



AAC Publications

Lomo, Northwest Face; Piramidalny, Northeast Face

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Max Ten and I established two new routes from the Kara-su Valley in July. First, in order to acclimatize, we climbed the northwest face of Lomo (4,750m). This shale mountain lies immediately south of Pik 4,810m and can be climbed from the pass between the two at 5B, as on the first ascent in 1988 by Buchinsky and team. However, it is rarely climbed, the last known ascent being in 1993.

We made the 2.5-hour approach from Kara-su base camp on July 19, our first day in the area. The next morning we left camp at 4 a.m. and reached the foot of the icefall at dawn. We were lucky to find an easy passage between ice and rock, and by 8:45 a.m. were on the plateau atop the hanging glacier. From there we chose the most obvious and easiest line up the northwest face, a steep couloir slanting left below steeper rock walls.

We followed this to an exit high on the north ridge, where we joined the 1988 route. Apart from a 30m section of water ice, the couloir was no steeper than 65°. Once on the ridge, we climbed four pitches of black and sometimes loose, ice-plastered rock. We reached the summit at 5:30 p.m. and after half an hour's rest started descending one of the couloirs on the southwest face. In retrospect it would have been faster if we'd followed the south ridge to the col and then slid down the main west-facing snow couloir below. In the end we had to rappel from ice and loose rock, finding old pitons and bleached slings along the way. At 11 p.m., 19 hours after setting out, we regained our tent in the valley. Our route had difficulties of 5A (WI4 M4).

After a rest in base camp we headed toward our main objective, the northeast face of Pik Piramidalny (5,509m). Our idea was simple: reach the base of the face and decide where to climb. We knew the lines of the existing routes, and for us that ground would be taboo.

The approach to the 1,000m-plus northeast face is a complex affair. First we had to climb to a notch on the east ridge of Pik 5,000m and then rappel to the glacier on the far side. We started up toward this notch at 7 p.m. Brick-size rocks, released by snow and ice melt, were falling from the rock band above. Four pitches of 60–70° ice led to the notch, where we bivouacked.

Next day, at 5 a.m., we rappelled to the glacier. This place is a trap, as the steep, icy northeast face of Piramidalny, the east face of Pik 5,000m, and the steep-sided east ridge of Piramidalny rise on three sides, while to the east is a massive icefall. In a two-person party, if one of you gets hurt here, you're in trouble.

Two hours from the notch brought us to the end of a snowy ridge rising from the glacier to the start of the difficult climbing on the northeast face. Two hellishly loose pitches, followed by six pitches of mixed climbing, brought us to a big ice slope. Two more pitches got us to the top of the slope, and a further pitch to a nice safe ledge for a bivouac.

Next morning, in order to bypass a huge cornice, we rappelled into an icy couloir and climbed up it for 30m, where we were "woken up" not by morning coffee but by two pitches of vertical and extremely loose rock. No protection meant no falls. Three cool mixed pitches got us onto a snowy ridge, which in turn joined the east-northeast ridge of Piramidalny at around 5,100m. We arrived there at 10 p.m.

and bivouacked in wet snow among crevasses. Next day, July 29, we left at 7 a.m. and, following in the footsteps of Piramidalny's first ascensionists (Nazarov-Filkov-Kirillov- Makarov-Marchenko-Usevich, 1987, 5B), we reached the summit by 11:30 a.m. In fine weather, we had great views of Lyalak Gorge to the west, Zarafshan Ridge to the south, and the Matcha Range to the east. Our ascent involved difficulties of 6A (WI5 M5).

We rested briefly then set off down the north ridge. (Often referred to as the "west ridge," this ridge descends north to Pik 5,000m, where it turns in a more westerly direction). Five rappels from Abalakov anchors got us to the col before Pik 5,000m. From there we climbed almost to the summit, then contoured the left side to reach West Vadif Pass. We made one rappel to the north, then downclimbed to the glacier, almost to the point where we had started climbing up to the notch four days before. Grassy slopes led down to the Kara-su Glacier, and just before midnight we reached base camp. Two weeks later, three young Germans climbed another new route on the face, up the buttress right of center.

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Images



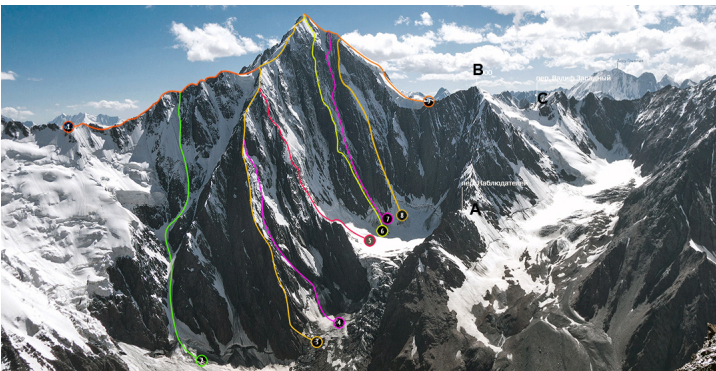
High camp on the east-northeast ridge of Piramidalny, with the Zarafshan Range in the far distance toward the southeast. The largest mountain is Pik 5,170m.



Lomo from the northwest. (1) The 1988 Buchinsky Route. (2) The 2016 Kazakh Route.



Max Ten high on the east-northeast ridge of Piramidalny with the Kara-su Valley below. (A) Asan. (B) Kotina. (C) Usen. (D) Kirkchilta (a.k.a. 1,000 Years of Russian Christianity). (E) Pik 4,810. (F) Lomo (southwest face).



Piramidalny (5,509m) from close to the summit of Lomo to the east. (A) Notch used to access the hanging glacier below the northeast face. (B) Pik 5,000m. (C) West Vadif Pass (the broad distant peak behind the pass is Snowy Ak-su). (1) Southeast Ridge (French, 1993). (2) Russian Roulette (USA-Slovenia, 2002). (3) East-northeast ridge (Nazarov, et al, 1987). (4) French (2014). (5) Belotserkovskiy-Ten (2016). (6) Voronov Route (1989). (7) Paolo Tamagnini (1991, solo). (8) German Route (2016). (9) West and north ridges (British, 1991).



Looking across the northeast face of Pik Piramidalny from Pik 5,000m, with the 2016 Kazakh Route marked.

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