



AAC Publications

Shingu Charpa, Historical Ascent by West Face

Pakistan, Karakoram, Tagas Mountains, Nangma Valley

In 2000, the Corean Alpine Club sponsored six climbers to make the first ascent of Shingu Charpa (a.k.a. Great Tower, ca 5,900m; various heights have been reported, from 5,600m to over 6,000m).

The team established base camp on July 7 in the Nangma Valley at 3,870m, and then proceeded to fix nearly 700m of rope to Camp 1 (4,100m). Bad weather followed, but after several days, twin rainbows appeared in the west, a signal for them to commence climbing.

On July 16, Bong Jeong-ho, Hwang Young-soon, and Shin Dong-cheol left base camp and reached the top of the fixed lines by 2 p.m. The climb above initially followed a large couloir on the west face and became more difficult above 4,300m. There was a section of 80°, and protection was difficult. After climbing three pitches above the end of the fixed ropes, the three retreated to a small ledge, where they bivouacked.

The following morning, with gear drenched by the previous evening's drizzle, they worked quickly to escape the couloir. Overcoming a large chockstone with water cascading down both sides, and with several big leader falls, the team exited the couloir to the crest of a spur on the west face. They found a tent platform 50m to the right at 4,700m.

On the 18th, Bong and Shin climbed 200m up the spur, while Hwang dried out their gear in long-awaited sunshine. Next day, all three juggled to their high point. At 5,000m, Hwang was hit by rockfall, though fortunately without serious injury. Multiple leads of 5.9 to 5.10 led to a bivouac site at 5,110m, where they slept on separate ledges. On the 20th, only five more pitches were completed, as time was lost when a stove was dropped. Fortunately, they had left a second stove at the previous bivouac, which was retrieved. That night they were again forced to bivouac on separate ledges at 5,250m.

Next day, in mostly clear sky, they climbed rock up to 5.11b, bivouacking at 5,350m. On the 22nd, they reached a point 300m from the summit. That night was long, windy, snowy, cold, and sleepless, the food almost all gone. At 9:20 a.m. on the 23rd, after climbing 200m of snow and 100m of rock, the three stood just below the summit. Bong carefully approached the large cornice and hammered in a snow stake. The three then retreated safely down the route, abandoning around half their fixed rope. The Korean Route had climbing up to 5.11b A2.

In 1999, these same three climbers had attempted Amin Brakk in the Nangma Valley, almost completing the line first tried in 1996 by a Basque team (AAJ 2000). In 1997, they were part of the Korean team making the first ascent of the central pillar on the west face of Gasherbrum IV, with Bong Jeong-ho reaching the summit (AAJ 1998).

— Peter Jensen-Choi, Corean Alpine Club

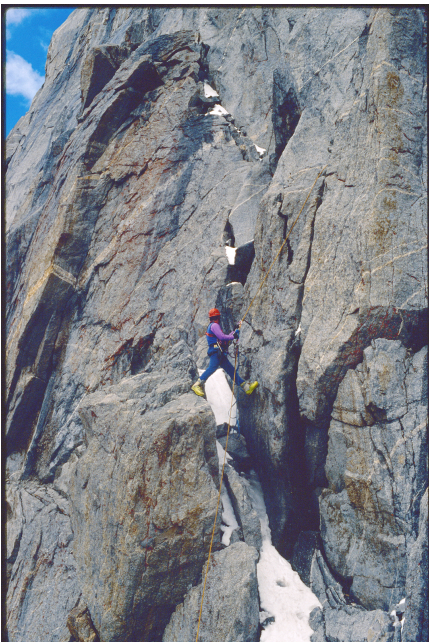
Images



Near the top of the west face on the first ascent of Shingu Charpa.



On the first ascent of Shingu Charpa in Pakistan in 2000.



On the west face during the first ascent of Shingu Charpa in Pakistan.



Jumaring on the first ascent of Shingu Charpa in 2000.



Shingu Charpa from the north, showing the approximate line of the Korean first ascent route up the west face in 2000, with bivouac locations marked.



Shingu Charpa (ca 5,900m) from the north. The Korean first ascent (2000) climbed the shaded west face from the top of the obvious snow couloir. The prominent north ridge (facing the camera) was attempted several times in the mid-2000s. The east face (left) was climbed in 2007.

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