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Kuz Sar I (ca 5,460m), North to South Traverse, First Winter Ascent

Pakistan, Karakoram, Virjerab Muztagh

Sikandar Ali Khan and I left Islamabad on February 7 and arrived in Shimshal on the 10th. With six local porters and a cook we established base camp at Shuijerab (4,380m) and then high camp at 5,000m at the base of Minglik Sar (6,050m) on Shimshal Pass. On the approach there was surprisingly little snow and all the watercourses were frozen. We left base camp at 3 a.m. on February 16 for an ascent of Minglik Sar. The predawn temperature was -30°C . We paused for one hour at high camp, and at noon we abandoned our attempt at an altitude of ca 5,500m due to adverse weather. We descended and immediately shifted high camp to 4,700m at the base of the northeast face of Kuz Sar I.

Early the next morning two of our Shimshali porters, Hajjat Kareem and Wazir Beg, arrived with breakfast, and Sikandar left with them for Kuz Sar I at 7 a.m. I stayed behind; my ankles had been chafed by second-hand boots I bought at a local flea market, and the climb had aggravated them. The three climbed the northeast face rapidly, reaching the summit at 11:15 a.m. They descended the southwest face and returned to Shuijerab that same day.

Despite lying close to Shimshal Pass, the twin-summitted Kuz Sar has not been climbed often because it lies directly opposite the higher and far more frequented Minglik Sar. Both peaks offer nontechnical ascents. Kuz Sar was probably first climbed in 1989 by the famous Pakistan mountaineer Nazir Sabir. Hasil Shar claims to have climbed it twice—once solo, when he also went to the top of Kuz Sar II (possibly ca 20m higher), and once with a British client. Several more ascents have been made by foreign parties.

On January 28, Fazal Ali and his son Mohsin, along with Khushdil Karim and Rehmat Nazar, climbed Minglik Sar—significant because Mohsin is the grandson of the accomplished Shimshali climber Rajab Shah, the first Pakistani to climb all five of his country's 8,000m peaks. More notable is that Mohsin is eight years old. Minglik Sar, a popular "trekking peak," is technically in the Ghurjerab Muztagh.

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Images



Looking west from the slopes of Minglik Sar to Kuz Sar and the route of ascent. Shimshal Pass is more or less in front of the climbers.

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