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Pakistan 2002

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In 2001 around 70 expeditions came to the Karakoram. However, with the change in political climate following the events of the 11th September and reprisals in neighbouring Afghanistan, plus the subsequent threat of an all-out Indo-Pakistan nuclear war, a little less than 40 were due to turn up at the start of the 2002 season. Then, a dozen or so cancelled at short notice, leaving no more than 28 permits being taken up by visiting expeditions. As several expeditions operating on the high Baltoro mountains had more than one peak booked, the actual number of climbing teams on the ground was somewhat less than 28.

Many of the last minute cancellations came from commercially organised enterprises which, because of the prevailing political situation, either did not get enough clients or felt it unwise to visit Pakistan at the time. However, as many suspected, those who did decide to continue with their plans generally experienced no real problem travelling through the country and found almost everyone they met extremely pleasant. From the point of view of the local economy a far greater effect was felt by the drop in number of trekking parties, which was, proportionally, considerably greater than the drop in mountaineering expeditions.

The next two years witness the Golden Jubilees of both Nanga Parbat and K2, and although celebrations are planned, these are not expected to be anything like as well-supported as those for Everest in 2003. However, there are many who believe it is not only the threat of violence in the country that is deterring climbers. There has been no real motivation to improve mountaineering bureaucracy in recent years and Mountain Wilderness, which began a training program for Liaison Officers, has recently stopped its work, as the Pakistan Government has sadly neither used these officers on expeditions nor employed them to train others. With Nepal's recent introduction of new peaks, greater freedom of access and a much reduced need for Liaison Officers, Pakistan should also be looking towards revising its regulations in order to provide a greater incentive for prospective expeditions. As noted below, further inducements may already be under discussion.

Peak fees

In an attempt to encourage more expeditions to the Karakoram in 2002, the Government of Pakistan reduced all peak fees by 50%. Although unofficially announced earlier in 2002, it was not until very late last year that the Government confirmed that the peak fees for 2003 (and it would appear 2004)

will remain the same as in 2002. The UIAA have continually campaigned for an improvement in the regulations, but highly instrumental in this recent decision have been local agents such as the well-known Pakistan mountaineer, Nazir Sabir, who pushed strongly for a continuation of the reduced fees. Sabir also reports that other incentives, for example the simplification of climbing and trekking procedures and an easier visa availability, were discussed.

Royalties for 2003 and 2004 in US dollars:

Peaks	Royalty for up to seven members	Additional members
K2	6000	1000
Other peaks above 8000m	4500	750
7500-8000m	2000	250
7000-7500m	1250	200
6000-7000m	700	100

The Weather in 2002

Very poor summer weather, with frequent snowfall and high winds above 6000m for much of the time, and unreliable satellite-transmitted forecasts, combined to produce almost zero success for expeditions attempting the big peaks. Only five expeditions operating on permitted peaks above 6000m reached the summit of their intended goal and significantly four of those were on the same route.

K2

Eight independent teams attempted various routes on 8611m K2 last summer, though the majority were on either the Abruzzi Ridge or SSE Spur (*Basque Route*). Several of these brought Nepalese Sherpas to help on the mountain. There was a six-member Spanish-Mexican team led by the female climber Araceli Segarra, who was attempting to become the only living woman summitter of this mountain. There was also a five-member team led by the Spanish climber, Jordi Tosas, a third Spanish expedition led by Oscar Cadiach, with strong climbers like Eduárd Sanchez and Eloi Callado (new route on the SW Face of Xixabangma in 2000), a fourth Spanish team led by Carlos Suarez that included 63-year-old Carlos Soria, a fifth led by Luis Fraga – a Spanish politician, Henry Todd's multi-national expedition on the Abruzzi Ridge, Sam Druk's very strong Tibetan team attempting to climb all the 8000m peaks, and a six-man Japanese expedition led by 60-year-old Kondo Kazayoshi, who already has six 8000m peaks to his credit and is trying to notch them all by 2008. The Japanese also had a permit for Gasherbrum II.

Kazayoshi was the first to arrive at Base Camp and start work on the SE (Abruzzi) Ridge, the venue for his 2000 attempt when he reached 7300m. In common with the other teams, the Japanese were hoping for reasonable weather during June with a summit attempt possible by mid-July, as has been normal in past years. However, the weather remained very poor, and throughout July there were probably only two days when the skies were completely clear. Together with the Tibetans it was the Japanese who opened the lower section of the ridge but they only once reached the site of Camp 4 at 7900m on The Shoulder and this became their altitude high-point for the entire expedition.

With generally dangerous conditions prevailing, some consider it lucky there were only two fatalities. On 22 July Captain Muhammad Iqbal was descending from Camp 3 on the Abruzzi Ridge. While he was rappelling the fixed ropes, it appears that one of them (possibly an old rope he had clipped into by mistake) broke. He fell nearly 1500m to his death, narrowly missing members of Henry Todd's expedition ascending from Advanced Base. Iqbal was the Pakistan liaison officer to the joint Chinese-Tibet/Pakistan Expedition attempting the Abruzzi Ridge and was a popular figure at Base Camp. This Tibetan team, which included three members who have climbed 11 of the 8000m summits, reached a higher point on the mountain than any other last season. Their best attempt took them to c.8400m, ie above the Bottleneck, where they were forced back by a sudden storm. Caught in a ferocious blizzard not far short of the 7900m camp on The Shoulder, they were unable to locate their tents. Worried about straying off the ridge, they spent a reported seven hours waiting for the wind to drop and the visibility to improve. When it did, they found the tents to be less than 30 metres from where they were standing.

Prior to this, on or around 13 July, a huge avalanche swept down the gully alongside the SSE Spur and caught six Sherpas and a number of Pakistan high-altitude porters ferrying loads near the base. One of the porters, Sher Ajman, was struck by large chunks of ice and died instantly. Several others were hit and most were lucky to escape alive.

Jordi Tosas was attempting the *Basque Route* and hoped to snowboard from the summit. He only reached about 6300m on the spur, but was able to snowboard down to c.5000m from that point. His team included the Georgian double Everest summitter, Gia Tortaladze, who has recently launched the International Mountaineering Association. The IMA comprises a group of well-known climbers such as Carsolio and Wielicki, who will be organizing major climbing projects that will also involve clean-up expeditions.

63-year-old Carlos Soria, who has four 8000m peaks to his credit including Everest in 2001, also attempted the *Basque Route* but his expedition reached no higher than 6600m. Oscar Cadiach's team made an unsuccessful attempt on the SW Ridge or Magic Line but never got above 6000m.

Most of the expeditions gave up towards the end of July and headed for home, but Segarra's team, which included the Mexican, Hector Ponce de León, and American cameraman, Jeff Rhoades, remained and were, to their surprise, rewarded in August with more than a week of fine weather. Unfortunately, this brought different problems. The temperatures soared, avalanches poured from the mountain and subsequently the Abruzzi was subjected to severe stonefall, cutting some of the fixed ropes and making climbing extremely dangerous.

❑ The Spanish also had to admit defeat at 7100m and return home empty-handed. However, one day during the expedition Rhoades and fellow film maker Jennifer Jordan were exploring the Godwin-Austen Glacier when they discovered the remains of human bones, alongside which were the remnants of an old canvas tent, clearly marked with the tag 'Made in India'. Later, some tattered clothing, labelled 'Cambridge (Massachusetts)' came to light, pointing towards the owner being a member of the ill-fated 1939 American-German expedition led by Fritz Wiessner. Then finally a glove was uncovered with the name Wolfe clearly written on it. It is presumed that the bones formed the remains of Dudley Wolfe, a very rich American climbing novice, who had been invited on the expedition largely to help finance it. He and three Sherpas were the first four fatalities on the mountain, whereas Ajman and Iqbal were the 51st and 52nd respectively

Nobody attempted K2 from the north or Chinese side.

Broad Peak

There were five separate expeditions on 8047m Broad Peak: the well-known guide, André Georges, and eight fellow members from Switzerland who also had permission for Gasherbrum I; a 15-member commercially organised German expedition led by Robert Rackl; a seven-member Korean expedition led by Han Wang-Yong, who only had Broad Peak and Gasherbrum II to climb in order to become the 11th person with all 14 8000m peaks (starting with Cho Oyu in 1994); a two-man German team hoping to complete a new route up the SW Face; a multi-national expedition led by Henry Todd. The two Germans quickly decided their proposed route was impractical and joined the others on the *Normal Route*. No one reached the summit.

On or around 19 July a big push by many of the teams working together saw a high point reached a little below the col on the ridge before the foresummit. The Koreans were trying to fix ropes across this section and with the American Chris Warner, from Henry Todd's expedition, in the lead, reached a point 50-60 metres below the col. Here, at c.7800m, the 45-60° slope of deep unconsolidated snow was deemed far too unstable and all descended.

Gasherbrum I

Only three expeditions attempted 8068m Gasherbrum I and while two failed (Swiss, led by André Georges, who were not able to get beyond 6300m and Spanish, led by Oscar Cadiach, who never made a serious attempt), Iwazaki Hiroshi's strong four-member team from the Himalayan Association of Japan recorded the only success on the Pakistan 8000m peaks during the season. Using the *Standard Route* up the Japanese Couloir the team reached the summit at 2.00pm on 5 August. It appears that on the descent the climbers were forced to spend an unplanned night on the mountain at 7000m and on 5 August Fumiako Goto became ill and fell into a coma. His team-mates lowered the unconscious victim down the route and were fortunately assisted by members of Kazuyoshi's K2 expedition. The latter climbers also had a permit for Gasherbrum II and, after abandoning their attempt on K2, were preparing to make a swift alpine-style attempt on the lower of the two Gasherbrum peaks when they received word of the accident. They quickly reacted with man-power,

oxygen bottles and climbing gear, assisting with the lower and the subsequent evacuation from Base Camp. Goto regained consciousness before he reached Islamabad and doctors in Japan appear optimistic for a full recovery.

Point 7062m - Borges Peak

Having failed on K2 and then found conditions on Gasherbrum I too dangerous to make a serious attempt, the four-man Spanish team of Oscar Cadiach, Eloi Callado, Lluís Rafois and Eduard Sanchez turned their attention to an unclimbed summit of 7062m, which they refer to as Gasherbrum 0. They reached the top on 19 July after what appears to be a technically difficult ascent and have proposed the new name of Borges Peak. The exact location of this peak is unclear though it is thought to be part of the Gasherbrum I complex.

Gasherbrum II

Gasherbrum II (8035m) is Pakistan's most popular peak. In 2001 a total of 17 expeditions attempted its *Normal Route*. Last year only two expeditions had a permit and only one, a six member Korean team, actually set foot on its flanks (the Japanese, who also had a permit for K2, were tied up with the rescue on Gasherbrum I as mentioned above). Their high point was 6300m.

Nanga Parbat

Only two teams attempted Nanga Parbat in 2002. A six-member Basque expedition reached c.7000m on the standard *Kinshofer Route* up the Diamir Face but found too much snow on the face above, while one Japanese and one Pakistani attempted the Rupal side of the mountain. The Japanese, Ichiro Hosada, was making his fifth attempt on the 8125m peak, which included a solo winter attempt in 1995. Although it is not entirely certain what route he was attempting last August, he failed fairly low on the mountain.

Gasherbrum IV

One of the more unusual expeditions to Pakistan last summer was the attempt by a six-man Swiss-Italian team to repeat the *Original 1958 Route* up the NE Ridge of 7925m Gasherbrum IV. Mario Casella was the leader and the members included the prominent Swiss-based activist, Roberto Bassi, the well-known mountaineer and film-maker, Fulvio Mariani, and the Lecco climber, Dario Spreafico. From Base Camp at 5100m on the South Gasherbrum Glacier the team established the route via the long glacier approach and the 500m-high dangerous icefall, dubbed the *Serracata delgi Italiani*, to the upper combe and col marking the lowest point between Gasherbrums III and IV. Camp 2 was established at around 6100m, after which chest-deep snow made it impractical to continue. Above, there are sections of hard mixed and rock climbing on the ridge, which the first ascensionists, Walter Bonatti and Carlo Mauri, graded V.

Batura II

A six-man team from the Saxon Alpine Club of Germany made a spirited attempt on the unclimbed Batura II (7762m), one of the highest unclimbed points remaining in the Karakoram. Tilo Dittrich, Günter Jung, Jan Lettke,

Tom Niederlein, Christian and Markus Walter set up Base Camp on the Baltar Glacier in June and followed the route of the first ascensionists of 7786m Batura I.

The 2002 Saxon expedition crossed the rubble-covered Baltar Glacier to an Advanced Base at 4250m and established Camp 1 towards the end of June at 5240m. To reach the site of Camp 2 they had to climb through a narrow and dangerous couloir, dubbed the Gunbarrel by the 1976 German team, which squeezed through a small gap between a rock wall and large sérac barrier. Camp 2 was placed at c.5800m on 2 June and, shortly after, Camp 3 above the Batokshi Pass. The team took around 250m of fixed rope and placed most of it on this section. On 15 July several team members were situated at Camp 4 (6560m) on the South Face of Batura II, somewhat left of the German line, preparing for a summit assault the following day.

Generally the weather had been very mixed with frequent snowfall but on the 16th the day dawned gloriously and Jung with the two Walter brothers set off at 3.30am. The snow conditions seemed reasonably acceptable to about 7000m but the névé field they were climbing was loosely bonded over ice and they realised that it would undoubtedly slide when hit by the rays of the sun. The three progressed to 7100m before deciding it was too dangerous. The route was subsequently abandoned but not before four members had climbed Batokshi Peak.

Back at Base Camp the group split, half going for an exploratory walk up the Toltar Glacier, while the rest climbed a 150m rock tower above camp. This gave three bold pitches (IV, VI and VII or 5.10c) on excellent granite and was christened Phalwan Chish (c.4200m).

Spantik

It seems that four expeditions attempted 7028m Spantik by its increasingly popular *Normal Route* up the SE Ridge and significantly, in a season where almost every team failed to reach its goal, all were successful.

Spantik remained more or less unknown until 1987 when Mick Fowler and Victor Saunders climbed the Golden Pillar, completing what was probably the most technical mixed route climbed to that date and at that altitude in the Karakoram. Interest then developed and since the mid-1990s, the SE Ridge has rapidly gained popularity. Despite the length of the route, technical difficulties are relatively low, there is only one real section where avalanche conditions can prove threatening. Significantly, much of the ridge is still negotiable in poor weather, making Spantik very much the peak of choice for those wishing to climb a non-technical, low 7000m peak in Pakistan.

The first group to succeed in 2002 was a primarily Pakistan expedition on which eight members from Shimshal, two from Passu, two from Skardu and two from Lahore (including a tour operator) reached the summit between 17 and 20 July. Accompanying this expedition was a Spanish climber, Victor Suanzez, who also reached the summit. Shimshal is the home of one of Pakistan's top high-altitude climbers, Rajab Shah, the only Pakistan mountaineer to have climbed all five of his country's 8000m peaks. With nearly two decades of mountaineering experience, Shah currently operates a climbing centre in Shimshal and is working with the youth of his area to bring them to the forefront of Pakistan mountaineering.

Next to summit on the 25th was a French Expedition, on which seven Europeans and three more high-altitude porters from Shimshal made the top. The group was led by the French guide, Christian Trommsdorf, and all but one foreign member made it to the summit. The team established three camps, the highest at 6050m, and was fortunate enough to be established at this camp at the start of a two-day period of fine weather. The summit day was 18 hours long.

The third team on the mountain was Japanese and comprised seven members led by the experienced Himalayan veteran, Omiya Motomu. Four members of this team together with three Pakistan high-altitude porters/guides reached the summit on 21 August.

The fourth and last expedition was formed by two mature Japanese, 57-year-old Hatsuyoshi Nori and 59-year-old Kenji Saito. Together with a Pakistan high-altitude climber, Akbar, the three reached the summit from Camp 3 (6200m) at 1.00pm on 1 September. The weather was good on the descent but Saito became exhausted and rather than continue further down the mountain, the three elected to spend a second night at Camp 3. During the night it began to snow hard and the three were pinned down for the next four nights. Saito deteriorated and eventually died from AMS.

The two survivors ran out of food on the third day and by the morning of the 5th an estimated three metres of snow had fallen. The pair set out in better weather and began to struggle down towards Camp 2 at 5500m but it took them all that day and the following night before they reached it. When they arrived at the site early on the morning of the 6th there was no sign of the tent, which was buried under tons of snow. The two had no option but to continue. Halfway to Camp 1 Akbar asked if he could stay for a rest. Nori left him with his sleeping bag and continued down to Camp 1 at 5200m, which he reached at 5.00am on the 7th. He was just able to make out the top of the tent and on digging it out managed to consume some food and drink. He then continued down to Base Camp (4580m), pleased to see that Akbar was now following. At 2.00pm the Japanese reached Base Camp. His fingers and toes were frostbitten but otherwise he was in relatively good shape. Akbar arrived later that day and was subsequently hospitalised before making a recovery.

Attila Ozsváth

The noted Hungarian rock climber and mountaineer, Attila Ozsváth, disappeared in the Charakusa region of Hushe on 24 July. He had gone to the area with a partner, Peter Tibor, although they do not appear to have been climbing together at the time. According to a spokesperson from North Pakistan Treks and Tours, who believe Ozsváth was swept away by an avalanche, a search was conducted but no trace was found.

The Flame

The only known significant rock climbs achieved in the Karakoram last year took place from the recently frequented Hainabrakk Glacier when Americans Bruce McMahan and Josh Wharton achieved the first ascent of *The Flame* at the head of the Hainabrakk Glacier via a route they named *Under Fire*.

McMahon and Wharton spent around seven weeks on the glacier, most of it suffering the bad weather prevalent in the range at the time. The pair made three trips up the glacier to the foot of the c.6310m spire, where they established a camp at c.5600m. Each journey was doomed to failure by the weather and as this approach involved considerable height gain and two dangerous icefalls, it took some motivation to return for the fourth time when the weather cleared at the beginning of August.

Their perseverance paid off. On 3 August, in an 18 hours' round trip from their tent, the two made the first ascent of this spectacular monolith via a 700m route they named *Under Fire*. The climb involved some wet and icy cracks, a difficult aid section using Birdbeaks and hooks, and an extremely bold lead by Wharton up the final 50 metres to the summit. This last pitch was a very steep and compact slab, and with the hand drill now broken, there was no possibility of protection. Wharton reached the top of this 5.10 pitch as the sun went down and the two rappelled through the night to the glacier. The route was graded 5.10+X, A3 and M5.

Shipton Spire

Returning to Base Camp after climbing *The Flame*, McMahon and Wharton took only one day's rest before setting out for a new route on 5852m Shipton Spire. Over the next two-and-a-half days the pair climbed the less-than-vertical but previously untouched South Buttress. This is the left edge of the SE Face as seen in the classic view of Shipton Spire and gave the two young Americans an almost entirely free climb. Only 30 metres was climbed on aid (C1) and in a dry year the pair reported that this section would go free at easy 5.12. The remainder of the climb went at 5.11 with some difficult snow-climbing needed to gain the summit. The 1300m, 30-pitch new route was christened *The Khanadan Buttress* (an Urdu name meaning family) and was the sixth line to be completed on this now famous formation (although not all of these have finished on the summit).

Other Peaks

Tadashi Kamei and partner from the Himalayan Green Club of Japan made an attempt on the NW Ridge of Khoser Gang, a prominent 6400m peak situated east of the Shigar to Dassu road and north of the Skoro La. After placing a camp at 5000m, the Japanese reached 5500m before giving up their attempt.

Three Koreans are reported to have more or less climbed the NW Face of a 5300m peak christened *Adil*. Unfortunately, at the time of writing there are no further details of either the ascent or the exact location of the peak.

Surprisingly, given its proximity to Chitral and the Afghan border, the Buni Zom region of the Hindu Raj was visited by a two-man Greek party. This mountain group is located a little east of the road connecting Chitral with Mastuj and was probably not explored until 1957, when Berry and Tyndale-Biscoe from New Zealand reached the summit of the highest peak, 6551m Buni Zom. Last summer Nikos Kroupis and George Zaralidis made an attempt on 6240m Gordoghan Zom, the fifth highest peak in the region and first climbed in 1965 by Alfred Koch and Ernst Lainer from Munich. Unfortunately, threatening weather turned them back at around 6050m.