



AAC Publications

Bamongo (6,400m), south face and west ridge, second ascent, partial new route

Asia, Nepal, Rolwaling Himal

On October 30 two strong Nepalese mountaineers, Mingma Gyalje and Pema Tshering Sherpa, and I made the second ascent of Bamongo. This is a pointed summit on the long west ridge of Kang Nachugo (6,737m), first climbed in 2008 by David Gottlieb and Joe Puryear en route to the first ascent of that peak (AAJ 2009).

Mingma was born in Na, directly below the mountain, and in Kathmandu he showed me a photo, saying he was looking for a climbing partner. Bamongo looked attractive and I decided immediately to go with him.

On the 28th we left our base camp at 4,800m and walked up to ca 4,900m, after which we began climbing the rock spur alongside the glacier. We then followed the edge of the glacier to a large rock wall, which we climbed in two pitches (80m total) on solid granite at 5.8. There was a little mixed climbing due to icy sections. After arriving at 5,440m, we fixed our gear to an ice wall, and as a storm moved in returned to base camp. It took only an hour and a half to reach our tents, and fortunately the heavy snow stopped at around midnight.

Next morning we started around noon with one tent, and after a couple of hours had regained our high point. This was the only feasible site for a camp, and as we wanted to climb the face above in a single push, we spent an hour digging a tent platform. We then reconnoitered the next 150m, looking for a suitable route to cross the tattered glacier below the south face.

We started at 5 a.m. on the 30th and reached the foot of the face through deep snow. The angle was between 40° and 60° and conditions improved as we gained height. We needed to climb fast as we were traveling light (no bivouac gear), so moved together with running belays. High on the face we climbed steep ice to avoid a rock band, and at 11:20 a.m. arrived on the ridge at an altitude of 6,000m. The crest above was sharp, the snow soft, and we were now exposed to a strong, cold wind from the north. With Mingma in the lead we made 10 pitches, and then continued for over an hour with running belays, occasionally stopping so one of us (mostly Mingma) could lead a steep step. My two companions moved so fast I had to ask them to stop a few times, just so I could catch my breath and take a few pictures. [Pema has climbed Everest 12 times.] We reached the summit at 2:35 p.m.

We reversed the route, and on the south face two of us rappelled, after which the third cleaned the belay and downclimbed. In this way we moved fast, reaching base camp by 9 p.m. It had been a round trip of 16 hours and we'd not stopped to eat or drink. Everyone was exhausted, and it's likely the fastest I've ever climbed at 6,000m. Our new route on the south face may also be the first by a Chinese on the south side of the Nepal Himalaya. Our line lies to the right of the 2008 ascent, and we named it Che Guevara (1,500m, 5.8 40-60°). Mingma had also brought clients, and a few days later tried guiding the same route with one of them. But they had to retreat from 5,850m as it was too steep for the client.

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Images



Pema just after reaching the west ridge of Bamongo. The Chinese-Nepalese team climbed the near edge of the fluted face behind. Easier Tibetan slopes are visible on the right



Climbing through the rock barrier at around 5,400m to gain access to the glacier plateau below the south face of Bamongo, the upper part of which is visible above the serac

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