



## AAC Publications

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### **Maidon Sar (a.k.a. Darmyani Peak), East Ridge from the South**

Pakistan, Karakoram, Batura Muztagh

Looking northwest across the Pasu Glacier to (A) Pasu Sar East (6,842m), (B) Noukarsich (6,498m), (C) Maidon Sar (6,085m, Spanish, 1985), and (D) Hiriz (5,550m, Spanish, 1985). (1) The 2016 American route to Maidon Sar. (2) The southeast couloir of Hiriz (Peak 5,550m), climbed in 1992. (3) Spanish Route (1985). Photo by Steve Su

**OUR ORIGINAL LINEUP was Doug Chabot, Rusty Willis, and me. However, several months before our departure, permit complications prevented Doug from joining us. We had planned to attempt the north face of Shispare Sar (7,611m), which Doug had been eying for several years.**

Rusty and I left the United States on July 14, 2016, and after a week of travel we set up base camp at around 3,960m, alongside the lateral moraine of the Pasu Glacier. On our first morning a huge avalanche swept our planned approach route to Shispare. Plan B, although less direct, was to ascend a small snow bowl on the north side of the Pasu Glacier to access its upper flank and so cross back south to Shispare. [This snow bowl is on the left side of the southeast flank of Peak 5,550m.] However, a reconnaissance mission was met with complicated crevasse crossings, and we turned back to place a high camp at the top of the bowl at a little over 5,000m.

Two weeks into the trip, Rusty received news that his mother had been hospitalized, and he returned home. Now down to a team of one, I decided to climb a peak designated 6,085m on our German map.

I accessed the peak using the same approach described earlier and used the same high camp. On August 4, I spent the night at this camp, planning to leave early the next morning. However, snowstorms delayed my departure. The weather improved as the day went on, and by afternoon it was clear and baking, with a temperature of 32°C inside the tent. Instead of waiting until the following morning, I left late that afternoon, with a forecast for progressively worse weather.

At 4 p.m., after the sun went behind the mountain, I set off up the glacier. After some backtracking due to crevasses, I climbed through a minor bergschrund and got onto the main snow slope leading to the east ridge of Peak 6,085m. Once on the ridge, cornices forced me to climb on rock below, though the difficulties were no more than M4. In fading light, I was fortunate to see the mighty Batura Glacier to the north from an awesome vantage point.

Soon it was completely dark and my pace along the ridge slowed substantially. The crest eventually led to the huge ice cap that makes up the summit. It appears to be a few hundred meters thick, and this would not have been a good time for it to break. After some awkward climbing on steep, unconsolidated snow, I belly-flopped onto the ice cap, where I could just make out the outline of the summit through the darkness. With only a 6m radius of sight with my headlamp, it took several passes before I could confirm I was on the top (ca 36°29'42.66"N, 74°41'9.11"E, Google Earth). It was a bit anticlimactic in the darkness, but after staring up at the starlit sky and seeing the occasional shooting star, I was rewarded.

I descended my route without incident, leaving three rappel cords on the ridge. In the distance I could see a light that I assumed to be a campfire lit by local herders. Seeing a sign from another human seemed to ease my worries of traveling alone. Later, I found that my liaison officer and my cook, Rasool, had built the fire to guide me.

For those who might attempt the north face of Shispare in the future, climbing earlier in the season (before July) may be advantageous. Crevasses might be more filled in, making easier glacier travel (skis essential), and the approach bowl will not have melted out, which causes severe rock slides and a huge gap in the bergschrund.

I would like to thank the Mugs Stump Award committee for supporting this trip.

– Steve Su, AAC

## **Historical Notes on Maidon Sar (Peak 6,085m) and Peak 5,550m**

Maidon Sar, noted on the Polish map of the Batura Muztagh as Darmyani (Needle) Peak (6,085m), has had three known ascents, all by the east ridge, though each party reached the ridge by a substantially different route. Each also thought it was making the first ascent of the peak.

The mountain was most likely first climbed in 1985 by Spanish climbers Kike de Pablo and José Luis Zuloaga. As reported in AAJ 1987, these two were in the area to attempt Shispare, and they climbed onto the Pasu-Batura watershed to the east of Peak 5,550m. They then moved west along the ridge, crossing Peak 5,550m and descending to a col before continuing up the east ridge of Peak 6,085m to the summit, which they named Maidon Sar. The ascent was made in a four-day round trip from base camp, and according to de Pablo it was a pleasant, safe, but long alpine climb, with no special difficulties but beautiful scenery. (In 2016, Steve Su's liaison officer told him that local herders referred to this peak as Patundas, the name given to a nearby herding camp, but Darmyani and Maidon Sar are the only names appearing in the historical record.)

The peak was ascended again in 1987 by Geoff and Sue Cohen (U.K.). They had been climbing in the upper Batura, and on the way down crossed the glacier below Yashpirt and made their way south, climbing about 1,000m of grass and shrub slopes, accompanied by haunting music from a lone Wakhi shepherdess who was nearby. They left early from a bivouac at the top of the vegetation and scrambled easily up rock and snow to the col at the base of the east ridge of Maidon Sar. The snow was good on the crest at first, but less inspiring while circumventing a rocky section before the final rise. Sue Cohen stopped just below the snow cap and about 40 minutes from the summit, which her husband reached solo. The couple regained their bivouac around nightfall after a long day.

In 1992 Jonathan Preston (U.K.) soloed the broad 700m couloir in the center of the southeast face of Peak 5,550m, the mountain crossed by the Spanish team to gain the east ridge of Maidon Sar in 1985. Peak 5,550m is sometimes referred to as Hiriz. From the summit, Preston descended east, back to the Pasu Glacier, most likely following the same route used by the Spanish.

## Images



Descending from Maidon Sar in 1985, looking east down the Passu Glacier and approach from base camp below the shepherds' huts at Patundas.



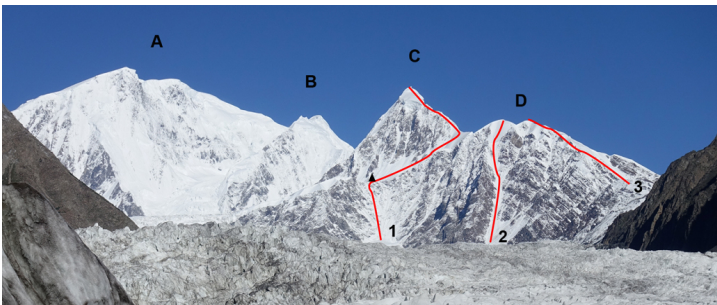
The east ridge of Maidon Sar, seen from the summit of Hiriz (Peak 5,550m) during the first ascent in 1985. This east ridge was followed by all three parties to have climbed the peak to date, though each party's approach to the crest has been substantially different.



From left to right, the peaks of Passu Sar East (6,842m), Noukarsich (6,498m), Maidon Sar (6,085m), and Hiriz (5,550m), seen from the east in 1985. The Spanish climbers' 1985 approach to the summit of Hiriz is marked. The obvious snow couloir splitting the southeast face is the one climbed in 1992.



Looking southwest across the lower Passu Glacier to (A) Borchers Peak (6,305m, Poles, 1974), (B) Shispare (7,611m, German-Poles, 1974), (C) Point 7,000m, (D) Rishi Choti (6,766m), (E) Passu Sar East (6,842m, Japanese, 1985). The base of the snow bowl used to access the upper Passu Glacier and Maidon Sar in 2016 is visible bottom right.



Looking northwest across the Pasu Glacier to (A) Pasu Sar East (6,842m, Japanese, 1985), (B) Noukarsich (6,498m), (C) Maidon Sar (6,085m, Spanish, 1985), (D) Hiriz (5,550m, Spanish, 1985). (1) The 2016 American route to Maidon Sar. (2) The southeast couloir of Hiriz (Peak 5,550m), climbed in 1992. (3) Spanish Route (1985).



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