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Aghil Range, Durbin Kangri Group, Xiao Kangri

China, Karakoram

As part of the Shaksgam Expedition led by Bruce Normand, Lukas Brexler, Harry Kirchenhofer, and I (all from Germany) visited the Durbin Kangri group in June. From the team base camp, we three followed the canyon leading toward Durbin Kangri I, which narrowed to just 2m and was prone to rockfall from both sides. Sometimes we had to climb over boulders bigger than a house, at other times traverse conglomerate cliffs. It took four hours to achieve just 300m of altitude on a 5km section. We followed the glacier below the mighty, 1,700m-high north face Durbin Kangri I to reach a basin, where we eventually established a high camp (5,409m).

I'd had surgery just 12 days before departing for China and had to step back. Dmitry Shapovalov then joined Harry and Lukas for an ascent of a snow peak directly opposite the north face of Durbin Kangri I. Following a natural line up 50° névé slopes to the summit ridge, and avoiding intervening rock towers, the three reached the summit (6,102m, 36°01'07"N, 76°47'38"E) on June 30. Neighboring unclimbed peaks of ca 6,290m and 6,453m could be of interest to future expeditions. We named the summit Xiao Kangri (little snow/ice peak), as it is dwarfed by the massive Durbin Kangri peaks.

Later, Dmitry and Lukas summited a previously unclimbed rock tower directly north of base camp. The fragile rock and conglomerate was held together mostly by good luck. Kulchintubulak Tower (5,290m, 36°03'13"N, 76°42'27"E) is a prominent feature when viewed up the Shaksgam Valley from below Aghil Pass. We departed base camp on July 5.

Editor's note: Prior to 2014 the only summit to be reached north of the Shaksgam River was Peak 6,366m, located southeast of Durbin Kangri and west of Burnag Kangri. This was climbed in 1997 by a New Zealand team led by John Nankervis.

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Images



Durbin Kangri II from the southeast.



The ca 1,700m north face of Durbin Kangri.



The southwest ridge of Durbin Kangri I.



Lukas Brexler on the first ascent of Xiao Kangri, with the north face of Durbin Kangri I behind.



South face of Xiao Kangri, showing the route of ascent.

Article Details

Author	Christof Nettekoven
Publication	AAJ
Volume	57
Issue	89
Page	344
Copyright Date	2015
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions