

ern end of the Chiantar Glacier had never been traveled, and Karka, the beautiful mountain shaped like the wing of a bat, had not yet received a visit.

South of the chosen summits, the green valley of Mahtahntir with its grand Atar Lake stretches from west to east. We made our base camp some kilometers up the valley at 3800 meters. This was a strategic position that presented no acclimatization problems and that gave access to the southern aspects of all the mountains of the area. One can reach this area in four to five days from Islamabad.

The first group of the expedition, composed of 11 people, departed on July 23, and used the first week to pick out the principal climbing routes, eventually marking and equipping them from a high camp. They also tried to determine the easiest pass to access the Chiantar Glacier, near which, at 4800-5000 meters, Advanced Base Camp would be established. Upon the arrival of the second group eight days later, one of the two kitchen setups was moved to the new camp, together with the alpinists who intended to make climbs from the northern glaciers. There existed therefore the possibility to follow very full itineraries and then to ascend by the southern aspects.

The activity of the climbers, directed by the leader, Franco Brunello, turned to the many aspects of the splendid mountains near base camp that offered themselves to the alpinists. Reports of an earlier reconnaissance spoke not only of glacial walls, but also of demanding granite walls where it would be possible to develop rock and mixed climbs of a certain technical level. Considering the vastness of the area of exploration, one would presumably opt to prepare more of an advanced camp to facilitate climbing activity.

Very important from the exploratory point of view was the trekking available, which was guided by the professor Luciano Chilese. While a group of the alpinists pursued the reconnaissance of the virgin summits, a small number of the expedition participants departed from the Atar Lake base camp to reach Darkot Pass via a route that had already been traveled to this point. Then, instead of descending in the direction of Yasir to reascend to Niaithi, they continued without losing altitude in search of a route that snuck between the southern flanks of Koyo Zon and Thui and the unclimbed summits that make up the top of Dhuli Chhish. After having crossed four passes in five days, they reached Wasam, where they waited for two days before continuing by jeep to Mastuj, passing by Sor Lapsur, Gupis and arriving at Gakuch. Here, on the road that takes one to Gilgit, the entire expedition was reunited to reach the enchanting Peshwar, last stop of our voyage in Pakistan.

From the web site [HTTP://WWW.INTRAISASS.IT/CHIANTAR](http://www.intraisass.it/chiantar)

Ibrahim Brakk, Free Kashmir. Todd Offenbacher, Nils Davis, Sean Isaac, and friends Sean and Shelly Huisman and Hermein Freriksen, arrived in Islamabad on July 7. Sean, Todd and I had decided, after a chance meeting in Canada in 1999, to join forces and make a visit to Pakistan's Kharidas Valley. Our cook, Ibrahim Munna, and the co-owner and director of Blue Sky Treks and Tours, Ghulam Muhammed, picked us up at the airport, the beginning of their incredible hospitality and friendship.

Sean had researched the topic and gleaned information from Luca Maspes who, along with three other Italians and a Swiss, had been the first climbers to visit this remote valley sandwiched between the oft-visited Nangma Valley and the renowned Charakusa Valley, known by the locals as Tsarak Tsa Valley. To our knowledge, this group, and a group of Korean trekkers, have been the only non-locals to set foot in the valley. This was evinced by the complete lack of impact we discovered.



Peaks of the Kharidas Valley. Ibrahim Brakk is the second peak in from the right. Azad Kashmir (Davis-Isaac-Offenbacher, 2000) on the south arête is shown. SEAN ISAAC

The Kharidas is a narrow and steep valley, mostly filled with rock-laden glacier, and bounded by moraines. After the five-day travel and hike from Islamabad, we camped near the foot of the valley on a narrow, lush part of the moraine, covered in wildflowers, which had just enough level ground for our five tents.

We spent the next week hiking farther and higher up the valley and glacier, reconnoitering possible lines on the massive walls on the north and south sides. The head of the valley is marked by the 6447-meter Drifca, mentioned in Venables and Fanshawe's book *Himalaya Alpine Style*. The weather was remarkably unstable for this area in July and we waited out rain days in our garish red circus-cum-mess tent, playing interminable games of Asshole and poker.

After scoping numerous possibilities on walls and spires from (roughly) 700 to 900 meters, we decided to go for a "warm-up" on one of the higher peaks up the valley, on the north side. The three of us went as light as we could, and started up a south-facing, all-rock, knife-blade ridge with one rope, no hammer or bolt kit, and no pins. We simul-climbed the initial 1,200 feet. The rock was high-quality, featured granite reminiscent of *Nutcracker*-style climbing. We climbed the subsequent 1,000 feet pitch by pitch through serious runouts and bad rock. The route gradually steepened as we pulled onto the middle of the west face to finish up a technical and loose face and corner. We rapped into an adjacent couloir and descended as night fell.

As it turned out, our "warm-up," *Free Kashmir* (V 5.10+) on Ibrahim Brakk, seemed the only good rock in the valley: the massive amounts of rock lining the walls of the north side of the valley were acres of loose, rotten and decomposed granite. We started up two more routes but called off both due to the dangerous and unpleasant nature of the rock. We then pulled out of the valley and spent a few days relaxing in Hushe.

A reconnaissance of the Nangma Valley was our next foray. We spent a week in the Nangma looking for new route possibilities. Believing it unclimbed, we started up a line on Brakk Zang, but bailed after learning that it had been climbed by Silvia Vidal and Pep Masip some years earlier. Todd and I returned to Islamabad and flew home August 15 while Sean stayed on another week to make a trip up to Bublomotin and Ultar.

NILS DAVIS

Brakk Zang, South Face, Ascents. It was reported that a Korean expedition was responsible for two new lines on the south face of Brakk Zang (a.k.a Sotulpa Peak, 4800m). Jang Hyung-Won, Lim Sung-Muk and Shin Moon-He established a route over the course of 15 days that was given the grade of VI 5.9 A4-. "A lot" of fixed ropes were used in the course of the ascent. Anjong Neonj and Moon Sung Wook established a second route to the right of the first in capsule style at VI 5.9 A3+. A portaledge was employed during the ascent. Both routes occur to the right of the 1998 south pillar route *Ramchekor* (Peter-Thomas, VI 5.10 A2, 600m) and left of the 1998 route, *Ganyips* (Masip-Vidal, VI 6a A3, 540m), which takes the southeast pillar. Parties visiting the area later in the season were reported to have noted that large, bright silver spots were painted on the rock to indicate belay stations of the Korean routes. The Koreans were said to have replaced the carabiner left by the British women on the summit with one of their own. (*High Mountain Sports* 221)

Amin Brakk, New Route. Juan Miranda and I arrived in Islamabad on June 3 with the intention of climbing a new route on the 1300-meter west face of Amin Brakk (5850m). We established Base Camp on the Changma Glacier at 4300 meters. Our idea was to climb the route as a two-person team.

The climb kept us in the Changma Valley for 51 days, 31 of which were spent on the wall itself. We spent ten days carrying gear and getting used to the altitude, then lived in portaledges between July 5 and August 4. On the wall, we had 13 days of bad weather (during which we could not leave the portaledge), four sunny days and mixed weather for the remaining days.

Namkor (6b+ A5, 1550m) is 31 pitches long, 17 of which were free climbed. The rest were aided. Even though the route reaches the summit ridge, we did not ascend to the summit, since a storm with heavy lightning forced us to descend back to Camp III. After riding out the storm in the portaledges for two days, we ascended back to belay 27 to recover a haulbag with gear and to clean up the fixed ropes that were still on the wall. The following day, August 4, we returned to Base Camp with our seven haulbags and their 300 kilos of weight.

Namkor has three parts: the first follows angled terrain over loose slabs and flakes up to belay 11 (Camp I). It can be free climbed at 6b+. The second part involves serious aid climbing: two A5 pitches and one of A4 lead over a smooth, slightly overhanging wall to Camp II. Finally, the third part is a magnificent 600-meter dihedral that reaches the summit ridge. We graded this section 6b A2+.

ADOLFO MADINABEITIA, *Spain*

Saltoro Mountains

Tahir Tower, First Ascent, and Exploration of the Kondus Valley. During the months of June and July, Dave Anderson, Steph Davis, Brady Robinson, and I were given a special permit to