



AAC Publications

Kongurlong Valley Climbs

Kyrgyzstan, Tien Shan, Terskey Ala-Too

In September, Dominik Bednar, Miroslav Dusek, Tibor Majer, Pavel Mezera, Pavel Simandl, Tomas Vemola, Borek Zelenka, and I from the Czech Republic visited an easily accessible but rarely visited valley (even by Russian trekking groups) in the western part of the Terskey Ala-Too, south of Lake Issyk Kul. From the main road alongside Issyk Kul, we drove 25km south to Kalkagar village and then walked four hours to establish base camp at the confluence of the Kongurlong and West Kongurlong rivers at 2,950m (ca 41°59'54"N, 76°37'24"E). This point can be reached by a 4WD truck and/or mules.

Our first climb was Karakoo (4,289m), reached by a long approach up the East Kalkagar Valley, followed by a 45°, heavily crevassed, north-facing glacier ascent to gain the east ridge. From there Bednar, Majer, Simandl, and I followed an easy snow crest to the top, on which we built a cairn.

Merzera and Vemola climbed Lama (4,096m) and Verblud (4,040m), two rocky pinnacles above the Kongurlong Glacier. They followed a steep gully on the east flank to the col between the two, and then climbed the short rocky ridges to both tops (UIAA III and IV).

Bednar, Majer, and I then made a long and winding approach up the Kongurlong Glacier, heading west at the top to reach the northeast ridge of Ak Bashi (4,610m), which we followed to the summit. Along the way were steep icy sections and bergschrunds.

Dusek, Mezera, and Vermola climbed the highest peak in this part of the range, Kongurlong (4,747m). From the head of the Kongurlong Glacier they crossed a difficult and heavily crevassed col, and then climbed the southwest face of the mountain (55° ice). They found signs of a previous visit, but we have not been able to find an ascent described in Russian journals. [A Swiss expedition visited this glacier in July 2014 and appears to have climbed Kongurlong, which they called Kundebe Peak (41°56'25.51"N, 76°43'23.72"E) and also Ak Bashi, which they named White Melon and measured 4,630m, 41°56'6.53"N, 76°41'42.24"E.]

We also attempted Peak 4,399m on the upper western rim of the West Kongurlung Glacier but had to turn back at 4,250m on the north-northeast ridge. Hard water ice all the way had resulted in it becoming too late in the day for us to continue. All ascents apart from Karakoo required one bivouac above base camp. We found the glaciers long and full of icefalls, and while this area is not as interesting as other parts of the Tien Shan, there is plenty of potential for fine climbing at moderate difficulty, and no permits are required.

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Images



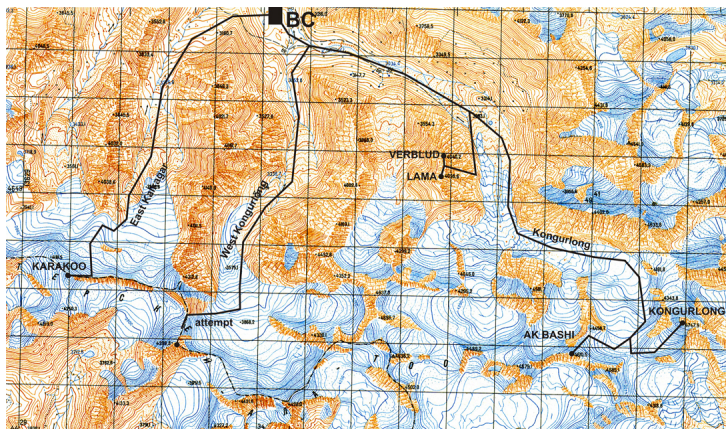
Ak-Bashi (a.k.a. White Melon), seen from the Kongurlong Valley to the north. In 2015 the peak was climbed by reaching the broad saddle right of the rock tower from the far (east) side, and then following the rounded snow ridge to the summit.



Kongurlong (a.k.a. Kundebe Peak), seen from Ak Bashi, with the route of ascent up the southwest face.



Karakoo from the East Kalkagar Glacier, showing the route of ascent.



The ascents and attempt made by the 2015 Czech expedition to the Kongurlong Valley.

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