Towers are three : The South Tower (approx. c5,800m), central tower (approx. c5,750m) and the North tower (c5,850m.). The base camp is on the Choktoi glacier, North west from the base camp of the Latoks.



### Biacherahi towers, South tower (violeta Peak) -c5,800m- :



During July and early August 1997, was the four-man British team of Richard Garnett, Dean Grindell, Mark Harris and Oliver Howard. This team enjoyed excellent weather, interrupted by only two short bad spells. The four climbed the smallest of the three Biacherahi Towers (5900m) via an easy snow couloir on the north side and then climbed a fine arête on one of the many flanking rock buttresses of Latok III. The route, which took two days to complete, finished at 5800m and gave many technical pitches up to British E2/5c on good solid granite.

the South Summit was first climbed in 1989 by the Spanish, Jon Lazcano and Javier Mugarra, who named it Violeta Peak. Their 20-pitch route up the c550m South East Face/Pillar was rated 6a+ and A3+. The pair report fixing 600m of rope over several days before jumaring to their high point and reaching the top in a 22-hour push.

North Ridge of South Tower (thought to have been ascended in July 1997 by Richard Garnett, Dean Grindell, Mark



Harris and Oliver Howard but probably climbed before this date.

## Biacherahi Tower, Central tower -c5,750m- :



The middle tower of the Biacherahi peaks, situated to the northwest of Latok Base Camp on the north side of the Choktoi Glacier, has three summits and a proposed alternative name of Triple Biacherahi Towers.

The Biacherahi central Tower probably received his first climb in 1990 (Rick Allen, Sandy Allan, Doug Scott and Simon Yates), Allan Arénacé, Doug Scott et Simon Yates), the South ridge probably climb by a norwegian team.

Starting from the col up and left of the Spanish Route, the Yamanois and Kurtyka climbed the c350m South Face in 11 pitches over the 14th and 15th August with difficulties up to 5.9 and A2. The main difficulties were found on the first four pitches but above, although the technicalities were less, the rock was often poor to dangerous and the route, overall, not as good as it promised from a distance. On the summit of the South Spire they found an old rappel sling. Approaching up the 400m snow slopes ( $40^\circ$ ) to the broad col below the South Face, the three passed a cache of abandoned rope at the base of the South East Face and now presume that both it and the summit rappel sling must have belonged to the Spaniards.

In 1999, on the 19th July, Dave Hollinger and Scottish resident, Paul Schweizer from the USA, climbed the Biacherahi Tower, the prominent 5,800m shark's fin formation opposite Latok I. The two made their ascent from the col that links the Choktoi and Nobande Sobande Glaciers.



## Biacherahi towers, Northern tower -c5,850m- :



It's possible that the North and highest tower may have been climbed by the 1986 Norwegian Latok I expedition via the snowy Northern Ridge but the East North East Ridge was definitely climbed in 1991 by the New Zealand pair, Carol McDermott and Andy McFarlane.

In 1999, After a four-day walk from Askole a primarily Scottish-based expedition set up Base Camp on the north bank of the Choktoi Glacier with the aim of attempting the unclimbed North Spur of Latok III (6,949m). An initial reconnaissance of the spur revealed an objectively dangerous approach followed by a difficult lower rock wall that would require protracted work in capsule style. However, after a huge serac fall from high on the North Face left of the Spur caused an avalanche that completely obliterated previous tracks over a 400m section and nearly eliminated three of the members approaching the spur in late afternoon, the route was abandoned. The expedition was now forced to focus its attention on available alternatives and on the 19th July Dave Hollinger and Scottish resident, Paul Schweizer from the USA, climbed the Biacherahi Tower, the prominent 5,800m shark's fin formation opposite Latok I. The two made their ascent from the col that links the Choktoi and Nobande Sobande Glaciers.



## Bobisghir -c6,414m- :

Robert Dawson's seven member British team wanted to attempt the first ascent of this 6,414m peak in the Panmah Mustagh. It is a little known summit which lies close to the head of the Nobande Sobande Glacier and on the watershed with the Braldu Glacier. Unfortunately, their choice of time, from late August to early October, proved disastrous last year. Approaching the Southwest side from Skardu via Askole, the Panmah and Nobande Sobande glaciers, the team reached Base Camp only to be hit by heavy snowfall. Time did not allow them to sit it out and the mountain was never seriously attempted.



## Bravo Brakk -c5,999-:

In 1995, Another peak christened Bravo Brakk (peak of the Three Ridges: c5,999m) was also climbed by both Huber brothers and Gutsch in seven hours from Base Camp via a snow/ice couloir up to 70 on the Southwest flank.



## Goma Brakk (Gama Sokha Lumbu) -c5,200m- :



In a good example of exploratory mountaineering during July/August the experienced four man British team of Bill Church, Tony Park, Colin Wells and Dave Wilkinson climbed three previously virgin peaks from a Base Camp off the Kero Lungma Glacier (immediately south of the Hispar and approached from Skardu via Arandu). The team's original intention had been to attempt a c6,000m peak seen the previous year and dubbed Mystery Mountain.

They were able to locate its position on existing maps but once in the field found that an intervening glacier basin, not marked on any maps, meant that the peak was unreachable from the Kero Lungma. In changeable weather and with masses of old spring snow (but little problem with fresh snow) they turned their attentions to a 5,200m peak (Goma Brakk) directly opposite on the north side of the glacier (1,000m: F).



## Chikkorin Sar -c6,205m- :

[To complete]



## Ganchen -c6,462m- :

[To complete]



## Hanispispur Group -c5,885m/c6,049m (c6,300m)- :

Northeast of Latok Base Camp lie the Hanispispur peaks. Hanispispur peak is an relative easy peak to climb and several forays were made on to Hanispispur South, the peak directly behind Base Camp and opposite Latok III. This peak, which has rebuffed several parties, saw its first ascent in July 1999 by Dave Hollinger and Paul Schweizer via the North Ridge. In largely stable weather Alex Franklin, Will Garrett, Fiona Hatchell, Colin Spark and Guy Willett, all from the UK, attempted several peaks from the Choktoi Glacier during the latter part of June plus July.

Hanispispur (5,990m) was climbed by Atkinson and Pasteur from the Nobande Sobande Glacier in 1991 via the West Ridge. This rarely ascended peak was climbed again last summer from the same glacier by a British organized expedition. A GPS reading on the summit gave between 5,885m and 5,900m for the altitude. Hanispispur South (6,049m) now appears to have been first climbed on the 21st July 1998 by Americans, John Bouchard and Mark Richey, and not in 1999 by an Irish-American pair from a primarily Scotland-based expedition as reported in INFO 208. Bouchard and Richey climbed the Southwest Couloir and South Ridge at 5.8 and M4, and called the peak Harpoon. Most maps record three summits to Hanispispur but this is untrue. The point marked 6,049m is more like a shoulder on the South Ridge of the true South Summit.

July Dave Hollinger and Scottish resident, Paul Schweizer from the USA, first climbed the Biacherahi Tower. In largely stable weather Alex Franklin, Will Garrett, Fiona Hatchell, Colin Spark and Guy Willett, all from the UK, attempted several peaks from the Choktoi Glacier during the latter part of June plus July. Hanipispur South (6,047m) on the north side of the Choktoi was tried via the East Face and North Ridge. A high point of 6,000m was reached after AD standard climbing before bad windslab conditions advised retreat. It was heavy snow conditions that had stopped a previous British party from making the ascent in 1990. Two members tried Pt 6,166m, reaching a high point of c5,800m before the line they were trying blanked-out.



## Hanispispur, Northern summit :

The "north" or "main" peak of Hanispispur (quoted as c6,100m) was first climbed in 1991 by Angus Atkinson and Liz Pasteur from the Nobande Sobande Glacier via the long but not too difficult West Ridge.



## Hanispispur -c6,047m (6300m)-, South peak :

Hanipispur South (6,047m) on the northern side of the Choktoi glacier was attempt via the East Face and North Ridge. A 6,000m high point was reached after a AD standard climbing before bad windslab conditions advised retreat. It was heavy snow conditions that had stopped a previous british attempt in 1990. Two members tried to reach a point qoted at c6,166m, stpped at 5,800m. Up to this point they evaluate difficulties as Scottish VI and A2.

The South Peak has been attempted on a number of occasions by British and American parties but is at least 200m higher than the 'main' summit and possibly 6,300m in altitude. The most recent attempt, by John Bouchard and Mark Richey in 1998 followed the South Couloir to the West Ridge and so to the most western summit block, a point approximately four pitches from the highest point of the mountain. Here, the American pair were repulsed by hard technical ground. Four members of the Scottish group, Sam Chinnery, Ally Coull, Neil Crampton and Dave Long also attempted this line and failed at the same point as the Americans in '98. Fortunately, they had the Bouchard/Richey in situ rappel anchors to assist with their descent. Later, Crampton, Long and Muir Morton attempted the North Ridge from a high camp established on the col at its foot but retreated in bad weather having reached the foresummit.

Finally on the 28th July, Hollinger and Schweizer climbed the steep rotten ice and mixed ground of the North Ridge, reached the foresummit, rappelled 15m into the gap beyond and climbed two pitches to the highest point, to make a probable first ascent of this peak. They rated the overall difficulties as Scottish IV.



# Lakpilla Brakk (Lukpilla Brakk/Ogre's Thumb/Uzun brakk) -c5,380m- :



The Lakpilla Brakk is growing at the front of the Ogre as a Thumb, as his "Thumb". There have now been a number of fine routes put up on the various granite formations that surround the Uzun Brakk Glacier, making the area a worthy venue for a lightweight rock-climbing trip on lower-altitude spires. Here joint the essantials climbing history of the Lukpilla Brakk :



## Lakpilla Brakk (Lukpilla Brakk/Ogre's Thumb/Uzun brakk) -c5,380m-, Southwest face :

The first ascent of the Ogre's Thumb, a conspicuous rock tower on the Uzun Brakk Glacier about four and a half kilometres south southwest of the Ogre, is attributed to the Americans, Tony Jewell and Tom Walter. This pair climbed the Southwest Face/Buttress in three days during mid August 1987. Their 21-pitch climb took the dominant prow and gave difficulties up to 5.10+ and A2.

In 1990 Americans, Pete Gallagher and Robert Warren, made the first Alpine style ascent of the peak via a combination of the German and Original Routes. They made three bivouacs and climbed 27 pitches up to 5.11 and A2.



## Lakpilla Brakk (Lukpilla Brakk/Ogre's Thumb/Uzun brakk) -c5,380m-, East pilar :

The 17 August 1995, Alexander Huber which have previously visit the sector to attempt the fabulous South pillar of Ogre leaved early in the morning in order to try the direct route, in free climb and in one day. The higher section of the East pillar 900m high (1400m in full) proved to be generally V and VI, except the final part of 120m around F7b/7b+. It was a very impressive climb at this high altitude by Alexander Huber which was well acclimatized, with in his best conditions.



## Lakpilla Brakk (Lukpilla Brakk/Ogre's Thumb/Uzun brakk) -c5,380m-, South face :

The 31th august 1988, Germans Ulrich Eberhardt, Bernd Eberle, Christian Futterer, Eduard Koch, Stefan Kohler and Michael Saumweber, climbed the South Face via a line they graded VII and A4. The Germans note that their route clearly lay to the right of the American line but might have joined it for the final few pitches. This team reached the summit after a prolonged siege and had to resort to extensive bolting of the blank granite that comprised the sixth and seventh pitches.

On the 17th August 1995 Hans-Christian Hocke and Alexander Huber made a one-day ascent of the German Route. They were unable to free climb the two bolt ladders (A1) but managed to climb the remaining 24 pitches completely free, finding maximum difficulties of 'only' VII+.

From the 8th-11th July 1996 Mauro Fronza, Maurizio Giordani and David Jonathan Hall climbed the face somewhat further to the right where it is bigger, creating Via del Popo at VII+ and A3. The c1,000m quasi-vertical wall was climbed in 33 pitches and only the main belays (a number of pegs and five bolts) remain in place. Giordani had tried this route twice before, in 1991 and '93.



## Latok group -c6,456/c7,151m- :



In the upper Biafo area, the glance is attract by the Uzun Brakk valley from where the imposing Ogre' group and the marvellous Gothic tower of the Latoks group is rising up. Just as the Ogres, Latoks are difficult and complex granite mountains, with the high towers and frozen barriers. Moreover, Latok would like to say "difficult mountains" in the language local Balti langage. The granite rock of the Latok-Baintha Brakk group is as splendid as Trangos. The group includes 4 principal summits which are Latok I, II, III and IV. These four summits were climbed by their Southern slope starting from the Biafo glacier side. The first climb was made by an Italians teams in 1977, the three others by Japanese, two years later.



## Latok I -c7,145m-, North face (Karakoram Walker) :



Brendan Murphy and Dave Wills. Both had attempted the unclimbed 2,400m North Ridge before and Wills was returning for his third attempt on this stupendous line, often referred to as the Walker Spur of the Karakoram. After thorough acclimatization, the two crossed the rimaye at c4,700m and climbed the initial couloir to a tent site at 5,250m. In three days they climbed 1,500m of the ridge in the superb spell of weather that blessed the Karakoram at the end of July. At the end of the third day they were excavating a bivouac ledge on a sizable snow mushroom when the whole thing collapsed. This resulted in Wills, unfortunately, joining the elite ranks of a group of well-known climbers who have lost their rucksack in a committing situation high on a big mountain. Included in the 'sack were the tent, stove and his sleeping bag. Wills spent a thoroughly miserable night and the pair made an 18 hour descent the following day to their spare tent and a second stove left at 5,250m. Borrowing replacement gear from the Ogre team, the pair made a second attempt in August but only reached 5,880m before having to sit out three days of bad weather. With the storm unabated they retreated once more.

In 1997, climbers from New England, John Bouchard and Mark Richey, joined the growing ranks of climbers who have unsuccessfully attempted the Walker Spur of the Karakoram the 2400m North Ridge of Latok I. This pair made several lightweight and Alpine style forays on to the route, reaching a high point of c6,000m before retreating due to the very dangerous conditions brought on by the lengthy fine period of warm weather. Parties who have climbed higher on the line know that above this point is a very loose rock barrier which would undoubtedly be the source of considerable objective danger in dry conditions. On their last attempt the two climbers were joined by Tom Nonis and

Barry Rugo, the other half of their expedition, who had previously been attempting the Ogre.



## Latok I -c7,145m-, North ridge :



Tom Nonis and Barry Rugo, the other half of their expedition, had previously been attempting the Ogre. Bouchard and Richey already have the 7,145m peak booked again for '98. On the neighbouring Latok I (7,145m) (see Latok I) New Hampshire climbers, Tom Callaghan and Tom Nonis, abandoned their attempt on the unclimbed North Ridge after Callaghan injured a knee early in the expedition. Before the incident the pair had made several trips up to 5,500m over a 19-day period of consistently poor weather.



## Latok II -c7,151m- :



First climb by italians team (leader Bergamaschi in 1977), second by japanese in 1979. The west ridge has severals attempts, high point ever climbed was c.6,850m by this route. In 1995, A german attempt lead by the famous climber Alexander Huber) by a new route on the impressive Southwest face (800m high) in 1994.



## Latok II -c7,108m-, North West ridge :

Latok II and especially the North West Ridge has a long history, primarily involving British expeditions. It was first attempted from the col below Ogre II by a Japanese team in 1975 but they abandoned their project due to rockfall and serious avalanche danger. In 1977 and '78 two British parties made further progress and reached c6,600m, although both attempts were marred by the death of climbers; Don Morrison on the first due to a crevasse fall and Pat Fearneough in '78, hit by stonefall in the dangerous Braldu Gorge. In 1987 Joe Brown and Dee de Mengel from a strong eight-man team retreated from above 6,800m in a serious storm. What now remains is an integral ascent of the entire ridge above the col.



## Latok II -c7,108m-, South ridge :



The mountain itself has been climbed only twice, first in 1977 by Arturo Bergamaschi's Italian expedition, succeeded in forcing a route up mixed ground on the tapering South Ridge, with Alimonta, Mase and Valentini reaching the top well into the night after a long push from their top camp (Camp 5) in bad weather. Above Camp 4 the route was over rock and mixed ground (pitches of IV) to a lower South Summit, in turn connected to the highest point by a narrow snow arête which took three hours to cross. Some days later four more Italians were able to reach the South Summit but turned back from this point. The route does not appear to have been attempted since.



## Latok II -c7,108m-, "Tsering Mosong" line :



One of the most outstanding achievements of the season 97 was the first ascent of the Southwest Face of Latok II by the well-known German brothers Alexander and Thomas Huber, plus the equally well-known American, Conrad Anker and a fourth German climber, Toni Gutsch. These four reached the 7,108m summit on the 19th July after having climbed a hard big wall route up the 1,000m+ sheer face above the huge central couloir.

In August 1995 Alexander Huber, on a seven member German team led by Jan Mersch, had hoped to attempt the face, which rises a total of 2,300m, but unstable weather and very poor conditions in the couloir had proved too dangerous and instead the team attempted the North West Ridge from the col below Ogre II, reaching a height of c6,600m.

In 1997, hoping to find the couloir in a safer and more snowy condition by arriving earlier in the year, the team assembled at a Base Camp (4,400m) close to the Uzum Brakk Glacier on the 14th June with around 2,000m of rope and the obligatory film crew from Mountain Air Productions. The climbers then sited a camp in the lower part of the 50 couloir at c5,600m and around the 24th June began fixing rope up the snow and ice above. Unfortunately, rockfall was every bit as bad as on their previous attempt and although the team only climbed this section during the night, the ground was still considered extremely hazardous. A second camp was established at 6,000m tucked in below the upper rock wall. From there the four slanted up the left branch of the couloir for 100m before taking off up the wall and fixing eight pitches to a portaledge bivouac on the prominent break at about one third height. The first pitch proved to be the hardest free climbing attempted (VII or 5.10c), while the fourth gave some taxing aid on loose terrain at hard A3. The rack consisted of 50 karabiners, 20 Friends, 30 nuts, 15-20 pegs and five Birdbeaks, six assorted skyhooks and some 6mm rivets. From the portaledge bivouac ropes were then pushed out to around 6,900m, at which point the climbers were able to see monsoon clouds building to the west. Fortunately, they were able to climb the last section to reach the final snowy ridge and the highest point (via a pitch of V) on the 19th July. Eleven climbing days were required to complete the wall, the Huber brothers spending six nights at the portaledge bivouac and Anker and Gutsch seven. The descent was reported to be decidedly dangerous due to worsening conditions and at one point the 5,600m camp was hit by rockfall, resulting in the loss of two sacks of gear.

The 25-pitch route (seven of which were A3) was given an overall American grading of VII and christened Tsering Mosong, the Balti expression for Long Life. Twenty of these pitches were either vertical or overhanging, making the line relatively sheltered from any debris falling from above. However, the hard aid pitches were generally loose and the leader was often looking at a huge fall should things go wrong. In terms of altitude the four climbers had completed probably the highest big wall climb in the world; up a face as huge and as steep as Yosemite's El Capitan but situated at an altitude almost 5,000m higher.



## Latok II -c7,108m-, "Nomadu" line :



Franz Fendt and Christian Schlesener, reached the Latok II summit via the North West Ridge to make the third overall ascent of the mountain. On their second attempt this pair left the camp below the headwall at 6,000m and climbed up the left branch of the couloir to reach the crest of the ridge at c6,600m. The eight pitches of this section gave difficult technical climbing with two hard cruxes and the ridge above provided more technical ground with short, hard rock steps. The pair reached the summit after 36 hours of continuous climbing with difficulties up to VI+ and A2 plus 80-90 ice. They then spent 14 hours rappelling the route to their 6,000m camp and a well-earned sleep before continuing down the stoneswept couloir to Base Camp. The new 1,100m line above the last camp in the couloir was named Nomadu.



## Latok III -c6,949m- :



The impressive rock pyramid of Latok III was first climbed in July 1979 by Sakae Mori, Kazushige Takami and Yoji Teranishi, members of a Japanese team that fixed 1,600m of rope on the difficult Southwest Ridge (VI+ and A2).

In largely stable weather Alex Franklin, Will Garrett, Fiona Hatchell, Colin Spark and Guy Willett, all from the UK, attempted several peaks from the Choktoi Glacier during the latter part of June plus July 1997, without success. The group report much abandoned rubbish at some old Base Camps of German origin. They were able to porter out c25kg of trash from one of these camps which is now all but clear, leaving just one or two other sites, which it is hoped might be tackled by future parties visiting this relatively accessible area.



## Latok III, borrow summit (Indian Face Spur) -c5,200m-:



In 1990, the Indian Face Spur, the fine granite pillar was climb by Sandy Allan and Doug Scott in 1990. The UK group climbed approximately one third of the way up the pillar at British HVS and A1/A2 but retreated with the realization that the route was far longer than it looked. However, they were able to reach the summit of Pt 5,400m via a loose ridge at AD standard. The group report much abandoned rubbish at some old Base Camps of German origin. They were able to porter out c25kg of trash from one of these camps which is now all but clear, leaving just one or two other sites, which it is hoped might be tackled by future parties visiting this relatively accessible area.

In 1999, Chinnery, Coull and Morton were making their final push on the West Face of Indian Face Spur. The crest of this prominent rock spur below a subsidiary summit of Latok III was first climbed in 1990 by Sandy Allan and Doug Scott at British 5c and A2. However, this pair stopped at a pinnacle some distance below the actual summit and made a rappel descent of the steep North Face to the left. The new Scottish line climbs the obvious groove that runs up the vertical West Face of the Arete, starting 80m up the central snow couloir. This gave continuous aid climbing for 400m with difficulties up to A3 before joining the crest of the arete at around half-height. The climbers spent five days fixing rope on the groove, returning to Base Camp each night. On the 27th they jumared the ropes to the crest, removing all the fixed gear as they went, then continued up the original route for a further 400m (passing in situ gear from the Italian attempt: see below) to reach the summit - the highest point on the crest of the ridge - on the 28th. The second half of the climb gave British VS climbing with one pitch of A2. This was the first route to reach the summit of the 'Indian Face', allowing a more straightforward descent to be made by rappelling the South East Flank.

Prior to these ascents the area had already been visited in June by the Italian team of Luca Maspes, Emanuele Pellizzari Massimo Sala and Gianni Zappa. These four remained for 18 days at or above their Base Camp close to the

start of the glacier. Twelve of these days were considered unsuitable for climbing, having very poor weather or snowfall. Sala and Zappa climbed a 700m high pillar on a small unnamed rocky summit of 4,750m, situated on the south side of the glacier about one hour above Base Camp. Traditional protection was used throughout and difficulties up to F6a+ and A1 were experienced. The route was completed in a long day from Base Camp, the trio descending from the summit via three rappels in a couloir to the east and returning the same day.

Maspes, Pellizzari and Zappa then repeated the Indian Face Spur, thinking they were on new ground. They climbed the first three pitches one afternoon and fixed ropes. It then snowed for three days after which they began again, adding eight more pitches and passing a jammed Friend left by Allan in 1990. The following day they climbed another six pitches and on the final day one more pitch to the pinnacle, which marks more or less the same high point as Allan and Scott in 1990 (which they estimate to be roughly five pitches of easier ground from the c5,200m summit). Making one rappel from their high point, the Italians found traces of the top bivouac (including a rappel sling) used by the British pair in 1990. They too bivouacked at much the same spot. Whether they followed the same line as that taken by Allan and Scott is unclear but apart from the first 70m and two pitches in the middle of the route, each rope length had a minimum grade of VI and A1, with the fifth pitch the crux (VIII- and A1). The three Italians placed four bolts: two on belays, one for protection on a pitch of very rotten rock (graded A2+ and VI) and a fourth (subsequently removed) when the leader was caught out by nightfall. They rappelled the line (setting up either two-peg or one-bolt anchors), all very impressed with the level of difficulty and commitment. Shortly after, Maspes made a solo ascent of a small rocky summit of 4,650m, which he christened Simo Peak, close to Base Camp. He climbed the South East Face, which gave 400m of climbing up to V, then descended via an easy rock gully. The team were disappointed with the amount of rubbish they discovered (and subsequently partially brought back) at the Base Camp sites below the Latok Group, particularly abandoned tents, batteries etc, which appeared to be of French origin.



## Latok III -c6,949m-, West face :



The West Face of Latok III is c2,000m high with the first section a snow/ice slope followed by an impressively steep rock wall, well-seen in the book Himalayan Alpine-Style.

The West Face was the target of Enrico Rosso and two Italian companions in 1988. However, on finding the face too plastered with snow, they decided to repeat the safer Japanese Route and in demanding conditions completed the climb in a eight-day, Alpine style push. The West Face was thought to have been attempted in the '90s by an American team that included Phil Powers from the

National Outdoor Leadership School. Until last summer Latok III does not appear to have been attempted since.

The face is 2,000m high with the first section a snow/ice slope and the upper 1,300m an impressively steep rock wall at relatively high altitude. This face was the target of Enrico Rosso's team in 1988 but finding it too plastered, the Italians turned to the original Japanese Route on the Southwest Ridge and completed it Alpine style in eight days (VI+ and A2). The next and what appears to be the best attempt to date came in 1992 when Americans, Greg Collum and Phil Powers, reached a point three pitches above a snow-covered spur in the centre of the face at an altitude of approximately 6,350m. Latterly, in July 1998, a high point of around 6,050m was reached by another strong American team comprising Kitty Calhoun, Steve Quinlan, Ken Sauls and Jay Smith, who report overcoming difficulties of 5.10a and A2 on less than perfect rock.

Latok III was to be the fourth summit of the on-going project entitled 'Russian Way - Big Walls of the World'. Base Camp was established on the moraine two hours from the base of the wall and after an acclimatization climb an advanced camp was set up closer still to the wall. Koshelenko had hoped the team would attempt the face in Alpine style but he was out-voted on his choice of line and the four went for a directissima towards the left side of the face that would require a capsule style approach and much aid. They started their ascent on the 19th July, hauling an initial load of 100kg up the broad couloir on the left side of the face. The four took two days and climbed around 25 pitches

to get established at the start of the rock wall (5700m). A heavy snow covering on the 45-60° ice slope had made the ascent to this point hard work. Above, the team progressed slowly, climbing only two-and-a-half pitches over the next two days (6 and A3+) to reach an altitude of c5,835m. The corner they were trying to ascend was composed of poor rock and Koshelenko's suggestion to descend and outflank the obstacle by climbing the buttress on the left appears to have been ignored. If further proof were needed, while lying on their portaledge at the end of a day in which Koshelenko had already received a cut to the head from a falling stone, a large rock burst through the tent fly and completely shattered Koshelenko's helmet.

It snowed heavily for two days, confining the Russians to their ledge. However, on the 25th the weather seemed to be on the mend and the team set off up the wall, only to get caught in more stonefall. This time Koshelenko, who was jumaring back up the fixed ropes, was hit on the hands. The result was two broken thumbs and a decision to retreat. On the 26th they started down. The sky was cloudless and the ice slopes now heavily laden with snow. Koshelenko was lowered, Ruchkin came next setting up the rappel anchors, then Efimov and finally Odintsov. At around 3.30pm the team were on the lower section of the face and only five rope lengths above the glacier, when they were pummelled by an avalanche that left a two-metre groove in the slope above. At that point Efimov and Ruchkin were together. They set up a belay on ice screws out of the fall line, then proceeded to lower Koshelenko while Odintsov waited one pitch above. Suddenly, another big avalanche hit. When Ruchkin finally emerged from the debris, badly battered with three broken ribs and a damaged neck, he found himself alone apart from two ice-axes. Efimov, the rucksacks and remaining ice tools and been swept away.

Odintsov came down and the three descended painfully to the foot of the face, where to their surprise they found Efimov sitting to one side of the base of the avalanche cone and all their equipment scattered close by. While his companions thought he had been killed in the avalanche, Efimov was convinced he was the only survivor after his 350m fall and at around 4pm had radioed Michail Bakin, a Russian doctor in Base Camp, to that effect.

Bakin, Odintsov, plus the injured Klenov and Koshelenko managed to transport Efimov, who had broken a leg and ribs, down to a safe point on the glacier but not before they had another lucky escape when a huge rockfall from the face above stopped in the avalanche cone just 20m away. The path out from Base Camp was too narrow and precariously positioned to carry an invalid, so the Russian's Liaison Officer made a rapid descent to Skardu to order a helicopter. There appears to have been a lengthy administrative delay before one could be released but on the 30th July and after the intervention of the Russian Embassy, Bakin and Efimov were successfully flown to Skardu hospital and the rest were able to walk out, arriving on the 3rd August.

In 2001, Odintsov organized a second team for a return match. Out of the original party it seems that only Ruchkin was interested but the pair enlisted Igor Barikhin, Mikhail Davy, Sergey Khadzhinov and Alexander Klenov. Base Camp was established at the former site late on the 22nd June and subsequently, while waiting for some delayed baggage, all members made an acclimatization ascent of a small subsidiary summit of the Latok group, which they refer to as Latok VI. The party slept the night on the top. The capsule attempt on Latok III began on the 7th July, the team spending two days climbing and hauling equipment to the top of the ice slope below the start of the big corner system. Realizing, even from far away, that stonefall in the corner was no less dangerous than the previous year, the team decided to pursue a more sheltered line up the flank of the pillar to the left. By the night of the 10th they had established a portaledge camp halfway up this wall. Unfortunately, the rock was far from good, making solid protection difficult to arrange and there was still a problem from stonefall. On the 10th, Odintsov was hit hard in the back by a rock and although there were no breaks, he was badly bruised, making further climbing difficult. On the 15th, now some distance above their 2000 high point, the weather deteriorated and at the end of the day an exhausted Khadzhinov and Ruchkin fell asleep in their sealed portaledge while making tea and ended up with bad carbon monoxide poisoning. It snowed for the next one and a half days but in the evening of the 18th the Russians had reached the prominent elongated snow patch, christened The Tomahawk and situated below the upper pillar. According to Odintsov, the climbing to this point had not been excessively difficult but almost constantly dangerous due to poor rock and stonefall. The following day they moved up to c6,200m, a point estimated to be two days' climbing from the summit. Barikhin was last man, jumaring the ropes and removing protection and belay anchors. The weather was nice and sunny during the evening and as Barikhin ascended the last rope and the rest of the team were



preparing a site for the night, a large rockfall suddenly cut loose from the summit ridge. Blocks flew past in all directions but cowering close to the rock the five climbers at the proposed camp site avoided being hit. However, when calm returned, they realized the rope below had been cut and Barikhin had disappeared. Odintsov rappelled for 50m but could see no sign of him. The following morning the team abandoned the climb and descended, finding Barikhin's body just 20m above the rimaye at the bottom of the face.



## Latok IV -c6,456m- :

Ohmiya is no newcomer to this region. In 1980 he made the first and, until last summer, only ascent of Latok IV (6,456m) via the Southwest Face, just to the right of Latok V. While excavating a snow cave on the descent both Ohmiya and his partner, Koji Okano, fell 50m into a crevasse, breaking a number of bones. They waited for four days but when no help came Ohmiya managed to tunnel through the outside wall of the crevasse and crawl down the glacier with a broken leg. In close proximity at the time were Victor Saunders and Will Tapsfield, who had been attempting nearby Uzun Brakk. This pair were informed of the accident and subsequently climbed up to the crevasse on Latok IV, where Okano, who had been stranded down the hole for eight days, was successfully pulled to safety. In 2001, a very strong German team comprising Toni Gutsch, Alex and Thomas Huber, and Jan Mersch attempted the South Pillar of the Ogre, one of the Karakoram's most famous mountains and despite more than 15 attempts still unclimbed since its legendary first ascent in 1977 by Chris Bonington and Doug Scott (see Ogre, South face). When Gutsch and Mersch went home, the Huber brothers were left with five days before porters arrived to evacuate Base Camp. They decided to attempt a very lightweight dash up the Southwest Face of Latok IV (6,456m), climbed only once before by the Japanese, Ohmiya and Okano (see above). The two brothers made the 12kms approach from Base Camp during the night, then climbed mostly unroped up the steep snow and ice slopes of the face and into the final couloir leading to the gap between the twin summits. They opted for the closer and slightly lower South Summit, reached it a little after midday and returned to Base Camp in a 22 hours round trip.



## Latok V -c6,190m-:

Latok V is the name ascribed to the small 6,190m pyramid that stands at the end of the South East Ridge of Latok III (6,949m) on the watershed running between Latok III and IV. It is probably, though by no means certainly, unclimbed and was attempted last summer by Motomo Ohmiya and partner.

In 1999, the Japanese climber Moromu Omiya returned for his third attempt on the unclimbed 6,190m summit of Latok V. Omiya, who made the first ascent of Latok IV in 1980, attempted this small peak in both 1999 and 2000 via the South Face. Last summer with two other companions he again tried the mountain but on the summit day was forced to give up just 70m below the top when it simply became too late to continue safely. The peak lies at the end of the South East Ridge of Latok III.



## Latok VI :



In 2001, Odintsov organized a second team for a return match. Out of the original party it seems that only Ruchkin was interested but the pair enlisted Igor Barikhin, Mikhail Davy, Sergey Khadzhinov and Alexander Klenov. Base Camp was established at the former site late on the 22nd June and subsequently, while waiting for some delayed baggage, all members made an acclimatization ascent of a small subsidiary summit of the Latok group, which they refer to as Latok VI.



## Redakh Brakk -c6,000m- :

In a good example of exploratory mountaineering during July/August the experienced four man British team of Bill Church, Tony Park, Colin Wells and Dave Wilkinson climbed three previously virgin peaks from a Base Camp off the Kero Lungma Glacier (immediately south of the Hispar and approached from Skardu via Arandu). The team's original intention had been to attempt a c6,000m peak seen the previous year and dubbed Mystery Mountain. They were able to locate its position on existing maps but once in the field found that an intervening glacier basin, not marked on any maps, meant that the peak was unreachable from the Kero Lungma. In changeable weather and with masses of old spring snow (but little problem with fresh snow) they turned their attentions to a 5,000m peak on the south side of the glacier, later christened Tsuntse Brakk, which gave 1,000m of PD climbing with a pitch of Scottish 3. After this they tackled a 5,200m peak (Goma Brakk) directly opposite on the north side of the glacier (1,000m: F) and finally, on the 13th August, made the first ascent of Redakh Brakk (c6,000m), which lies on the watershed with the Hispar Glacier. The route from the south was via a complex but easy glacier to a col on the main divide and AD+ snow and ice up the West Ridge to finish. Errors on existing maps were corrected in a fine piece of traditional exploration and Wilkinson plans to return this year for a crack at Mystery Mountain.



## Spaldang Peak -c5,550m- :

Preparing the Biantha Brakk expedition, Huber then teamed up with Volker Benz and Karl Spitzhof to make the first ascent of a nearby 5,550m tower which they christened Spaldang. The 900m high route on the East Pillar (1,400m of climbing) was partially sieged. The lower section, which was not so steep, gave fairly reasonable climbing (IV to VI) to a shoulder below the steep upper pillar. The upper section proved to be generally V and VI, except for the 120m headwall which was split by a perfect hand jam crack and fell to Huber at IX- (around F7b/7b+). This was a very impressive performance at the altitude, although by this stage in the expedition Huber was well-acclimatized and presumably still retained some of the old magic that allowed him to free climb the Salathé earlier in the year.



## Shel Chakpa -c5,800m- :



Dave Wilkinson returned to old haunts in 1999 with a visit to the Arandu (Basha River) Valley in the company of fellow British mountaineers, Bill Church, Gus Morton and Stewart Muir. The objective this time was a fine, pointed snow peak of c5,800m towards the head of the valley that rises east from the village of Zil towards the flanks of the Ganchen Massif.

After an initial reconnaissance to confirm the existence of a feasible ascent line, the four established Base Camp on the 18th July at c4,050m. According to the local population the British climbers were the first foreign party to visit this valley and their proposed summit already had the name Shel Chakpa. This Balti name means 'white broken peak', quite appropriate for a mountain with such considerable serac structure on its flanks. From Base Camp the West North West Ridge appeared to offer the safest and most feasible line of ascent. However, two weeks of warm and unsettled weather prevented a serious attempt until the 5th August, after which the team made a successful ascent and descent of the mountain over the next five days. The climbing on the first day proved straightforward but the second involved TD ice/mixed terrain to by-pass a set of shattered rocky towers on the lower part of the ridge. From Camp 2 at 5,000m the four continued up the ill-defined ridge, almost immediately finding a well-built cairn, which they surmise had probably been constructed by an enterprising ibex hunter coming up broken rocky ground to the south. Above, the difficulties increased and a meandering line up icy ramps and gullies at TD standard led to the summit. Descent was made largely by rappel, and in dry conditions, caused by the high temperatures at these modest altitudes during the Karakoram summer, stonefall lent an urgency to the situation. A rest day at Camp 2 was taken on the 9th and all four descended safely to Base Camp on the following day.



## Sokha Brakk -c5,956m-:

Two British climbers, Ian Arnold and Dave Millman, were visiting the adjacent Sokha Glacier to the south, where they managed to climb one small peak. Arnold had visited the glacier twice before and, in 1992, climbed the South Face of Pt 5,495m (IV+) and made a spirited attempt on the difficult and serious North Face of Pt 5,956m, an unclimbed peak on the main ridge southwest of Sosbun Brakk, subsequently christened Sokha Brakk. Little climbing has ever been attempted on the Sokha's dramatic peaks, though the glacier was visited as early as the first part of last century by the indefatigable Bullock-Workmans and then again in the late '30s by first Tilman then Scott Russell.

Attempts on other peaks in the region were thwarted by bad weather and although the team note considerable potential for future parties, there is little that would give easy climbing and approaches would be far from straightforward.

(See the common topics for more informations for the area : Redakh Brakk, Hispar& Sokha pass, Solu & Sokha glaciers).



## Sokha Brakk (Sekha Brakk/Dragonfly Crest), -c5,450m- :

Dave Wilkinson returned to old haunts in 1999 with a visit to the Arandu (Basha River) Valley in the company of fellow British mountaineers, Bill Church, Gus Morton and Stewart Muir. The objective this time was a fine, pointed snow peak of c5,800m towards the head of the valley that rises east from the village of Zil towards the flanks of the Ganchen Massif.

The British team chose to reconnoitre the unnamed side glacier rising north from their Base Camp but found the abnormally dry winter and spring had made approaches to many of the peaks both difficult and dangerous. The team was also bugged by the generally very unsettled weather but managed to climb one c5,450m peak on the Hispar watershed ridge. They named this Sekha Brakk (Dragonfly Peak).



## Sosbun Brakk -c6,413m- :



H.W.Tilman, before the war, had drawn attention to the slim tops of the valley of Hoh Lungma. It described it, in " Blank one the map " (E.Shipton) as "an uncompromising rock wall crowned with jagged towers". But the beauty of these peaks is misleading: the rock is dangerous with enormous rotted scales and cracks with sandy edges : Sosbun mean " heap's stone " in baltis and is well named. The climbing is very hard, as on the very beautiful face, 1100m high, vertical and often overhanging.

First and unique climb of the Sosbun summit in 1981 by the Japanesees H.Hashimoto and N.Matsumoto: they followed the difficult, elegant and very pure Southwestern edge (5 camps, a bivouac). Frenchies B. Domenech, Y.Duverney and J.P. Monet approached it in 1989; they stopped in a storm, under the slopes of the top which is the end of the difficult section (700m, 6b/A4). Undoubtedly disappointed, but adventure is always worth on this splendid mountain.



## Tsuntse Brakk:-

In a good example of exploratory mountaineering during July/August the experienced four man British team of Bill Church, Tony Park, Colin Wells and Dave Wilkinson climbed three previously virgin peaks from a Base Camp off the Kero Lungma Glacier (immediately south of the Hispar and approached from Skardu via Arandu). The team's original intention had been to attempt a c6,000m peak seen the previous year and dubbed Mystery Mountain. They were able to locate its position on existing maps but once in the field found that an intervening glacier basin, not marked on any maps, meant that the peak was unreachable from the Kero Lungma. In changeable weather and with masses of old spring snow (but little problem with fresh snow) they turned their attentions to a 5,000m peak on the south side of the glacier, later christened Tsuntse Brakk.



## Uzum Brakk --6500m- :

After their failure on Latok II, in 1994, Alexander Huber accompanied by seven German tried the Southern face while passing by the higher Uzum Brakk glacier in 1995. The route borrows the fine Southern ridge with obvious technical problems in the higher section (first time tried by a Japanese group in 1975 and later by a certain number of British forwardings but remains always virgin). Some members of the team arrived above 6500m.

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# Workman peak -c5,882m- :

The five-member italians team was on the Biafo Glacier in 1999 for almost a month from mid-July to mid-August but poor weather prevented them from achieving more than two ascents. On the 23rd July 1999, Giangi Angeloni, Angelo Carminati, Giorgio Carran, Gigi Rota and Ennio Spiranelli climbed the Central Spur on the West Face of Workman Peak (5,882m), finding snow and mixed terrain up to 60°. On the 28th, Angeloni, Rota and Spiranelli climbed a nearby c5,800m summit, for which they propose the name Tarci Peak after the great Bregaglia/Masino activist, Tarcisio Fazzini, killed during the winter of 1990 in an avalanche. The three Italians climbed the 600m South Ridge and West Face, which gave 12 rock pitches up to VI.



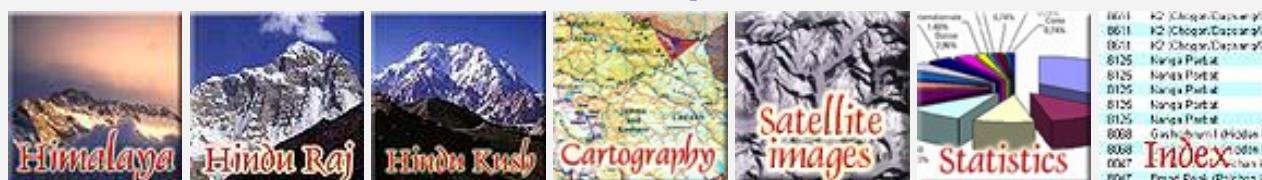
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