



AAC Publications

Margherita's Peak (5,400m), South Ridge, Open Eyes; K7 West (6,615m), Southwest Pillar, Attempt; Farol West (6,370m), West Face, Telegraph Road.

Asia, Pakistan, Charakusa Valley

Bad weather thwarted our plans to attempt unclimbed Hassan Peak. Instead, Lorenzo Angelozzi and I looked elsewhere and attempted three other summits, on two of which we were successful. Our first ascent was Margherita's Peak, a previously unclimbed rock tower at the end of the south ridge of Farol West. It makes a good acclimatization ascent after arriving in the Charakusa, with an approach that involves a night's sleep at the end of the glacier moraine. We climbed the south ridge. An ice slope led into a goulotte, where the climbing became steeper and more mixed. Finally, two rock pitches led to the top. We named the route Open Eyes (WI5 M5 UIAA V, 400m) because it opened our own eyes to the possibilities on Farol West, which would subsequently become our goal.

We then attempted a new line on the southwest pillar of K7 West [dubbed the Badal Wall in 2007 by the Belgian-Polish team that nearly climbed it] in capsule style. We started up the west face left of Badal (5.12+ A1, 1,200m, Favresse-Favresse-Pustelnik-Villanueva, 2007, to ca 5,900m, see AAJ 2008). Getting started was difficult: we had to make several attempts due to poor weather, with rain rather than snow falling altitudes of ca 6,000m. On the sixth pitch we had to overcome a fantastic off-width, which was hard to protect without Friends 5 and 6. Instead we were compelled to make a 25m runout above Friends 3.5 and 4. We descended in more rain, returning on our ninth day to move the portaledge and equipment to the top of pitch five. We finished the sixth pitch, climbed a seventh, and then part of the eighth, where we were forced to make a pendulum from a tied-off blade peg only in two centimeters. Then, we were narrowly missed by a large rockfall that destroyed our portaledge. Water cascading down the face had loosened large blocks, but fortunately, whilst climbing, we had been protected by the steep rock above. That night we tried to repair the badly damaged ledge, but the next day, our 11th, realized that continuing was futile, so we removed our gear from the eighth pitch and descended. To our high point, about one quarter height on the wall, the difficulties were UIAA VII+ and A2/3.

A short break in the weather prompted us to try a fast ascent of Farol West, though at the time we were unaware that this peak had a name and had been climbed in 1991 by Ian Stewart and Neil Wilson via the south-southeast face. Lorenzo and I opted for a probable new line on the west face. We left base camp at 1 p.m. with 14kg rucksacks, and bivouacked on the edge of the glacier when the snow became too soft to continue. We started up the face during the night, after the ground had re-frozen. Occasionally it snowed, and the darkness made route finding difficult. The middle section of the climb presented several challenging pitches, and at ca 5,900m we found one pitch up a granite crack stuffed with ice that was almost impossible. We graded it UIAA VI but climbed with axe and crampons. Once above it, we realized we were past the worst. Continuing up 55-60° slopes, we eventually arrived on the summit ridge, which we followed to the highest point in swirling cloud. We made 20 rappels down the face on a more direct line, which will provide a good route to another party in the future. We climbed our route, Telegraph Road (WI4 M4 UIAA VI, 900m), in 32 hours round trip from base camp, with 21 hours needed for the ascent (including five hours rest at the bivouac).

Bad weather had compelled us to change our goals many times but the situation for the rest of Pakistan was far worse, with thousands dead and millions displaced from their homes. We felt deeply sorry for them, and rather guilty, as we were there simply to focus on our climbing.

[There is additional information by and about Daniele Nardi in Italian on www.danielenardi.eu.]

Images



Farol West from the southwest with (1) Telegraph Road, and (2) Open Eyes to the summit of Margherita's Peak.



Daniele Nardi starting the UIAA VI crack at 5,900m on Farol West.



A Dead Man protects Daniele Nardi as he traverses the summit ridge of Farol West.



Badal Wall on the southwest pillar of K7 West. The 2007 attempt, Badal, more or less climbs the center of the face visible, stopping several hundred meters below the righthand of the two summit spires (see AAJ 2008, p. 81 for more details). The Italian attempt was further left, aiming toward the light-colored walls, but is invisible in this photo, hidden by the foreground ridge. The fine pillar up and to the left was dubbed the Chandelle.



Angelozzi stands below the lower southwest pillar of K7 West. (1) Italian attempt with (L) the site of the portaledge hit by rockfall, (P6) the hard off-width on pitch six, and (H) the high point. (2) the approximate line of Badal.

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