



AAC Publications

Shuijerab Glacier, Koh-e-Gulistan (6,224m), southwest face and west-northwest ridge

Pakistan, Karakoram, Shimshal Area - Shuijerab Group

On June 23, with our plans and preparations more or less complete, breaking news shocked the world: "10 climbers and a local Pakistani killed by Taliban at the base camp of Nanga Parbat." We would have to pass Nanga Parbat and the town of Chilas en route to Shimshal.

An avalanche of warnings from family and friends hit each member of the team. Previous atrocities along the Karakoram Highway have usually resulted from a clash of Shia and Sunni religions; tourists have more or less been spared. Now terrorism had reached another level, and a clear message had been sent to foreigners. Following phone calls with our Pakistani friends, and with the feeling that a small group of terrorists should not ruin the reputation of one of the world's most beautiful mountain regions, we continued with our plan.

Shimshal in Gojal (Upper Hunza) is famous for its peaceful people and their hospitality. They are of Ismaili belief, with a liberal interpretation of Islam and the Aga Khan as their religious leader. Girls and boys all attend school, and women are not necessarily covered by veils. The local people depend on tourism and reject all extremism.

Supported by the German Alpine Club, Harry Kirschenhofer, Michael Pfeiffer, Birgit Walk, and I arrived in Pakistan on August 10. We reached Shimshal on the 13th, and after a three-day trek along the Pamir-i-Tang, interrupted by a day of bad weather, set up base camp on the 16th at 4,600m, close to the snout of the Shuijerab Glacier.

We had located four unclimbed peaks above 6,000m, which we labelled P1–P4, at the northern head of the valley, including one actually beyond the divide in the neighboring valley of Oprang. Unfortunately, I caught a throat infection and had to descend in order to recover. During August 17–22 the remaining team established a high camp at 36°33.514'N, 75°42.416'E and decided to attempt P3. Leaving at 3 a.m. on the 24th, they reached the foot of the southwest-facing flank of the west-northwest ridge, where a 350m, 50° ice slope, overlaid with a little snow, led to the crest (AD-). They followed the ridge to 5,950m, where a small rock step gave a section of UIAA II. Above, the crest was generally straightforward (PD+) but cut by a large crevasse at ca 6,100m. Fortunately, they could get across a snow bridge. After an exhausting plod through deep snow, Kirschenhofer, Pfeiffer, and Walk reached the summit, recording an altitude of 6,224m (GPS) and coordinates 36°35.525'N, 75°43.305'E. Because of the mass of flowers around base camp, we named the peak Koh-e-Gulistan, Wakhi for "mountain of the land of flowers."

Future expeditions should consider P1 (ca 6,106m, 36°34'27.01"N, 75°44'0.65"E) where a névé slope on the east face leads to the north ridge, P2 (ca 6,053m, 36°36'47.94"N, 75°43'50.96"E) via the south ridge, and P4 (ca 6,080m, 36°36'03.32"N, 75°41'39.93"E).

There are also four 6,000m peaks at the northern head of the Ganj-i-Tang (aka Ganj Dur) believed to be unclimbed. According to our research these are: G1 (ca 6,104m, 36°36'24.32"N, 75°34'51.45"E); G2 (ca 6,047m, 36°36'55.30"N, 75°35'36.57"E); G3 (ca 6,038m, 36°38'09.50"N, 75°34'14.98"E); G4 (ca 6,028m, 36°37'59.55" N, 75°33'00.91"E). For more information, contact the expedition via the web address below.

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Editor's note: Only two previous climbs from the Shuijerab Glacier are recorded. In 2002 a Japanese expedition attempted a ca 5,836m peak on the west rim of the West Shuijerab Glacier, retreating just 15m below the summit but naming the peak Halshamas Sar. In 2007 a Japanese mountaineer, with a local climber, went to the head of the East Shuijerab Glacier, then climbed onto the divide with the Shuwert Valley. From there the two followed the ridge south to the top of a fine snow pyramid, GPS measured at 6,152m (6,020m on the map). They named this peak Shuwert Sar.

Images



Looking east from high camp on the upper Shuijarab Glacier to peaks around the Shuijerab-Shuwert divide. Nearly all the peaks in this photo are thought to be unclimbed.



High camp on the upper Shuijerab Glacier. P3 on the left was climbed via a snow and ice slope off-picture to reach the left skyline ridge, which was followed to the summit. P1, on the right, remains unclimbed.

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