



AAC Publications

Gunj-e-Dur Valley, Various Ascents

Pakistan, Karakoram, Ghujerab Mountains, Shuijerab Subgroup

(A) Qtang Sar and route of first ascent. (B) Sakwa Sar and route of first ascent (Forever Young). (C) Subsummit of Gunj-e-Sar [named Yad Sar, 6,015m, and reached in 2017 via the line shown here, by Ross Davidson and Karim Hayat. (D) The south face of Gunj-e-Sar and descent route used by Adam Bielecki and Janusz Gołąb (continuing down the 2017 route) after their first ascent via the north face. Photo by Adam Bielecki

After traveling for two days by road from Islamabad, Michał Czech, Janusz Goła b, Wadim Jabłoński, Maciej Kimel, and I, members of the Polish Sport Himalayan Program, arrived in Shimshal. We began the 45km trek to the Gunj-e-Dur Valley on September 9, accompanied by around a dozen porters and some donkeys. The route to base camp (approx. 36°34'47.16"N, 75°33'38.22"E) crossed steep, exposed terrain that was challenging for the donkeys, and there was a difficult glacial river crossing, where a rope was needed to transport the equipment. The approach took three and a half days.

After a rest day, we made a reconnaissance up the valley to acclimatize and establish an advanced base on moraine at about 5,260m. On the 14th we made the first ascent of Peak 211 on Jerzy Wala's map. After a few hours of hiking and some short sections that needed an ice axe, we were on the summit, which we called Qtang Sar (6,047m). We were back at advanced base by midafternoon.

On the 17th, after a brief rest in base camp, we all headed back to advanced base, from where, on the 18th, we started toward two different targets. Janusz and I headed for the almost one-kilometer-wide north face of the area's highest peak, Gunj-e-Sar, while the three younger climbers chose the west face of nearby Trident Gunj-e-Sar.

Janusz and I climbed the north face (Shimshal Highway, 1,000m, A15) to a bivouac on the west ridge, the crest of which we followed next day for around 300m to the previously unclimbed summit (ca 6,350m). We descended by reversing the west ridge to the middle summit [first climbed in 2017 by Ross Davidson and Karim Hayat, and named Yad Sar] and then down the southeast face, following the line of the 2017 route. We made a second bivouac on moraine, not far from base camp. Unfortunately, the following morning a large rock crushed Janusz's leg. He was in great pain, and the accident meant he was unable to take part in any further ascents and had to wait at base camp.

In the meantime, Czech, Jabłoński, and Kimel had climbed the west face of Trident Gunj-e- Sar (ca 6,150m) with one bivouac 200m below the summit. They named their 800m route Pakistani Disco (UIAA V M6 WI4+), and from the top descended to the southwest via an ice slope and couloir to the glacier.

Gunj-e-Sar (ca 6,350m), the highest summit in the group, seen from the northwest. The first ascent was made via the route Shimshal Highway on the north face, seen here more or less in profile. Photo by Adam Bielecki

We were now two teams of two. On the 24th, Czech and Kimel set off for advanced base, hoping to make the first ascent of Peak 216 (Wala map) via the southwest face. The rock formations on this face turned out to be steep and difficult, and would have required aid, so the two climbers wove around the rock buttresses and primarily followed straightforward ice slopes/couloirs, only meeting difficulties in the last 100m, where the terrain became much steeper and more mixed. Arriving at the

summit ridge, they bivouacked a few meters below the top. Next day they went to the summit, then moved down the north ridge a little way before rappelling a snow and ice couloir to the glacier. They named the peak Sakwa Sar (6,063m) and the route Forever Young (400m, M6 AI4).

Jabłoński and I went into the Little Gunj-e-Dur Glacier on the 25th and camped immediately north of Peak 278. Next day we climbed it via the northwest slope (Ja Soldat, AI4 M5+), naming the summit Jarj-e-Dunduk (ca 5,700m). We descended the east-southeast ridge and bivouacked, and on the following day continued east along the ridge to the summit of Peak 277, which we named Koh-e-Ganj (ca 5,800m). After returning to the bivouac, we descended the north-northeast face via an ice couloir and returned to base camp the same day. We arrived back in Shimshal on October 1.

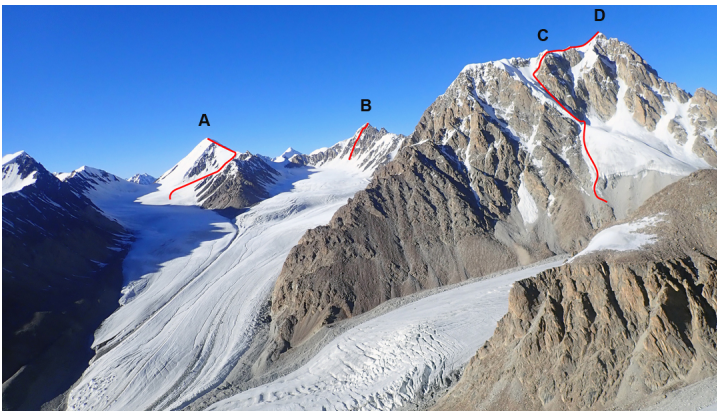
The weather was great through the whole of September, although it became significantly colder toward the end of the trip. The area still offers much potential for unclimbed peaks and new routes.

— **Adam Bielecki, Poland**

Images



Shimshal Highway on the north face of Gunj-e-Sar's main summit (ca 6,350m).



(A) Qtang Sar and route of first ascent. (B) Sakwa Sar and route of first ascent (Forever Young). (C) Subsummit of Gunj-e-Sar [named Yad Sar, 6,015m, and reached in 2017 via the line shown here, by Ross Davidson and Karim Hayat. (D) The south face of Gunj-e-Sar and descent route used by Adam Bielecki and Janusz Gołąb (continuing down the 2017 route) after their first ascent via the north face.



(A) Koh-e-Ganj and (B) Jarj-e-Dunduk from the north, showing (1) ascent to Koh-e-Ganj and (2) descent of the north-northeast face to the Little Gunj-e-Dur Glacier.



The Gunj-e-Dur Valley. The red triangles show the locations of the camps used by the 2021 Polish team, and the blue dots the peaks climbed.

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The first ascent was by the snow couloir at the right edge of the picture, gaining the ridge above. This was followed left to the summit.



The west face of Trident Gunj-e-Sar showing the line of (1) Pakistani Disco and (2) descent. Adam Bielecki



On the summit ridge of Gunj-e-Sar, looking at the main summit.



The southwest face of Sakwa Sar (6,063m), with (1) the descent after climbing (2) Forever Young.



The upper section of Forever Young on the southwest face of Sakwa Sar (6,063m). Adam Bielecki Collection



Gunj-e-Sar (ca 6,350m), the highest summit in the group, seen from the northwest. The first ascent was made via the route Shimshal Highway on the north face, seen here more or less in profile.

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