



AAC Publications

Mario Sar, South-southwest and Southeast ridge; Dih Sar, Southeast Face, Attempt

Pakistan, Karakoram, Ghujerab Mountains, Karun Koh Subgroup

Looking south from Mario Sar at Karun Koh (variously 7,164m 6,977m). Photo by Mariusz Saramak
The Ghujerab Mountains form the northern Karakoram. This vast mountain area can be conveniently partitioned into four areas or subgroups: Khunjerab, Karun Koh, Tupopdan, and Shuijerab. Two Polish teams visited the Karun Koh Group during August-September, and September-October, the last team encountering the best conditions, although melting ice and snow after noon still presented problems. Google Earth is not perfect for the evaluation of terrain in this area, but in 2018 Janusz Majer and I put together a comprehensive sketch map of the Tupopdan and Karen Koh groups at 1:100,000. This produced an immediate interest among Polish climbers.

Mariusz Samarak and Jacek Widera set up base camp in the Spesyngov Valley on September 7, having trekked from Shimshal via the Boesam Pass and Ghujerab River. This lies northeast of Karun Koh (reported as either 7,164m or 6,977m), the highest of the Ghujerab peaks and climbed only once (in 1984 by Austrians, via the southwest ridge). The goal of the 2019 expedition was to climb to the Spesyngov Pass (5,400m) and try neighboring peaks.

On September 13, from a camp at 5,100m, the pair reached the ridge north of the pass and followed it up to Peak 6,151m and from there northwest a short distance to Peak 6,210m, which they named Mario Sar (36°39'50.68"N, 75° 5'29.72"E). The terrain was snow and scree of 45° or less.

On the descent, before reaching the pass, Saramak slipped on an icy section (his new light alloy crampons had blunted) and fell 300m toward their approach route. Fortunately, he was able to get back to camp unassisted. Over the next two days they descended to the main Spesyngov Valley, where they were helped by two porters. Four days later they were back in Shimshal, but it was only on returning home that Saramak found that he had fractured his foot. There are plenty of opportunities to be had in this area, apart from the great northern side of Karun Koh, and it appears that the second half of September is probably the best time for climbing here these days.

The second team to visit the Karun Koh mountains was Jakub Bogdanski and Michal Ilczuk. They arrived in Shimshal on September 11, and via the Boesam Pass and Ghujerab River reached the Dih Valley on the 16th. This is the last valley rising south from the Ghujerab River before reaching Spesyngov. The next day, not without difficulty, they established base camp at 4,700m, at the start of the Dih Glacier. On the 20th they placed a high camp at 5,300m in the First Ice Flow, northeast of the main glacier, and below the southeast face of Dih Sar (reported as either 6,363m or 6,200m, 36°35'4.51"N, 75°17'36.66"E). On the 21st they tried to climb a gully on the right-hand side of the face, but quickly had to move onto the bordering rock, which proved appalling. At 5,700m they decided it was too dangerous to continue.

On the 22nd they tried again, this time up the center of the face, which at this point is snow/ice and 700–800m high. They simul-climbed the first 300m and then belayed eight pitches (their rope was 75m) to a height of 5,950m, where, still four or five pitches from the summit ridge and with only two hours of daylight left, they opted to descend. (They had no bivouac gear.) It took a full eight hours to reach camp, and they eventually returned to Shimshal on the 26th.

Reaching Gilgit Airport on the 29th, they found there were no more tickets for flights to Islamabad, from which they were due to fly home next morning. The only option was a taxi for \$200, the price of two air tickets. The 650km-plus journey down the Karakoram Highway took 13 hours. They were in time for their flights but said this was by far the most dangerous part of the expedition.

– **Jerzy Wala**, Poland, translated by Monika Hartman; pictures supplied by Janusz Majer

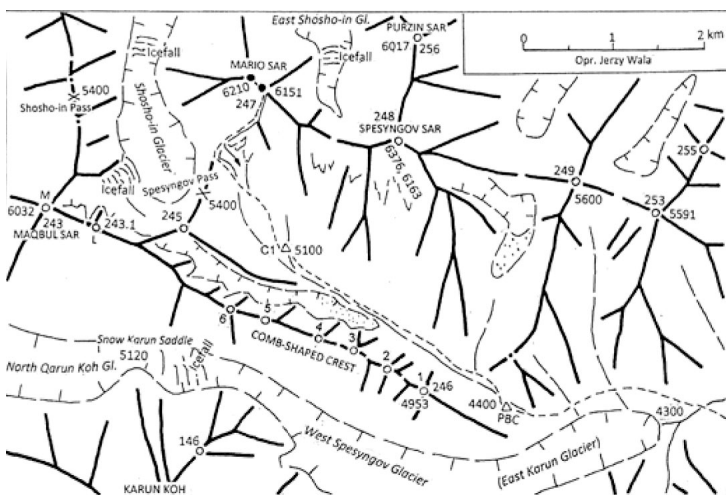
Images



The northeast face of Karun Koh (variously 7,164m or 6,977m).



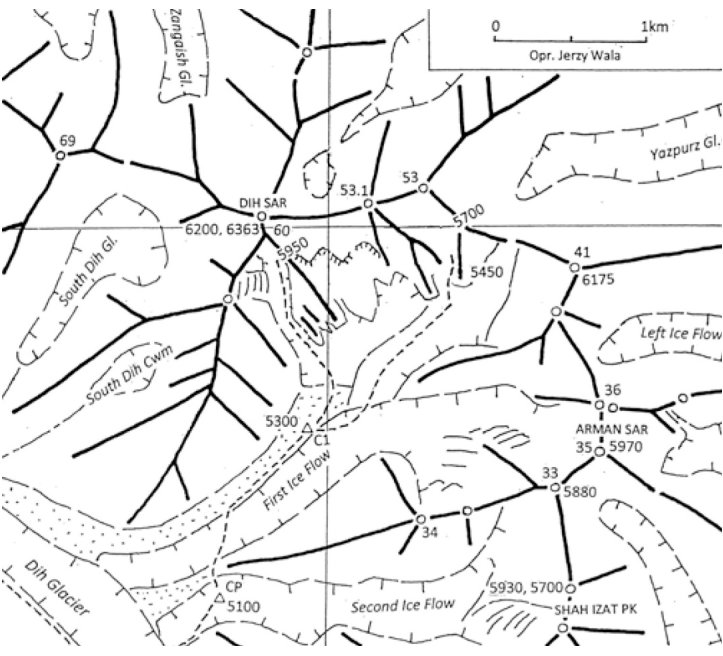
Looking south from Mario Sar at Karun Koh (variously 7,164m 6,977m).



Upper Spesyngov Valley to the northeast of Karun Koh, showing activity of Polish climbers in 2019.



The southeast face of unclimbed Dih Sar, with the lines of the 2019 Polish attempts.



Upper Dih Valley and 2019 Polish activity on Dih Sar.



Jakub Bogdanski on the southeast face of Dih Sar. (A) Arman Sar (ca 6,000m, climbed from the far side by 2017 British expedition). (B) Peak 5,970m. (C) Peak 5,883m. (D) Imtiaz Sar (5,930m, climbed from the far side by 2017 British expedition).

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