



AAC Publications

Rakaposhi, South Face and Southeast Ridge

Pakistan, Karakoram, Rakaposhi Range

Our planned objective for 2019 was a new route on Tirich Mir, the highest peak in the Hindu Kush. However, by the time we arrived in Pakistan, Kazuya Hiraide and I still had not received a permit, and so we went to Gilgit to reconnoiter another objective while we awaited the final decision. Kazuya has made frequent visits to Hunza and holds a strong desire to climb peaks from that valley. One of the most outstanding is Rakaposhi (7,788m). The south side, although reconnoitered in the past, remained untouched.

The start of the valley of the Sulgin Glacier, leading to the south face, is only 40 minutes by jeep from Gilgit. Twenty kilometers of easy walking leads to the snout. Although low (3,660m), base camp could be no higher than the glacier snout. Our view of the south side of the mountain was not encouraging, boasting many treacherous seracs—there was only one feasible route.

We returned to Gilgit, and after two days there our agent told us a permit for Tirich Mir would not be forthcoming this year. We called back our Pakistani team, who were on standby in Chitral, and on June 16 we all headed to Rakaposhi with the necessary supplies. Ten days from our schedule had been lost.

For acclimatization, and to confirm the line, we spent three days negotiating the complex icefall and climbing the south face to 6,100m, with nights at 4,500m and 5,900m. After our return to base camp, the weather was bad for another six days.

After the weather improved, on June 27, Kazuya and I moved up to Camp 1 at 5,200m, carrying food and fuel for seven days but no rock gear. Next day we outflanked seracs and continued up a snow ridge and face. Our previous tracks had gone, and we struggled with the fresh snow. Even so, we managed to gain 1,000m to a camp at 6,200m, not far below the southeast ridge.

On the 29th we reached the southeast ridge, having climbed an ice wall just below the crest, using ice screw belays. The panorama to the northeast was magnificent, and the summit looked close. Unfortunately, the altimeter told us otherwise. Contrary to our expectations, there was no firm crust on the ridge crest, and we again struggled with deep, soft snow. We climbed 600m to a campsite at 6,800m, whereupon it snowed for the next two days and we remained in the tent.

On July 2 we decided our best chance of success was to try for the summit directly from this camp, an ascent of 1,000m. We left under a starlit sky at 4 a.m.

There were no technical difficulties and once the southeast ridge joined the final section of the southwest ridge (the route of Rakaposhi's first ascent in 1958), the snow conditions improved due to the westerly wind. We stood on top at noon, overwhelmed by the 360° panorama. Opposite stood Shispare, which the two of us had climbed the previous year.

We returned to camp, spent the night, and then descended our route all the way to base camp the following day. While the route had little technical difficulty, the height gain from base camp was more

than 4,000m, and the weather remained unstable throughout the ascent.

– Kenro Nakajima, Japan

Images



Kazuya Hiraide on the upper southeast ridge of Rakaposhi with the Sulgin Valley below and Nanga Parbat in the far distance.



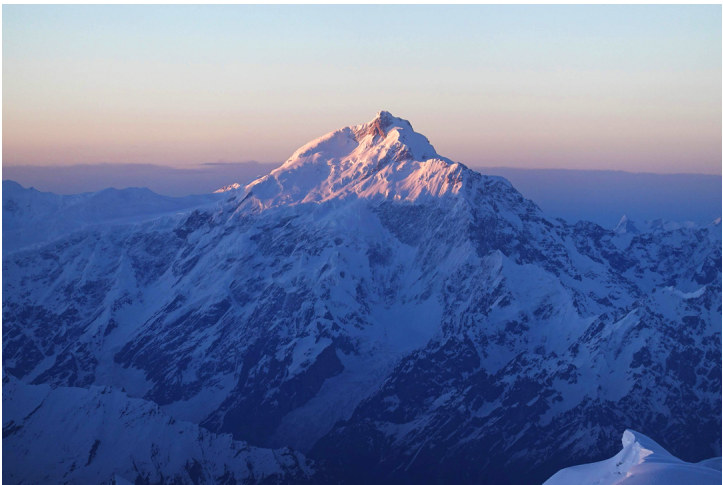
Kazuya Hiraide on the south face of Rakaposhi. The southeast ridge is visible above left.



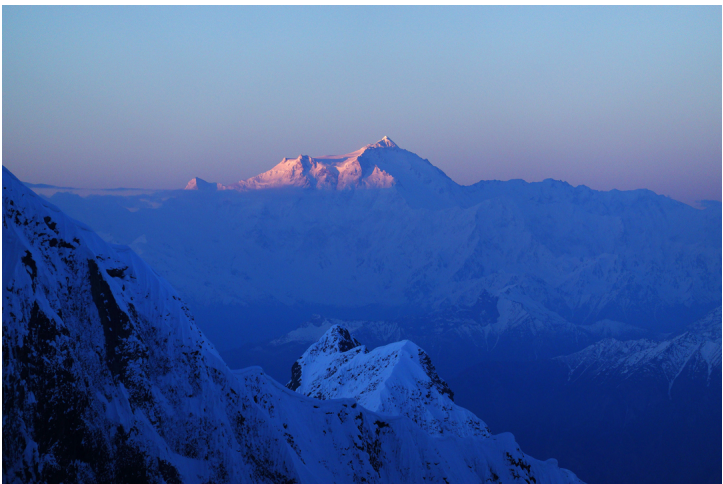
Diran (7,206m) seen from high on Rakaposhi. The standard foute follows the broad west-northwest ridge descending toward the camera. Behind is Spantik (7,027m) with the Golden Pillar in profile to the left. In the distance are K2, Broad Peak, the Gasherbrums and on the far right Saltoro Kangri.



Shispare (7,611m) unclimbed southwest face seen from Rakaposhi.



Haramosh (7,397m) northwest face seen from Rakaposhi. The route of the first ascent (Austrian, 1958) was via the left skyline - east ridge.



Sunrise on Nanga Parbat (8,126m). The left skyline - northeast ridge - is the route of the original ascent from the Rakhiot side.



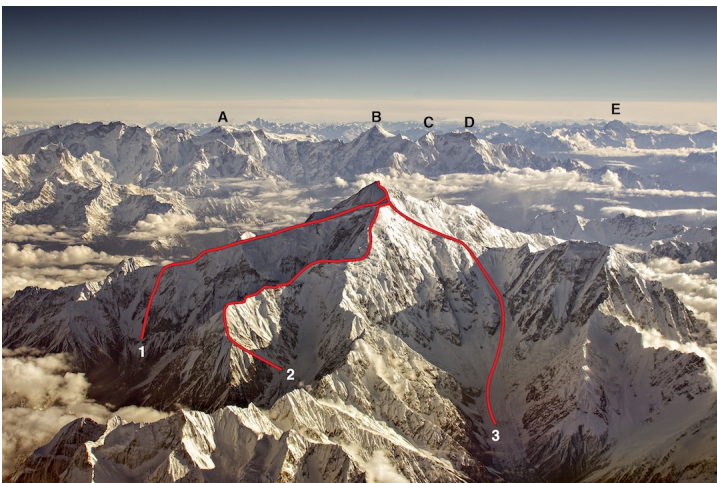
The 2019 Japanese route on the south face and southeast ridge of Rakaposhi (7,788m).



Kazuyu Hiraide on the south face of Rakaposhi.



Kazuya Hiraide moves along a corniced section of the southeast ridge of Rakaposhi. Diran lies in shadow in the background and distant left are the high peaks of the Hispar Glacier.



Rakaposhi (7,788m) from the southwest, showing (1) northwest ridge (1979), (2) southwest ridge (1958), and (3) south face and southeast ridge (2019). In the background, the major summits are (A) Pasu, (B) Shispare, (C) Bojohaghur Duanasir, (D) Ultar, and (E) Karun Koh.

Article Details

Author	Kenro Nakajima
Publication	AAJ
Volume	62
Issue	94
Page	
Copyright Date	2020
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions