



AAC Publications

Kyajo Ri (6,186m), east face, Stealing Beauty

Asia, Nepal, Mahalangur Himal, Khumbu Section

In May, Vladimir Belousov from Russia and Marina Kopteva, the accomplished big-wall climber from the Ukraine, made the first ascent of the east face of Kyajo Ri, a coveted objective that had seen off many parties since the peak was officially opened in 2002. The mountain is the highest in a small cluster of peaks known as the Khumuchu or Kyajo Ri Himal.

In 2003 a Dutch team comprising Andreas Amons, Paul Bielen, Peter Valkenburg, and Michael van Geemen were the first to take on the challenge of the huge rock walls that form the triangular east face. They made one bivouac after five or six pitches, then after nine pitches (up to 6b A2) realized they had neither the right rack nor food and time to complete the route. They retreated to Machermo, moved one valley south (above Luza) and climbed west over a ca 5,400m col to the Kyajo Drangka, from where they repeated the southwest ridge. Van Geemen would return to the east face in 2011 with Niek de Jonge, but the pair was forced to descend after a just three pitches when van Geemen fell ill.

In 2009 Germans Johannes Jahn and Michael Stacheder had another crack at this wall, and while it is not known whether their line was the same as the Dutch, the two persevered through spindrift, aiding sections, to a camp at 5,500m. Next day, after overnight snowfall, they climbed steep rock to an easing below the 300m headwall. Here, tiredness and poor conditions forced a retreat. Their 700m ascent to ca 5,800m involved difficulties of UIAA VII, M5 and aid. Attempts by Koreans are also strongly rumored but no details are known.

Another Dutch pair, Roland Bekendam and Hans Lanters, attempted the face in late October 2012, but found that the sun disappeared from the wall by 11:30 a.m. and the temperature dropped rapidly to -10°C , making it rather chilly for rock climbing. They also found the wall completely devoid of snow and ice, and hence drinking water for their proposed three-day ascent. They quickly gave up and returned to Machermo. Later they crossed the pass above Luza, finding difficult dry conditions in the steep rubble-filled couloir on the far side. After camping on a frozen lake, they ascended the tiny Kyajo Glacier below the south face and then the increasingly popular normal route, which featured a 100m rock band not there in 2003. [This ridge had a "first official ascent" in 2002, though almost certainly was climbed. After the peak opened, teams on this route noted ancient rusted tins and remains of tent platforms beneath the mountain, as well as old remnants of passage on the ridge.]

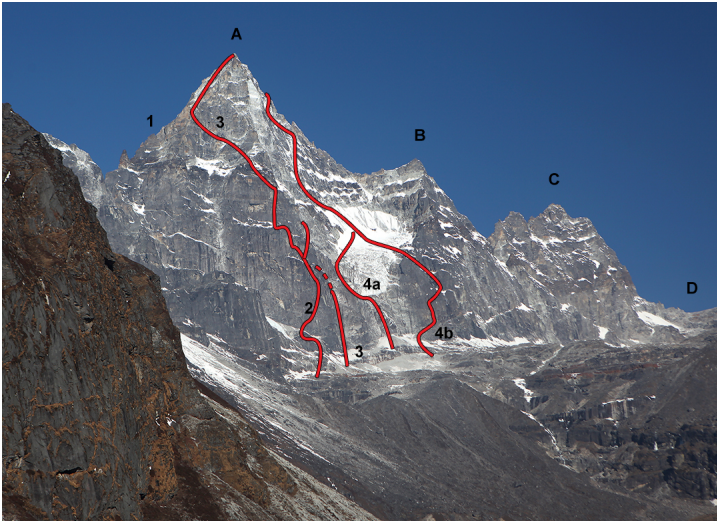
In pre-monsoon 2013, Belousov and Kopteva arrived at Machermo lodge, and after three hours on a good path established a camp below the east face at 4,900m. From there to the foot of the ca 1,150m wall was just 30 minutes. Carrying a limited amount of food and fuel, the pair climbed the face, alpine-style, in five days, reaching the summit on May 14. A sixth day was needed to rappel the route.

The pair completed the line, named Stealing Beauty, in 28 pitches. The first four, up the steepest part of the lower wall, were 6b with one pitch of A2. The next three pitches in a corner system, leading to a sloping terrace at 5,300m, where they made their first bivouac, provided mixed terrain up to M6. Three more pitches (6b) led to a large scree terrace and a second bivouac (5,450m). Short rock walls and icy corners were followed to a couloir/ramp that slanted left across the lower headwall to reach the southeast ridge at around 5,800m. The climbing that day was nasty in parts, due to the poor snow and ice conditions and wet rock.

The Russian-Ukrainian duo was now on the 2005 American route. After a third bivouac, they kept to the left side of the crest on shattered rock and reached the top via a final 100m of icy slopes (65°, AI3). Some bolts were placed on the route.

information from Roland Bekendam, The Netherlands, and Anna Piunova, Mountain.ru

Images



(A) Kyajo Ri, (B) Pt. 5,900m, (C) Lungaretse (5,916m), and (D) Col 5,620m, seen from close to Machermo. (1) Southeast ridge (2006). (2) Dutch attempts on east face. (3) Stealing Beauty (2013). (4) Attempts on northeast face: (a) New Zealand (2011), and (b) Italian (2009).



Vladimir Belousov on easier ground towards the middle of the face

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