



Patrasi I, First Ascent, via Northwest Ridge of Patrasi II

Nepal, Kanjiroba Himal

The west side of Patrasi showing the route of the first ascent of Patrasi I, traversing over the summit of Patrasi II. Photo by Pasang Rinzee Sherpa.

In the premonsoon season, Nepali guides Vinayak Jaya Malla, Pasang Kami Sherpa, and Pasang Rinzee Sherpa worked commercial expeditions to 8,000m peaks. After returning to Kathmandu, they enjoyed only a few days of rest at home before heading to Jumla in West Nepal, arriving on June 4.

They were perfectly acclimatized for the adventure ahead: the first ascent of the highest summit of the Patrasi group, situated on the western rim of the Kanjiroba Sanctuary.

Aware that locals in this area would be heading to the highlands to collect yarsagumba (caterpillar fungus) for traditional Chinese and Tibetan medicine, and therefore porters would be hard to find, the three climbers brought four support members from Kathmandu. Neither the climbers nor support staff had previously trekked or climbed in the area.

Along with a local guide and three porters, the team drove to Pere (2,700m) on June 5, then walked four hard days via the Chaudhabise Valley to a base camp at 5,050m below the west side of the Patrasi group. Day three involved crossing Tang Tang Pass (4,950m, approximately 29°26'21.15"N, 82°30'22.44"E) and descending to an overnight camp at 4,100m in the Changda Valley, where they met an encampment of yarsagumba collectors.

At 8 a.m. on the 10th, they began their ascent of Patrasi. They first climbed a 200m snow couloir to reach the northwest ridge of Patrasi II (6,471m, 29°25'18.04"N, 82°35'5.70"E). After climbing 11 belayed pitches with rock to French 5a, and simul-climbing other sections, they reached 5,700m, where they were able to fashion a partial tent site. For safety, they slept that night in their harnesses.

The following morning, they left at 5 a.m. After another 11 pitches (up to M4) and a little simul-climbing, they arrived at 6,000m, where they decided to pitch their second camp at around 4 p.m. The climbing had been quite challenging in cold and windy conditions with intermittent snow showers. The rock was poor, and there were many places where protection points were 10m to 15m apart.

At 4 a.m. on June 12, the three set out for a long summit push. Following the corniced ridge, then crossing a section of hard blue WI3, they reached the top of Patrasi II, descended a little to a snow slope, then headed up onto the left flank of the northeast ridge of Patrasi I (6,521m, 29°25'02.7"N, 82°34'59.6"E). They reached this summit at 4:35 p.m. in cloudy weather.

The descent was long and tiring, with muscles cramping toward the end of the day. Downclimbing and 15 long rappels (they climbed on 70m ropes) took them to the 6,000m camp. It was 9:30 p.m., and they didn't bother to cook, instead falling asleep very quickly.

On the 13th, it took the trio almost 11 hours to descend all the way to base camp. By the 17th, they were back in Jumla. All equipment and nondegradable waste was packed out, and they left only five snow stakes, ten pitons, and some cord on the mountain.

Commenting on the trip, Pasang Kami Sherpa said, "This expedition added an interesting chapter to my mountaineering journey. It was in stark contrast to my experience on 8,000m peaks, where fixed

rope, oxygen, well-stocked camps, and support systems are the norm. Here, we were on our own, a small team carrying only essential things, making our own decisions, and adapting to whatever the mountain presented us.”

For his part, Vinayak Jaya Malla said, “Let me tell you, for passionate mountaineers there’s nothing quite like the pure joy of alpine climbing in one of Nepal’s most remote areas. Far from human settlements and with no communication networks, one must be well prepared. Alpine-style climbing is a whole different game.”

The team expressed gratitude to the Mount Everest Foundation for financial support.

—Lindsay Griffin, with information from Vinayak Jaya Malla, Nepal

Notes On The Patrasi Group: Three tops rise around a small, sloping glacier basin above 6,200m along the ridge to the northeast of Kande Hiunchuli (6,627m). Two are unnamed on maps, but the most easterly and lowest is referred to as Patrasi (Patrali on the HMG-Finn map). In AAJ 2015, it was suggested the other two be called Kande Hiunchuli Northeast I and II, but since that time a more logical alternative has been adopted, and all three peaks are now included in the Patrasi group: Patrasi I (or Main, 6,521m), Patrasi II (or Northeast, 6,471m), and Patrasi III (or East, 6,450m). Patrasi II was climbed in 1980, using 1,200m of fixed rope and two camps, by a Swiss team on the northwest ridge. Subsequently, three British expeditions failed on Patrasi II, as did the Anglo-Russian expedition reported in AAJ 2015.

Images



Pasang Rinzee Sherpa belays Pasang Kami Sherpa on the south flank of the ridge connecting Patrasi II and I.



Steep ground on day two of the first ascent of Patrasi I.



Climbing through broken ground on day two of the first ascent of Patrasi I.



On the upper northwest ridge of Patrasi II (the summit is more or less directly above the climber), on day three of the first ascent of Patrasi I (summit off to the right).



The northwest ridge (left) and west face of Patrasi seen during the descent from the Tang Tang Col to the Changda Valley. To the right, with its summit in cloud, is Kande Hiunchuli (6,627m).



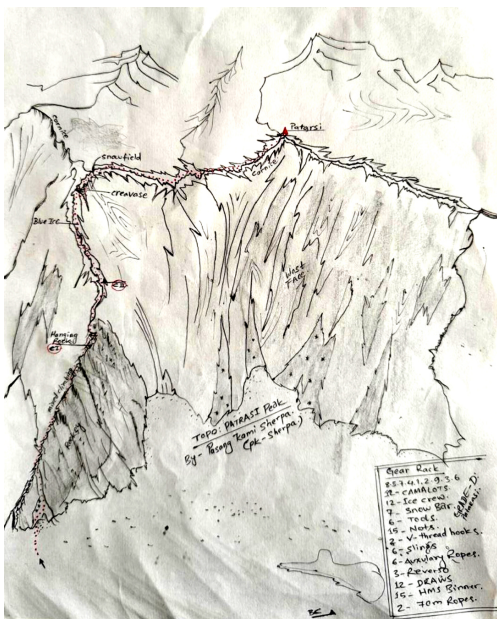
Climbing the initial gully to reach the northwest ridge of Patrasi II, on day one of the first ascent of Patrasi I.



The unclimbed west face of Kande Hiunchuli (6,627m) on the west rim of the Kanjiroba Sanctuary, seen from the Chaudhabise Valley above Pere.



The west side of Patrasi showing the route of the first ascent of Patrasi I, over the summit of Patrasi II.



Topo of Patrasi by Pasang Kami Sherpa (AKA PK)

Topo sketch and gear list for the first ascent of Patrasi I, passing over the top of Patrasi II.

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