



AAC Publications

Chashkin Group, Various Ascents

Pakistan, Karakoram, Ghujerab Mountains

(A) Chashkin I from the south with (1) the 2020 ascent route, and (2) the descent route. (B) Unclimbed rock tooth (5,820m). The snow couloir immediately to the right (the Johnny Danger Couloir) was climbed as far as the col below the southeast ridge of the tooth. AM Peak is off picture to the right. Felix Berg Photo

During the summer, I was looking for a destination for my guided group. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan were closed because of COVID-19, but suddenly I got word that Pakistan was opening its borders, so I contacted Mirza Ali Baig from Shimshal. One day after Pakistan opened to tourists on August 9, I flew to Islamabad, with the rest of our German team following a couple of days later. With Mirza Ali, we started our trek from Shimshal on the 15th, reached Purien-e-Sar after two days, and on the third walked a further 4km to establish base camp at 4,950m, immediately south of the Chashkin Group.

The weather had been excellent on the approach, and except for a few morning rain showers, continued to be fine for the next seven days. Wasting no time, on the 20th, Mirza Ali, Arshad Karim, Patrick Munkel, Gabriel Stroe, and I left base camp at 5 a.m. and headed for Peak 5,770m. Rocky terrain led to a ridge, which we followed to around 5,400m, then slanted right across snow and boulders to reach a 40–50° snowfield. We followed this to a saddle in the ridge at 5,700m. We turned right and climbed the last section of the northwest ridge (60°) to the summit. We were all back in base camp by early afternoon, naming the new summit AM Peak (standing for Astrid Maria) and grading our route 450m, AD- 60°.

Two days later, Arshad, Gabriel, Patrick, and I set out at 4:30 a.m. for Chashkin I (6,035m on Polish map, 36°31'24.71"N, 75°29'46.90"E), not knowing that an ascent and ski descent had been reported in 2019. From around 5,300m, a snowfield led into the left couloir on the south-southeast face. After a narrowing (55° hard ice), we continued on 45–50° névé slopes, and at the top of the couloir traversed right across blocky ground (II and III) to the col between the west and east tops. The main (east) summit is a rock tower and was climbed from the north by a pitch of about 50m (steep snow and about 10m of M4/M5). We reached this top near midday, measuring it at 6,105m. Patrick also climbed the west top (ca 6,080m), a relatively easy ascent from the col over a snow are te.

We descended with around nine 60m rappels and two short sections of downclimb- ing along the central couloir on the south- southeast face, then rejoined our approach route and were all back in base camp by 6 p.m. The 700m route was graded TD- M4/5 60°.

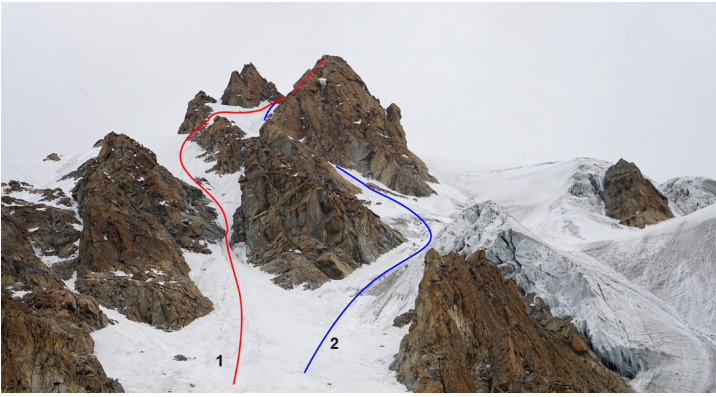
On the 24th, Patrick, Markus Hohle, and I decided to try a rock tooth of 5,820m on the ridge between Chashkin I and AM Peak. We left base at 6 a.m. and reached the bottom of the snow couloir that led up to the col to the right (southeast) of the tooth. This was 400m high and mostly 50–55°. At midday, just a few meters before reaching the col, Markus slipped and slid about 60m. Fortunately, his injuries were not too serious, but once at base camp he was evacuated by helicopter. We dubbed our route as far as the col Johnny Danger Couloir (AD).

— Felix Berg, Germany

Editor's Note: In 2019, Tico Gangulee (USA) reported making the first ascent of Chashkin I by the central spur on the south-southeast face, followed by a traverse of the summit and a ski descent of slopes farther east, part of this in quite poor weather (see AAJ 2020). On returning from Pakistan, Felix Berg read

reports of this ascent and was troubled by the descriptions, particularly as the final pitch was hard and there was no visible rappel anchor on or near the summit. In response, Gangulee noted that he made several rappels (as much as 60m total) on the east flank of the northeast ridge of the summit tower in whiteout conditions, leaving a piton and an ice screw lower down. Berg and others also analyzed Gangulee's photos and compared them with Berg's own images. Based on the position of nearby and distant peaks seen in these images, Berg feels certain at least three of the photos reportedly taken during the 2019 ascent were taken further to the east, in the vicinity of the rock tooth attempted in 2020. As a result, Berg believes his party made the first ascent of Chashkin I. Gangulee did not respond to an invitation to comment on this report.

Images



The upper south-southeast face of Chashkin I and the lines of ascent (1) and descent (2) in 2020. The highest point is on top of the right-hand rock buttress. The reported 2019 route followed the rocky ridge in between to reach the snow slope between the summits.



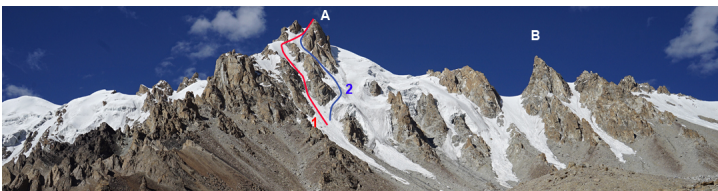
A view from below the rock tooth (Peak 5,820m), looking almost south, to Markus Hohle emerging from the top of the Johnny Danger Couloir. The corniced and flat-topped snow peak behind and to the right is AM Peak.



The route to the summit of AM Peak as seen from the ascent of the south-southeast face of Chashkin Sar.



Felix Berg on the summit of Chashkin I. The view is to the west. Down and to the right of him is the lower west summit, and the more distant, flat-topped snow peak behind is Chashkin III. The valley running down to the left forms the approach from Shimshal.



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The morning sun strikes Distaghil Sar (7,785m). The pyramid at far left is Kunyang Chhish (7,852m).



On the final pitch to the summit of Chashkin I.



Looking down the northwest side of the summit of Chashkin Sar. The sharp ridge leads off picture toward the lower west summit.



The true (east) summit of Chashkin I as seen from the lower west top. The 2020 ascent followed the steep snow and a short section of mixed on the left skyline. The rappel descent was straight down the rock face below the summit.

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