



Praqpa Ri Central, Attempts

Pakistan, Karakoram, Baltoro Muztagh

From mid-July to late August, Martin Sieberer (Austria) and I attempted to reach unclimbed Praqpa Ri Central (7,156m, 35°49'47.30"N, 76°25'57.09"E) to the west of K2. However, even while approaching the mountain we noticed "monsoon-like" weather, with high solar radiation, elevated temperatures, and almost daily precipitation. Our spirits were not high as we made a first inspection of the crevassed Savoia Glacier in unpleasant weather, hoping to find a route toward the sharp northwest ridge. We built 80 rock cairns to mark the way. Continuing up the Praqpa Glacier, we ground to a halt in water-soaked snow. Crossing crevasses in these conditions didn't seem a good idea, so we camped for the night to aid acclimatization, hoping to continue if there was an appreciable drop in temperature. There wasn't, so the next day we retreated, sinking and sliding in the wet snow.

The weather remained unstable, but one day we saw the mountain free of cloud for a few hours, and this motivated us to have another attempt. We chose the east flank, already climbed to the 7,026m southeast top by Chileans in 2017 (AAJ 2018), hoping to continue their route to the main summit. We climbed through the night to reach the broad Khalkhal Pass (5,701m) on the east-southeast ridge, then through the whole of that day (August 11) we rested in our tent. The following night we continued, but met unconsolidated powder, which we were unable to protect. It was just too dangerous, so we retreated to base camp.

In the last few days of the trip, we made a second attempt on this route, but the result was the same: Bad conditions forced us down from 6,000m. Our expedition was not only horribly unsuccessful but also depressing. Climate change appears to have reached the high ranges of our planet, and the climbing season for 6,000m and 7,000m peaks has now likely shifted to the autumn.

— **Simon Messner, Italy**

Images



Praqpa Ri from the Savoia Glacier to the east, taken on the last day of the 2021 expedition. The main summit (B) is the ice tower at the right end of the horizontal summit ridge. The team first planned to inspect the sharp ridge on the right, leading to the northwest summit (C), but were unable to make safe progress up the glacier below. The climbers then attempted to repeat the ridge falling from the southeast summit (A) to Khalkhal Pass (K), reaching a high point at (H).

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