



## AAC Publications

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### **Kachqiant, Northeast Ridge; Ghaintar Chhish, Southeast Ridge, Attempt**

Pakistan, Hindu Raj, Thui and Ghamobar Groups

**Inspired by Florian Tolle's report in AAJ 2008, Ruud Rotte, Danny Schoch, Menno Schokker, and I left the Netherlands on June 3 for the Dasbar Valley in far northwest Pakistan. We were possibly the first climbers to visit since Tolle's French team in 2007.**

We hired 30 porters in Nialthi and reached a base camp at 3,600m, where we planned to stay three and a half weeks. Beautiful, unclimbed Kachqiant (36°37'0.25"N, 73°14'35.40"E), named by the late Bernard Domenech, was our main goal, but we also wanted to explore other mountains. Acclimatization trips quickly showed the snow to be very soft during daytime; climbing on snow was only possible at night. We made an advanced base at 5,000m, at the foot of Kachqiant's northeast ridge.

After two weeks of acclimatization and exploration, Danny, Menno, and I attempted the northeast ridge. It was a big struggle. The wind was extremely cold and the snow very powdery. Our progress was slow, and at 5,450m we decided to retreat.

Subsequently, Menno and Ruud went for the southeast ridge of Ghaintar Chhish (a.k.a. Gainthir Chhish, 6,273m). The main peak has been climbed once, and the southeast ridge rises to the unclimbed eastern summit at about 6,200m. They packed a tent and food for four days, but at an altitude of 5,800m they decided to retreat—the rock was very poor and there were many wet snow avalanches.

Danny and I went for a final try on Kachqiant. We knew conditions would not improve, but we were positive about our chances. Regaining the previous high point proved difficult, but this time there was less wind. An extra camp, lots of food, and thick down jackets were part of the new strategy. At 2:30 a.m. on July 1, we left our tent at 5,500m. The snow was immediately very powdery and unconsolidated. A lot of exhausting wading followed, though some of the snow overlay bulletproof black ice. There were a couple of 70° ice pitches, but these were easy compared to the sections of deep snow.

Bas Visscher just below the summit of Kachqiant at the start of the descent. (A) The pointed rocky summit of Peak 6,200+m. (B) Thui Zom (Thui I, Karol Zom, 6,623m). (C) Peak 6,200+m. (D) Koyo Zom South and Koyo Zom (6,872m). (E) Dasbar Zom (6,058m). (F) Ghaintar Chhish (6,273m). Heights generally taken from the Miyamori map.

Our progress was very slow, but luckily the conditions improved on the final ridge. At 4 p.m. we reached the summit. What a happy moment! Maps quote a height of 6,015m; the GPS on our satellite phone indicated 5,990m. We graded the ascent TD- (1,000m, mostly 50cm of steep powder snow on black ice, with five sections of 60–70° ice and a knife-edge corniced ridge).

Taking no risk, we descended the ridge entirely by rappelling from Abalakov anchors, finally reaching our tent at 1 a.m. Many rappels were needed, as we had taken only one 60m rope. We were completely exhausted and next day rested many hours in the sun. When the temperature cooled, we descended the tricky ridge to 5,000m. We knew we were safe now, and after some sleep walked down to base camp. The next day we walked out of the Dasbar Valley with smiles on our faces.

The Hindu Kush and Hindu Raj have not been frequented much by Western climbers in recent years—certainly not compared with other ranges in Pakistan. While we met many friendly people and the reception we received in Nialthi was wonderful, it was hard to assess the risk. The police in Ghizer District decided to send an agent to stay with us for our entire time in base camp. Future expeditions will have to make their own judgment.

We had good weather in June, with very hot days and cold nights. Better snow conditions might be found in September or October, but by that time it could also be very dry. The rock seems good in the lower valley, and there are some serious walls. Higher in the valley, the rock is poor. Lots of peaks have seracs, so finding safe lines is not easy.

Probably the best unclimbed goals for future parties are the north-northwest ridge of Ghamobar Zom (a.k.a. Dhuli Chhish, a collection of summits over 6,400m; the highest, 6,518m, was climbed in 1973 by Italians Platter, Riz, and Vaia, via the southwest face and southeast ridge); the southeast ridge of Ghaintar Chhish (6,273m, first climbed from the north in 1968 by an Austrian expedition); and perhaps Ayesh Bilou (5,000m). Attractive Peak 5,900m is hard to access and might be better from the adjacent valley to the west.

Bas Visscher, Netherlands

Beklimming Kachqiant 2018 (Dutch) from bas visscher on Vimeo.

## Images



Ayesh Bilou (5,000m) seen from the northeast. An ascent of the wall would give 1,500–2,000m of climbing on rock of variable quality. Locals say an Italian team failed on it in the 1980s.



Ruud Rotte at the bivouac below Ghaintar Chhish. The southeast ridge is the right skyline. The central snow couloir is threatened by a serac. The rock is terrible.



A bivouac on the southeast ridge of Ghaintar Chhish. In the background right is the Ghamobar massif.



Looking west from Kachqiant at unclimbed Peak 5,900m, which looks like a smaller version of Kachqiant when seen from the north. In the background is the range of peaks explored in 1999 by an International UIAA expedition led by Jean Claude Marmier and another French expedition (AAJ 2000).



Ghaintar Chhish from the south. The Dutch attempted the right skyline, the southeast ridge. The peak has only been climbed from the far side, and only the highest (left) top.



Kachqiant from the north. This image was taken in 2007, when there were fewer seracs than today. Danny Schoch and Bas Visscher climbed the obvious ridge falling toward the camera.



The vast north side of Ghamobar Zom (Dhuli Chhish). The unclimbed north-northwest ridge, which is more than 2,000m high, rises away from the camera on the right side of the picture and ends at the northwest summit (Ghamobar Zom V, ca 6,400m). The entire north side of the massif remains unclimbed, though it is thought to have been attempted by French climbers.



Danny Schoch just below the summit of Kachqiant. (A) The pointed rocky summit of Peak 6,200+m. (B) Thui Zom (Thui I, Karol Zom, 6,623m). (C) Peak 6,200+m. (D) Koyo Zom South and Koyo Zom (6,872m). (E) Dasbar Zom (6,058m). Heights generally taken from the Miyamori map.



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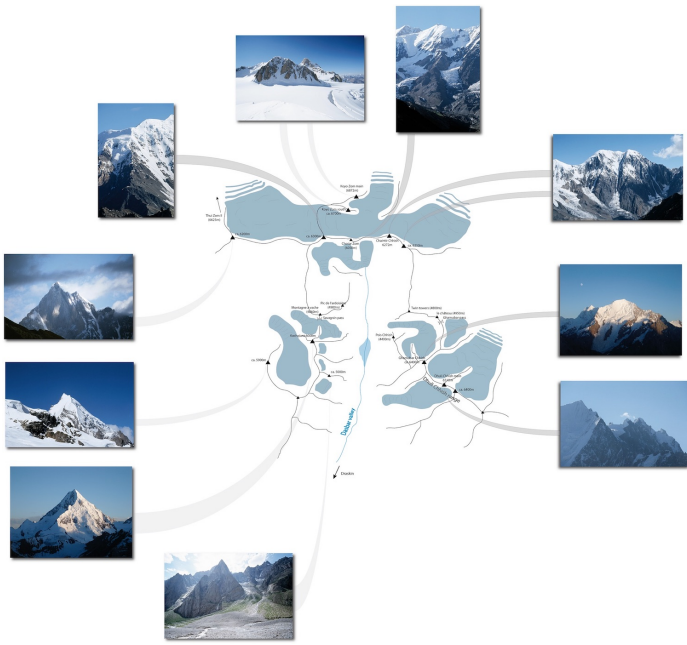
Bas Visscher on the northeast ridge of Kachqiant at around 5,300m.



Danny Schoch climbing ice on the summit ridge of Kachqiant.



The unclimbed north-northwest ridge of Ghamobar Zom seen in profile. In the right snow conditions, this 2,000m arête would be a great alpine-style challenge.



Florian Tolle's 2007 sketch map of peaks around the Dasbar Valley. Different heights and some different names have been used in this report.

## Article Details

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