

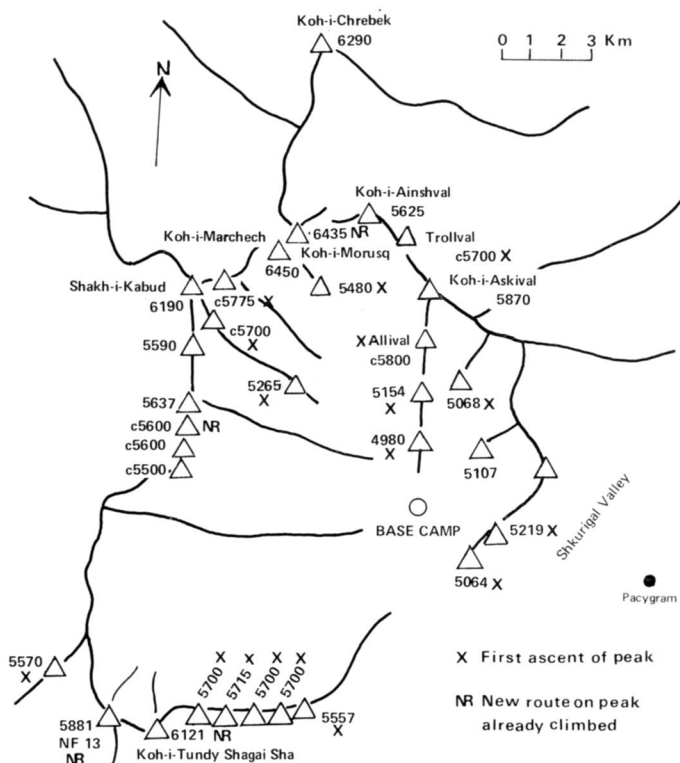
British Central Hindu Kush Expedition, 1971

R. Scott

The attractions of the Afghan Hindu Kush are manifold, but it was our budget that eventually led us there. A shorter journey, shorter approach march and nothing to pay for your peak. It is good-value, cut-price mountaineering.

All the major peaks have had an ascent or two and the aims of the expedition were to make an attempt at a new route on a 6000-m peak and to make first ascents of some of the unclimbed 5000-m peaks in the Bashgal valley area. The valley that we picked was the Shkurigal, a tributary of the Bashgal and Base Camp was set up at 3500 m in a pleasant meadow with a good supply of wood and water.

HINDU KUSH SHKURIGAL VALLEY



The most remarkable event of our six weeks' stay in the mountains was the weather. With the exception of two or three days, we were treated to brilliant sunshine. The combination of hot days and cold nights gave snow and ice climbing to be envied. However, one had to reach the snow first and this often involved a good day's walk from Base Camp, which we sited centrally with respect to the numerous side valleys of the Shkurigal. The snow-line varied between 4500 m and 5000 m, and most approaches involved steep, loose moraine.

The climbing is very much Alpine, only at a greater altitude. The drop to Base Camp after each sortie, though it did not help our acclimatisation much, unfortunately could not be avoided.

The Shkurigal has now been thoroughly explored. The valleys to the north, the Suigal, Shoshgal and Peshashgal, visited by the Scottish Hindu Kush Expedition of 1965, look very good. I do not think that they have been visited since by a mountaineering expedition, and if this is the case, they could well accommodate an expedition of the same nature as our own. To the west of the Shkurigal, Koh-i-Mondi looks magnificent, and a formidable proposition for any expedition.

SUMMARY Party: P. Ball, J. Davies, A. I. I. Kellas, R. Junkinson, R. Scott and B. J. N. Smith Shkurigal valley area—peaks are summarised on the map herewith.



65 *Shakh-i-Kabud*. Photo: R. Scott