



AAC Publications

Charakusa Valley, Various Ascents

Pakistan, Karakoram, Masherbrum Range, Charakusa Valley

The Charakusa Valley has been so well documented, and seen activity from some of the biggest hitters in the alpine climbing community, I won't waste any time trying to sell it to you. Shingo Ohkawa and I arrived in the valley in early July, armed with a quote from Luca Maspes that we would "raise the flag of what the weekend warrior calls modern alpinism; no permits, no specific projects, no information at all." Our main goal was to establish new rock routes, and by Shingo's direct quote, "pick the low hanging fruit." We were successful in establishing a few new routes and accidentally freeing an old aid line. In doing so we hopefully added a few gems for future climbers.

We began with the almost obligatory ascent of the British route on Naisa Brakk (5,200m), perfect acclimatization for other climbs in the area. While standing on top of this perfect rock pyramid, we noticed a spire with an obvious dihedral splitting the face below the summit. We decided to climb it next and give it the name Ali Brakk after our awesome base camp cook. He is just one of many examples of Pakistani people, negatively portrayed by the Western media, who are amazingly kind and peaceful.

On August 9, after three hours of ascending heinous talus fields, Shingo, fellow American Erin Wilson, and I started up the spire. The climbing was delicate, and the rock somewhat loose, but fun and exciting. We swapped leads for the first half of the day, until Shingo came down with a little altitude sickness. Erin and I swapped leads to the summit, with Shingo following the remaining pitches without incident. On the ca 5,600m top we found two bolts, so were unable to name the peak after Ali. However, we called the new route Right On Dude! (355m, seven pitches, 5.10+ R). We rappelled the backside of the pillar, adding two bolt anchors.

The next few weeks were littered with rain and short weather windows. We kept fit by bouldering and making a few easy snow climbs. On two occasions we made the one-hour walk from base camp to the relatively small Iqbal Wall, where we climbed two lines. The first was stellar quality in a super splitter (320m, six pitches, 5.10+); the second, immediately to the left, was equally splitter but slightly more difficult (210m, four pitches, 5.11). We were forced off the second route ca 12m below the top by rain, snow, and terrifyingly close lightning. Hopefully, a future party will finish the route and give it a name.

Our last effort was the striking Second Pillar (4,950m) at the base of K7 West. We had only one day of good weather to make the attempt. We climbed unroped ca 450m and bivouacked in the rain on a monster ledge. When we awoke next morning it was clear. We racked up and began climbing as soon as the sun kissed the stone, moving upward on what we hoped was unclimbed terrain. However, we soon passed old Italian iron, which spoiled our plans of a first ascent. We reached the summit at dusk, finding no signs of previous climbers, once again hoping we were on virgin ground. Months later we discovered an Italian team had climbed the route in 1998, naming it Pilastro dei Bimbi (600m, 17 pitches, UIAA VII+ A3, Garota-Masdea-Spreafico-Valsecchi-Valsecchi). We managed to climb the entire route free and onsight, proposing a grade of 5.11 (though much of the climbing was fun 5.10). Rappelling, we got our ropes stuck multiple times, eventually having to cut the lead line.

Jesse Mease, AAC

Images



The Second Pillar of K7 West with the line Pilastro dei Bimbi, climbed free in 2012 by Americans. To the right is the giant southwest pillar of K7 West, the scene of many unsuccessful attempts.



Shingo Ohkawa reaching the summit of Naisa Brakk. Behind and in right center is the new route Right On Dude!, following the very obvious corner on the sunlit face of the unnamed spire.



The Iqbal Wall. Red line marks the Slovenian Diedre (Debeljak-Novak, 2011).



Recent lines climbed on the left side of Iqbal Wall. There has been much activity on this wall over the years, and it is not clear whether the routes marked are entirely new. (1) Slovenian Diedre (Debeljak-Novak, 2011). (2) Americans (2012, 5.11). (3) Americans (2012, 5.10+).



The new route Right On Dude!, on an unnamed spire.



Jesse Mease on a one-pitch splitter roof pitch in the Charakusa Valley.

Article Details

| | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Author | Jesse Mease |
| Publication | AAJ |
| Volume | 55 |
| Issue | 87 |
| Page | 301 |
| Copyright Date | 2013 |
| Article Type | Climbs and expeditions |