



AAC Publications

Khane Valley: Brakk Na Brakk, Brakk Truc, and Ridakh Ridge

Pakistan, Karakoram, Tagas Group

Brakk Na Brakk from base camp to the southwest. The first ascent route climbed to the large snowfield below steep walls on the left, then moved up and around to the right onto the south face, where a couloir led to the summit. Photo by Tomeu Rubí

The village of Khane (2,800m) is the last place of habitation heading north in the Hushe Valley that is accessible by vehicle. The time taken to drive there from Skardu will vary depending on your form of motorized transport, but is generally four to five hours. Tomeu Rubí and Pep Roig (Spain), Derek Watson (U.K.), and I reached the our base camp at 4,470m, near the start of the Khane Glacier, in two days from the village, with an intermediate stop at Boulder Camp (4,000m).

On August 4 and 5, we climbed our first peak, named Brakk Na Brakk (5,872m, 35°19.9806'N, 76°28.0918'E GPS), according to some locals, though others refer to it as Adil, and it is named Agil on Jerzy Wala's sketch map of the area. It stands opposite Tangra Tower in the Second Khane Cwm.

On the first day we climbed to a bivouac on the southwest side of the peak, from which Tomeu and Derek climbed partway up a 300m rock wall leading to the upper glacier, then descended, leaving three ropes in place. Next day we left at 4:30 a.m., reached our high point, and continued for a few more pitches, one of which, the crux of the route, was 6c A2. After 200m of easy but exposed mixed climbing, we reached a snow ramp leading up to a sort of col, from which a gully on the south face headed up to the gap between north and south summits. Climbing this (up to 60°—we wished we'd brought a second axe), we could see the north top was higher, and we reached it at 4 p.m. Cloud cover had been increasing, and now it began to snow a little. We descended to our bivouac, arriving after midnight and a 20-hour day. The west face of this peak had been attempted by Korean expeditions during the period from 2001 to 2003; we saw an old belay station at the start of the headwall.

Seen from the upper First Khane Cwm: (1) The west face and south-southeast ridge of Hasho Peak II (Russians, 2019). (2) The southwest face and southeast ridge of Brakk Truc (Spanish-U.K., 2019). Photo by Cati Lladó

On the 8th, after having only one day's rest, as poor weather was predicted to arrive in just a few days, Tomeu, Derek, and I (Pep was ill) set off for the head of the glacier and the First Khane Cwm. Reaching the cwm was difficult, but a Russian team (see report [here](#)) had left fixed ropes on the rock buttress alongside the icefall, and we used them to reach the upper plateau. Here, we saw two peaks (22.1 and 22.2 on the Wala map, immediately south of Hasho Peak II) that looked straightforward. We decided on the southerly summit, as it seemed more aesthetic and was a little closer.

We camped at 5,100m and set off before 5 a.m. The ascent was enjoyable: a 40° snow ramp on the southwest face to reach the southeast ridge, and a few easy meters of rock at the top. We called the peak Brakk Truc (5,672m, 35°20.1161'N, 76°29.3453'E GPS), after the Spanish card game Truc. (It also means "six" in Balti.) It took only three hours from our high camp to the summit, so we were able to return to base camp the same day.

During the approach to base camp, we had spotted a ridge on the right side of the north face of Peak 222.1 on the 2012 Wala map. (See AAJ 2016. Strangely, in later editions of this map, this peak is unlabelled, but is marked between 222 and 224]. The peak is a subsidiary summit to the northwest of

Grey Tower (Peak 222, 5,435m, climbed in 2012 by Bulgarians via the east ridge). The ridge we were eyeing exited onto the west ridge of Peak 222.1, which we could follow to the summit and thence onward to Grey Tower.

Pep was still ill and returned to Skardu, but Tomeu, Derek, and I decided to try the ascent without bivouac gear, knowing that if we just completed the ridge, it would be worth it. We left base camp at 5 a.m., descended 400m of the Khane Valley, and in around an hour were on the spur. Approximately 20 pitches later, we reached the characteristic “horns” on the west ridge and ended our climb there. It was 3:30 p.m., and we knew the descent would be complex. We made two rappels to reach a wide, steep couloir that led down to the valley. The descent was infernal: very long with much loose rock. Sixteen hours after our departure, we regained base camp. We named the route Ridakh Ridge (1,000m, 6a+).

– Cati Lladó, Spain

Images



Derek Watson on the last pitch to enter the First Khane Cwm. The two pitches below had been fixed previously by Russian climbers during their approach to Hasho Peak II. At the top of this pitch, a short rappel led to the upper glacier. Tomeu Rubí



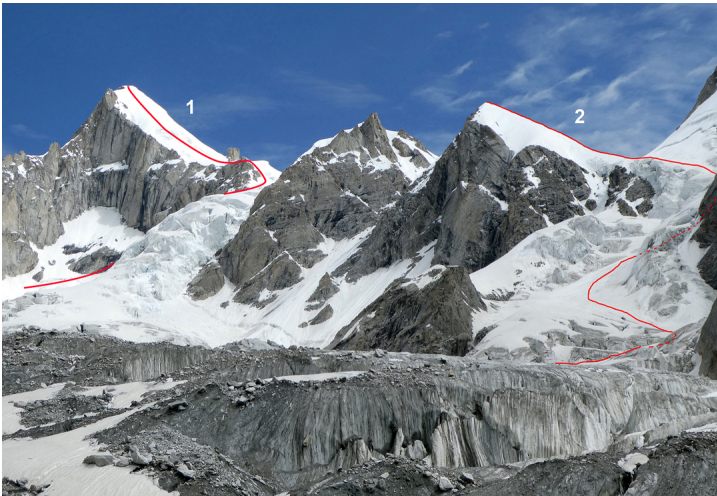
Tomeu Rubí on a difficult rock section during the first ascent of Brakk Na Brakk.



Brakk Na Brakk from base camp to the southwest. The first ascent route climbed to the large snowfield below steep walls on the left, then moved up and around to the right onto the south face, where a couloir led to the summit.



Cati Lladó high on Brakk Na Brakk during the first ascent.



Seen from the upper First Khane Cwm: (1) The west face and south-southeast ridge of Hasho Peak II (Russians, 2019). (2) The southwest face and southeast ridge of Brakk Truc (Spanish-U.K., 2019).



The north side of Grey Tower. This 5,435m rock tower was first climbed from the Bulgarian Col to the left via the skyline (east) ridge. The 1,000m Ridakh Ridge (marked) terminates on the west ridge of a subsidiary summit.



Derek Watson on fine granite slabs during the first ascent of Ridakh Ridge.



Derek Watson on the rock section of Brakk Na Brakk during the first ascent via the southwest and south faces. This traverse was just below the crux pitch, which was not climbed until the day after. Visible below, on a green terrace below a small rock tower and directly above the glacier lake, is Green Base Camp in Khane Valley.



Panorama of the peaks on the south side of the Khane Valley, opposite Second Khane Cwm and Tangra Tower. Twin II was climbed to within 150m of the summit in 2015, while Grey Tower was climbed by its left skyline ridge in 2012.

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