



AAC Publications

Chashkin I, Southeast Face and Ski Descent

Pakistan, Karakoram, Ghujerab Mountains

Chashkin III, II, and I from the south, showing the approximate lines of (red line) Steeze Matters, the first ascent of Chashkin I (6,035m), and (blue line) the subsequent ski descent from the summit. Photo by Tico Gangulee

In June I traveled to the Shimshal region, where, according to locals, I found the snowiest spring in memory. While the region's high but gentle peaks have a history of ski alpinism, I was most interested in the pointy ones, if there appeared to be a way to ski down (or partially ski down). The Chashkin Group seemed to fit the bill, especially Chashkin I (6,035m, 36°31'24.71"N, 75°29'46.90"E), which had a rock ridge and pinnacle with what looked like semi-casual snow to either side.

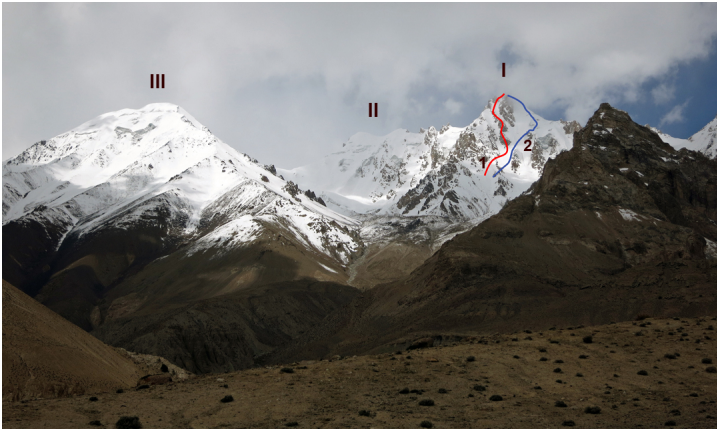
Most likely due to the 40km approach, Chashkin I and II both remained unclimbed, although Chashkin III (around 5,900m) has received three ascents. This was erroneously reported to have been climbed first in 2010 by Samina Baig from Shimshal Village (AAJ 2011), but was in fact first climbed in the winter of 1997 by Shimshalis Qudrat Ali and Shaheen Baig; Chashkin III is sometimes referred to as Samina Peak after the later first female ascensionist (who went on to become the first woman from Pakistan to climb Everest). With typical hubris, I planned on climbing all three Chashkins, with first ascents of I and II and ski descents of all three.

This was clearly not to be. Avalanche hazard and more difficult climbing than expected, along with daily snowfall and strong wind, ground my progress to a halt. On June 20, close to my last day in the area, I set out from advanced base at 5,000m for a shallow ridge line on the southeast face of Chashkin I, which seemed the safest place to be. I quickly found harder-than-expected mixed climbing, but thankfully never particularly sustained, with ledges or terraces every 30–40m. I brought gear for roped soling, but the cruxes were above ledges and felt like boulder problems, so I was comfortable free soling them in ski boots. (I hauled my pack and skis when it got steep.) The climbing was mostly moderate mixed, with cruxes either on slabs or with steep crimping, which I climbed barehanded. I named the ascent route Steeze Matters (900m, ED 5.11 (or V2) M4+ 85°).

The climb took about nine hours, and the daily storm hit as I was close to the summit. This made the ski descent harrowing, with a few wrong turns and re-ascents. There was a lot of standing around waiting for a view through the cloud, and I heard avalanches running. After 250m I was below the major cloud and able to make a break for the lower mountain on a more easterly aspect below the hanging glacier. Here, the skiing got pretty fun, but I was too tired to enjoy it. I would definitely return to the area for Chashkins II and III, but later in the season in the hope of getting more stable weather.

– Tico Gangulee, USA

Images



Chashkin III, II, and I from the south, showing the approximate lines of (red line) Steeze Matters, the first ascent of Chashkin I (6,035m), and (blue line) the subsequent ski descent from the summit.



Chashkin I (6,035m) from the south.

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