



## AAC Publications

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### **Pumari Chhish East, Attempt; Rasool Sar, First Ascent; "Lunda Sar," First Ascent of Southwest Face (no summit); Khani Basa Sar, First Ascent.**

Asia, Pakistan, Karakoram, Hispar Muztagh

In the summer of 2009, Eamonn Walsh, Ian Welsted, and I traveled to Pakistan to play in bigger hills than the Canadian Rockies back home. We had first visited the Hispar Glacier region in 2006, when we attempted the southwest face of Khunyang Chhish East (ca 7,400m). Even though Khunyang East is one of the most beautiful mountains I have ever seen (and remains unclimbed), in 2009 we decided to experience another mountain: unclimbed Pumari Chhish East (ca 6,900m).

We left Calgary on June 10 and on the summer solstice arrived in base camp at 4,500m, a wonderful grassy spot perched above the Yutmaru (Jutmaru) Glacier. While base camp had great bouldering, it also offered a front-row view of our objective to remind us why we were there. The first order of business was to acclimatize, and on June 26 we summited a previously unclimbed 5,900m peak just to the northeast of camp, above the East Yutmaru Glacier, in an 11-hour round trip. We named the peak Rasool Sar in honor of our cook, guide, and friend Hajji Ghulam Rasool. While most of the "climbing" on Rasool Sar's southern flank consisted of slogging up a steep snow slope, there was an amusing bit of corniced ridge toward the top. After a few more acclimatization hikes, with three nights spent above 5,600m and one foray above 6,000m, we declared ourselves ready for the main attraction.

Initially we had planned to attempt Pumari Chhish East via its south ridge, first tried in 2007 by Steve Su and Pete Takeda. But after we had wallowed in horrible snow on a few ridge climbs, the corniced south ridge lost some of its appeal. (Bad snow is something most Karakoram ridges I have experienced seem to share.) We turned our attention to the southeast face. On July 16 we bivied below the face at 4,800m. The following morning we got going well before dawn to take advantage of cooler temperatures. We made good progress up snow and ice fields, followed by a beautiful ice hose, to reach the base of a rock headwall at 5,700m. While Eamonn prepared a tent platform, Ian and I did one more pitch of reasonably difficult mixed climbing. Leaving a rope fixed, we descended to a waiting dinner. Although the terrain above looked hard, it was perhaps not impossibly so. Unfortunately, we never got to come to grips with it. The effort of a big day, the altitude, and above all a heavy meal of freeze-dried chili and cheese had me throwing up all night. In the morning I could barely stand, and so down we went.

On June 28, Ian and I (Eamonn having left to drink beer in Ireland) once again approached the southeast face. Unfortunately, during the intervening 10 days of warm weather the ice hose we'd climbed on the first attempt had melted out. While we sat trying to decide whether we should still attempt the face, a large wet-snow avalanche swept the gully in question. That evening we were back in base camp.

In between these two attempts (if they can be called that), the three of us climbed a route on a ca 6,300m peak directly north of the East Yutmaru Glacier and west of Khani Basa Sar. On July 20, starting from a bivy at 4,900m below the southwest face of the peak, we soloed some 900m of serac-threatened snow and ice to reach a steep rock wall streaked with ice. We climbed this in eight long, sustained ropelengths (WI4 M5) to reach the west ridge at 6,200m. Unfortunately, the late hour, deteriorating weather, and horrible snow (waist-deep crud over rock slabs and hard ice) combined to turn us around. We rappelled through the night and arrived back at our bivy site 22 hours after setting out. While we did not tag the summit, we were psyched to climb one of the best alpine mixed routes

any of us had ever done. We also took the liberty of proposing a name for the still unclimbed peak: "Lunda Sar," which roughly translates as "Second-Hand Peak."

Finally, a few days before heading home, Ian and I made the first ascent of Khani Basa Sar (6,441m), a significant peak on the ridge separating the Yutmaru and Khani Basa glaciers. The peak had been attempted by several expeditions; during an acclimatization foray up its south ridge, we came across traces of a 2008 Korean expedition.

Leaving our bivy at 4,800m at 3 a.m., we made for the southwest rib of the peak, which neatly separates two couloirs capped by giant seracs. After a few worrying moments when we thought we might have blundered into one of these gullies in the dark, we decided we were in fact on route and continued up pleasant névé and rock scrambling.

Shortly after dawn we roped up at a short mixed wall and then continued above on 55° ice. The crux of the route was a narrow bit of snow ridge (of course!) leading to the summit plateau. One serac wall proved especially troublesome, but after I took a leader fall and landed on a pleasantly soft snow mushroom, we managed to get up it. After a short brew stop, we continued upward on much easier terrain. We summited around 6 p.m. and were rewarded with a panoramic view of the Karakoram. The descent was not entirely straightforward, especially reversing the snow ridge, but we persevered and stumbled back to our bivy exactly 24 hours after leaving it.

I highly recommend the Yutmaru Glacier area: It is a wild, deserted, awesome place. There is no shortage of things to do, from granite bouldering to super-alpine objectives. In either category, our expedition barely scratched the surface of what is possible.

## Images



The Canadian line on the southwest face of "Lunda Sar," a ca 6,300m peak west of Khani Basa Sar. The climbers' high point was the ridge, about 100m to 150m below the summit.



The Canadian route on the southwest face of Khani Basa Sar (6,441m).

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