



AAC Publications

Sosbun Group, Solu Glacier, various ascents

Pakistan, Spantik-Sosbun Range

Searching for a part of the Karakoram that might offer solid rock and had rarely been visited, I decided on the Solu Glacier. Only a few expeditions had ever gone there, most peaks were still untouched, and parts of the valley featured some of that legendary Karakoram granite. The Solu is immediately south of the Hispar and Biafo glaciers, so we could reach it in a few hours' Jeep travel from Skardu, following the Shigar and Basha rivers to the village of Bisil. We were fascinated by the hospitality and culture of the local villagers, and as they'd hardly ever had close contact with non-Pakistanis, we all had a happy, moving, and interesting time.

Narrow paths led to the Solu Glacier, and we spent a lot of time exploring the glacier and its side valleys. Next to the pastures of Pakora, towering above our camp at a little lake with a sandy beach, we discovered the huge rock face of Pakora Brakk. The dimensions of this face exceeded anything we could climb with our available gear, but at the foot of the main section, Gaby Lappe, Clemens Pischel, and I climbed a rock pillar to give the route Zhunzhe (170m, UIAA IV+/V-). Immediately west of Pakora Brakk, and dividing the pastures of Pakora into two parts, a distinctive stream came down from a side valley. The upper section of this valley contained the Pakora Glacier, surrounded by a number of impressive rock faces and sharp peaks, all unclimbed. I chose the middle peak at the back of the glacier, and soloed up its southeast gully. This steepened to 50° and led to the summit ridge, which I followed southwest to the highest point (mainly II and III with a step of IV+, and a short section of 55° ice). I named the peak Braunschweig Brakk (35°58'44" N, 75°23'40" E, 5,301m GPS).

Now sufficiently acclimatized, we headed toward the highest mountain in the area, Sugulu (6,102m, named by the 2000 British expedition). We spent two full days at a 4,600m advanced base camp, and climbed Gang Shole (4,860m), a rocky top on the ridge coming down from a point east of Sugulu. Then, Clemens Pischel and I moved up to a high camp north of Gang Shole at 5,200m. Shortly after pitching the tent and beginning the inevitable snow-melting marathon, snowfall set in and did not stop. Next morning, knowing that we were running out of time and supplies, we decided to climb as far as we could. In poor visibility we navigated through an icefall between 5,200m and 5,500m, until arriving on the watershed ridge. Here we continued west along a corniced crest, and then past Ice Cream Peak, the highest point reached by the 2001 British expedition (see below), until ca 250m below the summit of Sugulu we were turned back by an ice cliff.

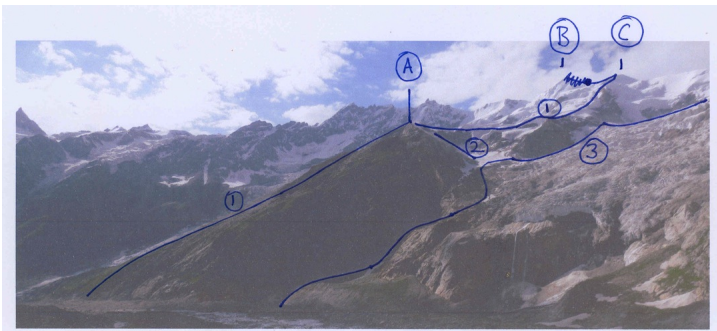
Kai Maluck, Germany

Editor's note: Although Auden and Tilman (in 1937), and Mott and Russell (in 1939), penetrated the lower part of the valley, there is no known report of mountaineering activities in the Solu Glacier before the visit of a British expedition in 2000. Ken Findlay, Paul Hudson, Dave Wilkinson, and Karl Zientek established base camp above the place on the glacier known as Sugulu. During the approach they'd been informed by locals that around 1995 an expedition climbed three peaks from the glacier basin west of Sugulu. Unfortunately, information on who they were and exactly where they went was extremely sketchy. The 2000 expedition climbed one peak, Sekha Brakk (Dragonfly Peak, ca 5,450m), on the Hispar watershed. Wilkinson returned the following year with Bill Church, Steve Kennedy, and Stuart Muir, climbing over what has now been named Gang Shole, and making the first ascent of Ice Cream Peak (ca 5,800m, AD) as part of an attempt on Sugulu.

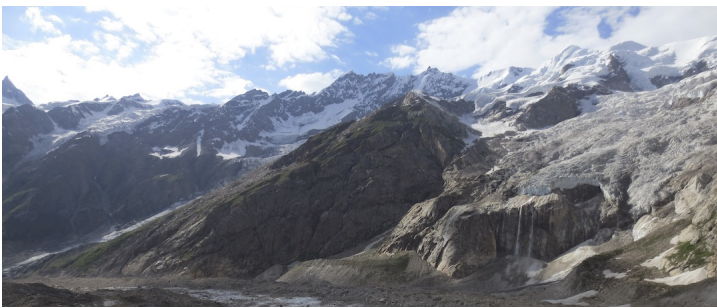
Images



Peaks of the Pakora Glacier, with the route to Braunschweig Brakk (5,301m GPS). Most of the first-ascent route lies behind the prominent rock rib.



Looking northwest from the Solu Glacier to (A) Gang Shole, (B) Sugulu, and (C) Ice Cream Peak. (1) The route followed by the 2001 and 2012 expeditions, the 2012 team continuing from Ice Cream Peak toward Sugulu. (2) The route also followed by the 2001 expedition. (3) This route was followed by the 2000 expedition toward Sekha Brakk.



Looking northwest from the Solu Glacier (high res reference).



Susanne Riediger during an ascent of Gang Shole. Summits behind lie on the watershed ridge west of Sugulu.

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