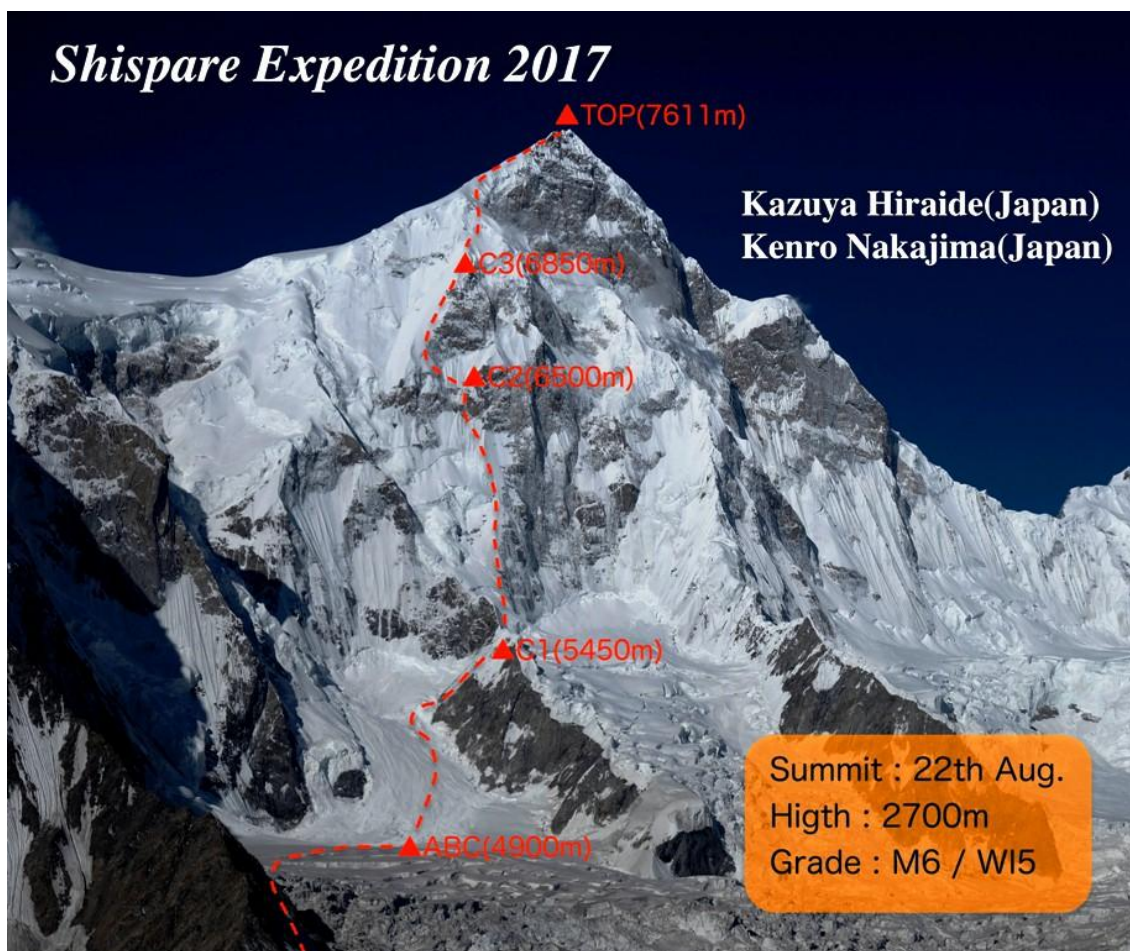


KAZUYA HIRAIDE & KENRO NAKAJIMA
First Ascent of Shispare 7611m Northeast Face, Karakoram
Most Outstanding Climb of the Year 2017
(Translated, edited and supplemented by Tom Nakamura)



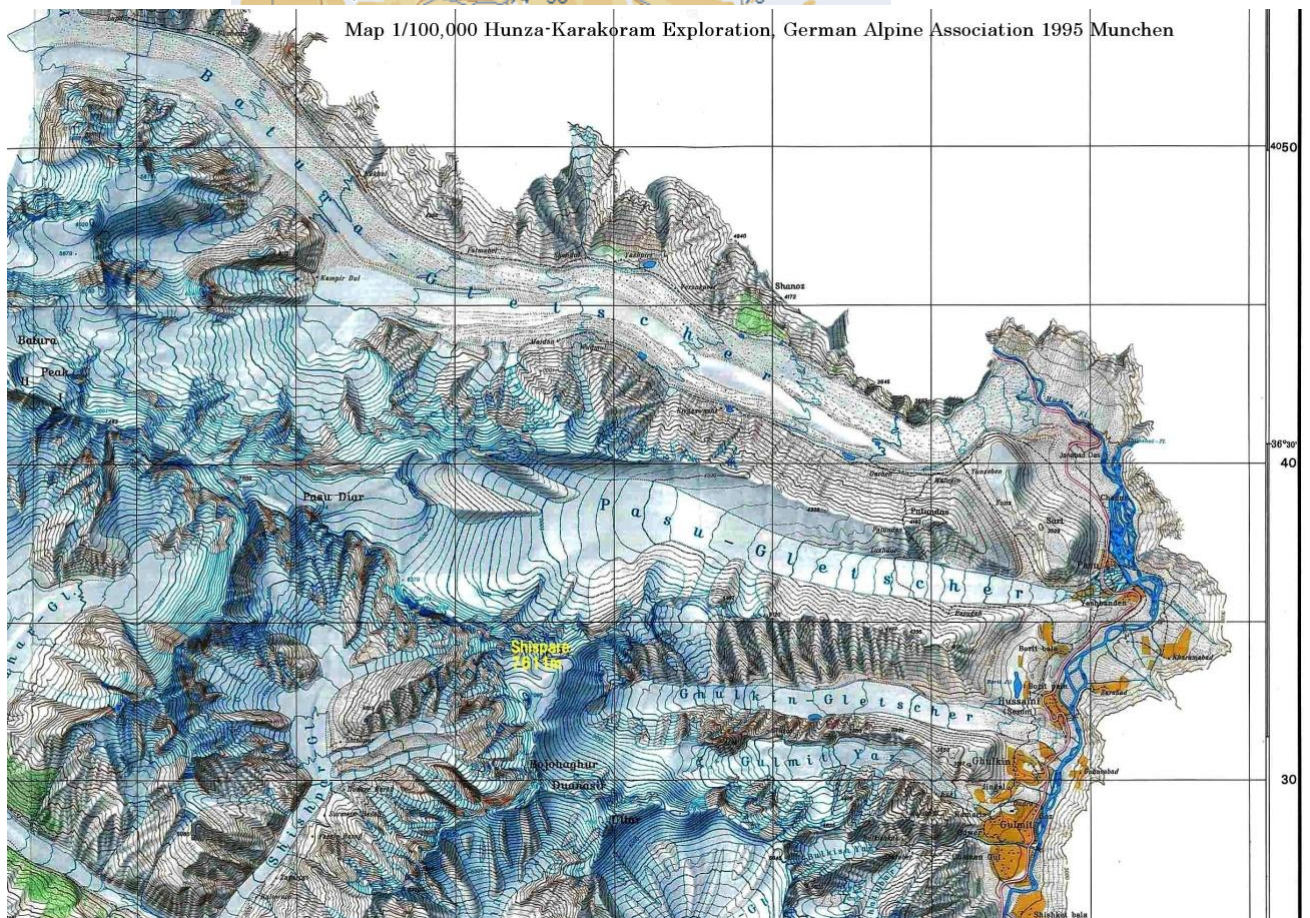
“Dear Kazuya and Kenro,

I am the editor of the American Alpine Journal (AAJ), and I am writing today to offer our congratulations for your beautiful ascent of the northeast face of Shispare. As you know, this is a face that many people have dreamed of ascending, and it was wonderful to see that you climbed it in such fine style. Congratulations!

This is certain to be one of the most significant first ascents of 2017, and so we would like to feature the climb prominently in the next edition of the AAJ. Therefore, I would like to invite one of you to contribute a substantial article about the climb, perhaps describing the history of attempts on the face, your planning and strategy for the climb, and the details of the ascent itself.” (Dougald McDonald, AAJ Editor, Sep. 12, 2017)

Introduction – Location (Coordinates 36° 26.4'N, 74° 40.9'E)

Shispare lies east of the Batura Wall, which is the highest part of the Batura Muztagh. The Hunza River curves around the southwest, west, and northwest sides of the Batura Muztagh, and Shispare towers above the western bank of the river. In turn, the Hunza Valley lies in the Gilgit District of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan.

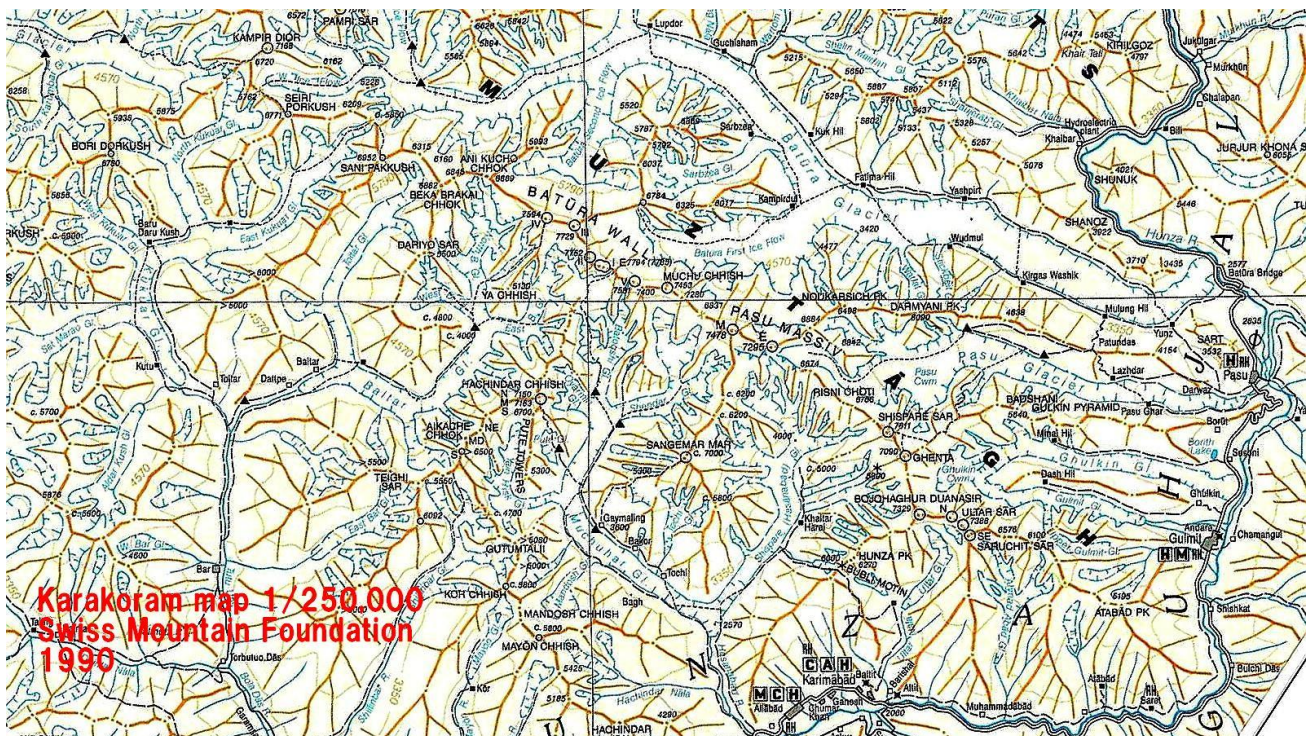
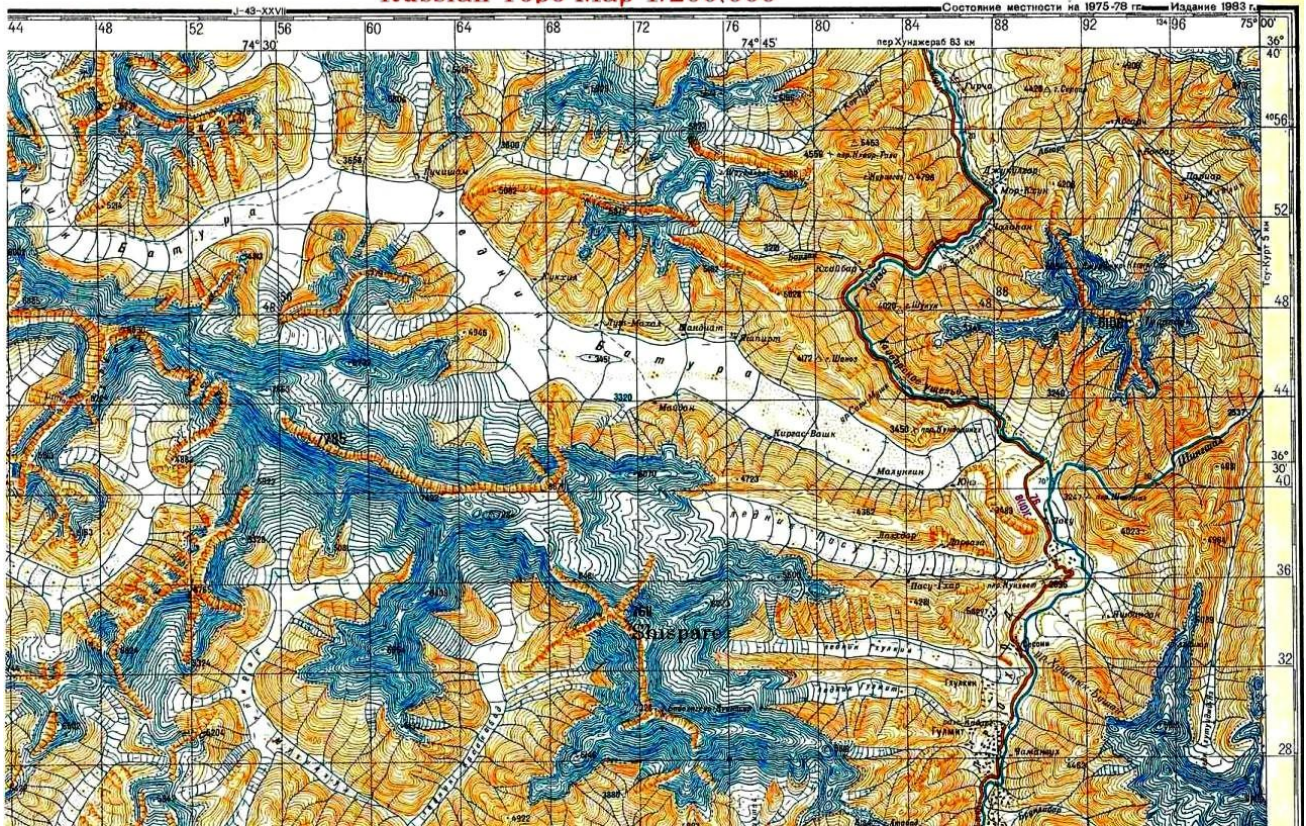


БАЛТИТ

Russian Topo Map 1/200,000

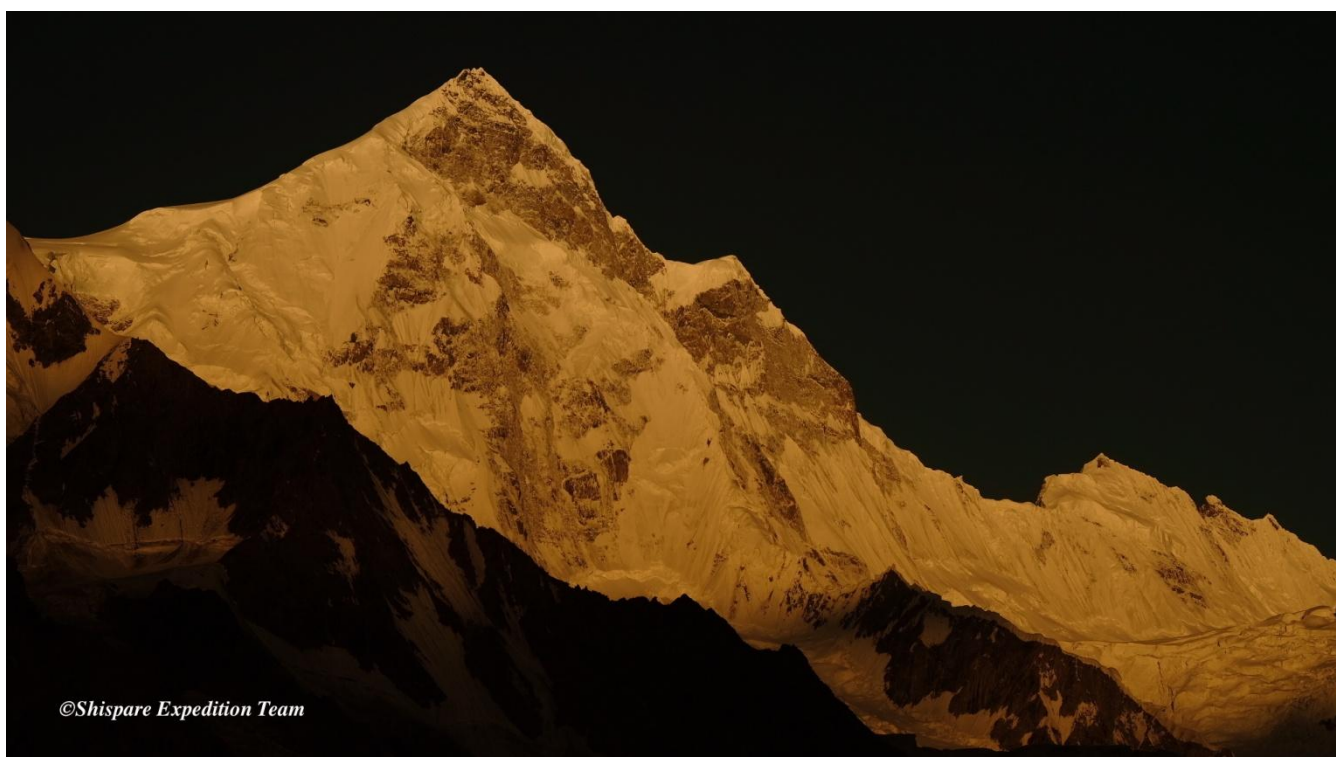
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Notable features

Shispare is notable for its tremendous rise above local terrain. For example, the nearby town of Karimabad, in the Hunza Valley, has an elevation of 2,060 m (6,759 ft), making for 5,550 m (18,210 ft) of relief, in only 13 km (8 mi) horizontal distance. Being near the end of the Batura Muztagh, it commands large drops in three directions (north, east, and south). **In addition, Shispare has a strikingly large and steep Northeast Face. This has remained one of the final targets to attract challenging Himalayan Climbers.** (The following picture is morning sunshine of Shispare northwest face.)



History

Climbing began in the Batura Muztagh later than in other parts of the Karakoram. Shispare was the first major peak in the range to be successfully climbed, in 1974, by the "Polish-German Academic Expedition" under the leadership of Janusz Kurczab. The ascent took 35 days, and during preparations for a second group to try for the summit, one member of the expedition (Heinz Borchers) was killed in an avalanche. The first ascent route followed the Pasu Glacier to the East Ridge, between the Pasu and Ghulkin Glacier. (Note: this ridge goes southeast from the summit, turns northeast, and then turns roughly east, so it is called the "southeast ridge" and the "northeast ridge" in

different sources.) Difficulties included a long ice ridge, and the access to the ridge required 1500m of fixed rope. (First ascent: July 21, 1974 by H. Bleicher, L. Cichy, M. Grochowski, J. Holnicki-Szulc, A. Mlynarczyk, H. Oberhofer, J. Poreba) A legendary Polish climber, Janusz Kurczab died of cancer on April 11, 2015 at 77 years

The next attempt was in 1989 by members of the Ryukoku University Alpine Club in Japan, led by Masato Okamoto. The group was on the mountain for almost two months, but was not able to summit; their high point was around 7,200 m (23,620 ft). In 1994, a group from the Komono Alpine Club in Japan, led by Yukiteru Masui, achieved the second ascent of the peak. They reached Base Camp on June 18, and Masui, Kokubu, and Ozawa reached the summit on July 20. They followed the same route as the first ascent party and climbed in a similar style, with a similar amount of fixed rope.

Karrar Haidri's Report

Updated Aug 8, 2013 05:10 EDT: Japanese Kazuya Hiraide & Ms. Kei Taniguchi have summited Diran Peak 7257m and attempted Shispare 7611m

Two-members strong Japanese expedition comprising, Mr Hiraide Kazuya and Ms Taniguchi Kei, (Pioletts d'Or winners) arrived in Islamabad to attempt to climb the 7,611 meter high Shispare Peak.

On June 22 the team was briefed at the Alpine Club of Pakistan by its President, Manzoor Hussain, who was the Pakistani leader of the Joint Pak Japanese Expedition that made the first ascent of the 7,284 meter high Passu peak in 1978. Passu peak is connected with Shispare Peak through a long ridge.

The President of the ACP shared his experience of climbing the ridge and studying the Hassanabad glacier and the Shispare Peak from near the Passu summit. Mr Hirade Kazuya, who is a good ice climber, has earlier experience of climbing Laila and Golden peaks in Karakoram. Discussing his climbing details, he informed that his team will be attempting the 7,273 meter high Diran Peak to reach up as high as possible for acclimatization purposes only, whereas their actual target is the 7,611 meter high Shispare Peak, which he already attempted in 2007 via the Hassanabad glacier from South side. The Base Camp is low at 3,900 meters. The Expedition intends climbing an about 1700 meter near vertical ice wall on the Southern side to reach the main ridge leading to the Shispare summit. It was agreed by the leader that this side is difficult and prone to avalanches but with experience of his last attempt he felt confident about the climb.

Expedition Record

Hirade's sentiment

I have long been turning "Shispare over in my mind. The mountain has stayed in my remembrance as a mountain attracting me challenging to climb at the risk of my life.

In 2002, I alone headed to Pakistan to seek unclimbed summits and to find climbing routes. In this journey I was deeply touched by Shispare with a single glance. The first attempt was in 2007 after five years, but I gave up progress at 6000m of the untrodden centre route of the northeast face due to unstable snow conditions. "There exist no such mountains as unable to climb unless staking own life" I thought in those days. This was a word coming out from feelings that I could not simply accept the defeat as a fact because I was young.

I gained plenty of experiences in mountaineering and returned to Shispare in 2012. I challenged unclimbed southwest face but was not successful having retreated at 5350m due to bad weather. I recognized "We can't climb mountains even doing at the risk of own life". I felt that I had mentally grown up. In the next year of 2013, I again challenged the southwest face as there was a viable route on the upper part. The partner was late Kei Taniguchi, a distinguished world-known female climber, with whom I drew a new line "Samurai Direct" on the southeast face of Kamet in 2008 (Piolet's d'Or 2009 awarded). I expected success with the best partner, but we had to retreat at 5,700m. We returned escaping from horrible huge seracs in the upper part. I muttered to myself in despair "There could be a mountain that is impossible to climb throughout the life.

In winter of 2015, Kei Taniguchi of my partner over the years was killed slipping 700m from the summit of Mt. Kuro (1984m) of the Daisetsuzan, Hokkaido, Japan. I made a fresh resolve to climb carrying Taniguchi's affections to the mountains. Then in this year, 2017, I departed for seeking possibility of the northeast face. This was the forth challenge on Shispare.

Shispare is a starting point in my Himalayan climbing and have learnt experienced many things through this mountain. In some occasion I was tempted to find a reason not to pursue an original objective when I faced dangers and difficulties and forced to make decision. However Shispare is now a mountain of obsession. I challenged Shispare with an indomitable resolve in 2017 in order to take advantages even one percent possibility if there was. These efforts led to success of the first ascent of the formidable northeast face.

Summary of Itinerary

July 17: Japan – Islamabad

July 25: Trekking from Pasu

July 26: BC (4000m)

July 28/29: Reconnaissance and acclimatization

Ascended to 5600m on the 1st ascent route, stayed at 5160m

August 1 – 4: Acclimatization. Ascended to 6750m toward Pasu Peak, stayed at 6400m

August 7 – 9: Rest in Hunza waiting for good weather

August 13/14: Tried attack, but returned to BC after overnight at 5000m, heavy snow

August 18: BC – C1 (5450m)

August 19: C1 – C2 (6500m)

August 20: C2 – C3 (6850m)

August 21: Stayed at C3

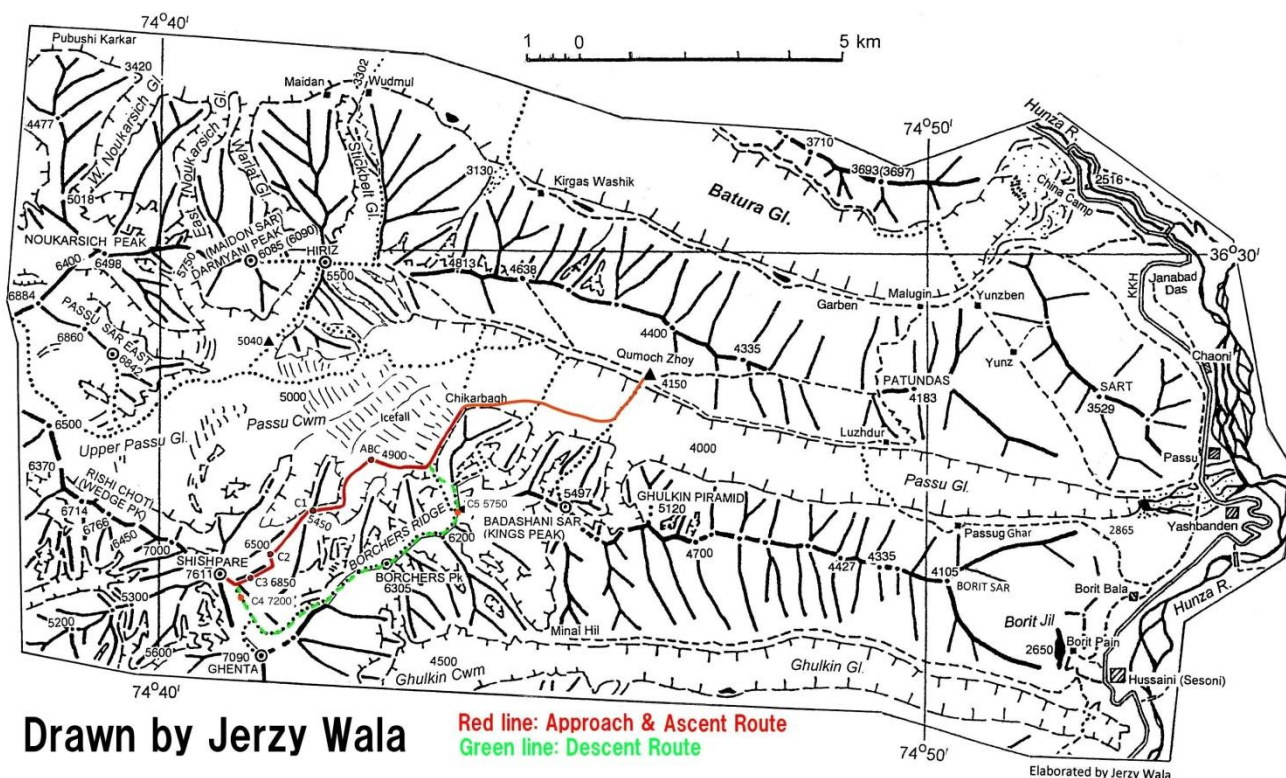
August 22: C3 – Summit (7611m) – C4 (7200m)

August 23: Descended 1st ascent route – C5 (5750m)

August 24: C5 – BC

August 25: Left BC for Hunza

August 28: Arrived at Islamabad September 1: Returned to Japan



Approach and Climbing

On July 21, we headed to Hunza from Islamabad by roads. We entered Chilas having passed Babusar Pass (4170m) open only in the summer, and then drove northwards along the Karakoram Highway to Hunza. To our surprise in recent years Hunza is a hive of Pakistani tourists rather than foreigners. (Editor's note: This is the same tendency in Indian Kashmir.)



Mountaineering Map of the Karakoram & Hindu-Kuash, No.5 Batura Glacier & Hunza
By Tsuneo Miyamori, Nakanishiya Shuppan Co. Ltd. 2001

Trekking

On July 25 we changed the vehicle to a jeep at Pasu village and started trekking from ZeroPoint, a terminal after having passing Lake Borith. The first day was three and

half hours walk to Luzhdur having traversed white and beautiful Pasu Glacier. Porters, knowing well of the glacier for route finding, led us to a wide and grassy camp site on the moraine of the glacier left bank after passing through labyrinths of the glacier.

On the following day, we ascended a steep slope Patundas on the mountain ridge. Sight was widely opened and our objective, Shipare, came into view. Flower carpets were at our feet. We farther went down a gentle slope to BC site 4000m on the left bank of the Pasu Glacier. We arrived at the BC site in mid day after three and half hours walk. Pakistani climbing team aiming at Pasu Peak was already there.

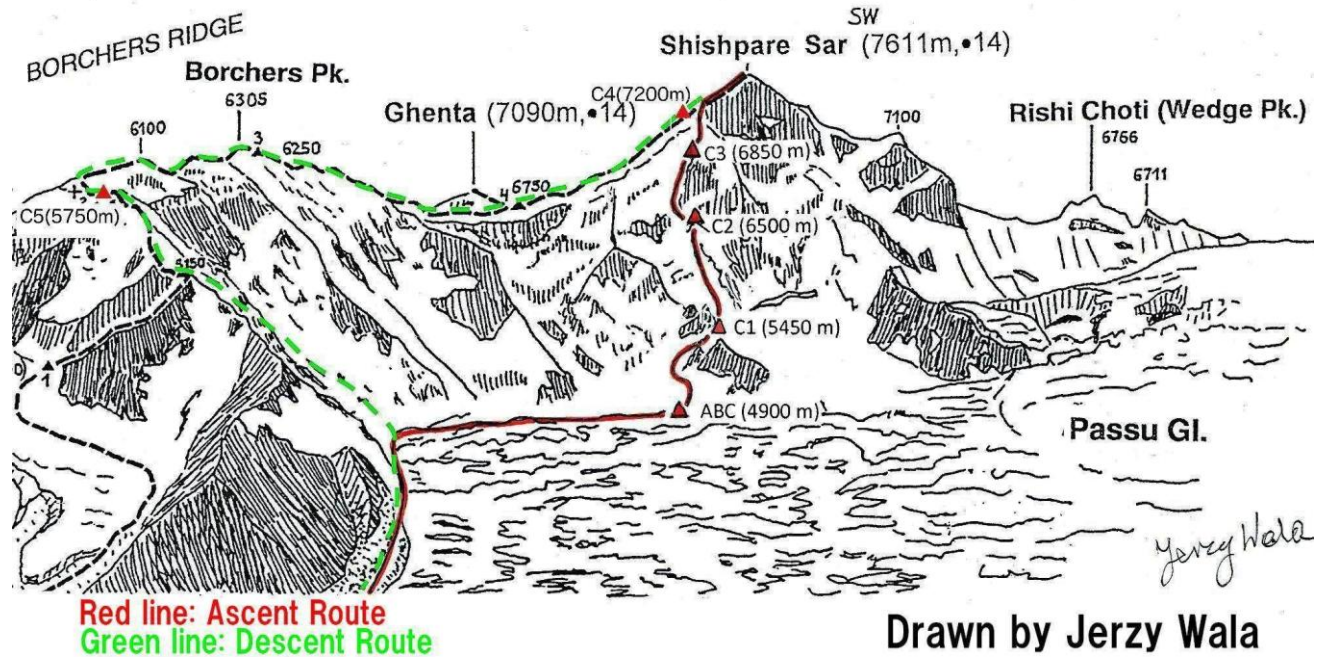
Acclimatization and Reconnaissance of Descent Route

On July 28 we headed for the first ascent route for acclimatization and reconnaissance. We went to the east sub-ridge after traversed the Pasu Glacier from BC. The glacier was really like labyrinths. We tried to find a safe route looking around and going this way and that. We jumped several times over the crevasses. It was not easy to find a good point to start climbing up the east sub-ridge. Through trial and error we progressed to a contact line of the glacier and the side wall of the east sub-ridge and then ascended to the main ridge from snow face in the western side. On the next day we climbed up the ridge to 5600m. From here we check the conditions of descent route and returned to BC. We found fixed ropes, not many, on a rock ridge that the previous party had left.

Pasu Peak

After two days rest in BC we departed to Pasu Peak 7478m, which is located 8km northwest of Shipare. The only obstacle for climbing is the lower icefall. There is no other difficulty to reach the summit. We had a permit to climb Pasu Peak for acclimatization and reconnaissance of the northwest ridge. The Pakistani party soon returned as conditions of the lower icefall were worse and no route paving advanced on schedule. Though it was a long detour (roundabout way), we ascended to the plateau of the northern side of Shipare along the right bank of the Pasu Glacier and followed a safer route after traversing the whole plateau. To our regret, bad weather impeded us to reach the summit, but we made acclimatization up to 6750m (stayed two nights at 6400m) and came back to BC. We expected to attempt Shipare in the next good weather cycle. However as the forecast told us that bad weather would continue for a couple of days, we once went down to Hunza for three days rest.

Shipare – First Attempt



Cloudy and snowy weather lasted even after returning to BC and we watched weather forecast every day. 2017 was a year of much rain fall all over Pakistan and landslides frequently happened in mountain areas. Nine days after acclimatization in Pasu Peak we could no longer wait and left BC in cloudy weather judging the lower part would not much affected by bad weather. But it became worse and we lost direction to advance in whiteout. After having waited for a chance staying overnight at 5000m we were forced to return to BC as there was 40–50cm snowfall and wall conditions were worst for climbing.

Shipare – Second Attempt (Final Assault)

We did not lose patience. We waited for the last chance until snow conditions on the wall became stable enough for safe climbing. Forecast told us good weather but the summit of Shipare was always hidden in clouds. Weather conditions were suffering from a change being compared with the first half of expedition period.

On August 17 weather recovered for a few hours in the morning and the wall of Shipare got sunshine. On the following day, though weather was not clear, we decided to depart from BC. We traversed complicated glacier we had already walked to the northeast face. The Day 1 started with couloirs exposed to awful danger of falling down of seracs. As feared we were captured by large collapse of seracs. The first collapse was small and we suffered from only less snow shower. The second collapse was in a large scale with big sound and smoke of snow. We felt danger and escaped in a hurry. But one of legs got caught in a crevasse and, tied rope was so tightly stretched the both of us could not hide ourselves and were exposed to violent snow gale like blast for one minute. Though the wind was as strong as we could hardly breathe for a while, we were not buried in snow. This experience gave us confidence that we could negotiate such big collapse of snow blocks and let us pass through dangerous zone smoothly being free from much fear. Since departure was delayed because of weather, a camp of Day 1 was set up on leveled snow ridge before reaching scheduled point.



Between C1 and C2

On August 19 we reached and started climbing the ice-snow wall of 60 – 70° degree crossing a ridge from camp site. The wall was a bit snow-covered but the runner was secured by ice-screws. To accelerate climbing speed we carried on continuous climbing with only one intermediate belaying point. We climbed fast, but it was a tremendous burden on calves. Then we climbed S-shaped ice-snow wall and faced rock wall. We

traversed the basal part of this rock wall by four pitches to the left and entered couloirs. The weather began to break. Snow shower was incessantly falling down to our heads. We first planned to make a bivouac at the wall base, no suitable spot was found. In such situation that we had to make up our mind whether to go further or to once return to BC, we again started climbing while it was snowing. We could barely manage to take the runner on thin ice by screws. We resisted violent snow shower so that our bodies might not be stripped of the wall and overcame the rock part in two pitches. However, no expected camp site was soon found. We detoured to the opposite side of the climbing route and further ascended steep snow face by three pitches and reached a snow ridge that could avoid avalanche. The snow ridge was thin and narrow but we could make a space for camp where two, both of us, laid ourselves down.



Near C1 (1)



Near C1 (2)



Crux between C2 and C3

On August 20 Hoping that snow conditions got improved even a bit, we departed after the wall began to receive the sunlight. We returned to the route by rappelling twice steep snow wall ascended on the previous day. Further three pitches traverse of the ice-snow wall took us to the base of the second rock wall, which looked treacherous as, though angle was not large (60°), there was ice and snow on large rock slab. The top leading the pitch tried the wall with no loads. In the first half of the wall, where screws were buried to only half and no enough protection was ensured, we just managed to advance. But it took a time as we could not have workable belay on rock slab with no ice and snow on the mid-way. Fatigue of calves was coming to a durable limit. We boldly continued climbing with no protection. Then, by good luck, ice-axes worked sticking onto ice, even foots being left up in the air, we could proceed to the next step. It was the first case that we yelled out exiting in such high place. Perhaps it was due to being relieved from the tension that in the next pitch, an ice-axe being off, one of us fell down. While falling down, intermediate runners appeared kaleidoscopically but none of runners did come out miraculously and he was stopped with no injury. We resumed climbing and we could break through the rock in one pitch. From a finishing point of the rock, we traversed ice-snow wall in three pitches and intently climbed “bow-shaped” ice-snow wall. It began again to snow and we were showered with snow. We continued to climb being belayed. After finishing ice-snow wall we set up a camp leveling a ridge.



Between C2 and C3

On August 21 it continued to snow since the last night and frequent snow shower buried more than half of the tent. As there was no sign of ceasing of snowfall and visibility was even worse, we took one day rest. Effect of high altitude sickness appeared to Nakajima causing less appetite due to bivouacs exceeding a limit of his acclimatization.



Near C3

On August 22 we already passed through a critical part of rocks and were reaching a height close to the summit. Being encouraged by the good progress we got up early but it was still snowing. We left the tent at 6 am as visibility became good. Snowfalls till yesterday forced us do deep snowplowing at start. Style of snowplowing was the same as in the winter of Japanese mountains. The difference is the altitude. Body didn't work as smoothly as in Japan, whilst time was lapsing. From the camp site we first climbed one pitch steep snow wall, then three pitches of traverse to the ridge, four pitches of snow ridge, which led to the summit ridge. We struggled against deep snow. 11 am already passed. As we could connect satellite phone here, we heard weather forecast of the following day from Japan. Weather forecast told us that tomorrow would be not bad and clear. But we were actually exposed to snowy winds but visibility was not bad. There still remained 400m to the summit. We deposited as much supplies as possibly left and hurriedly headed to the summit with minimum climbing gear, one rope and foods/drink.

Winds were fiercely blowing. We had a glimpse of Rakaposhi through clouds. On the way we were caught by clouds and we carefully advanced confirming direction of descent route. As visibility was bad, disappointing false summits we restlessly ascended ice-snow wall and we found ourselves where there was no further peak to climb. No landscape from the summit was hidden in clouds. There was no time to steep ourselves in the happy feeling of accomplishments. 2:30 pm already passed. We were worried about a descent route in whiteout. Ice stuck to Hiraide's beard like Santa Claus. Soon after having telephoned to headquarter during our absence, we started descent. Tracing footsteps already faded out. Using compass we managed to return to the deposit point before dark. If visibility had been good, we would have gone down further. Due to snow storm we bivouacked digging snow slope. The tent was showered all night as ever. .

On August 23 Snow storm unchanged even in the morning. Situation became serious. Concern was not to look back to recollect delightful success but how to make a narrow escape for safe descent. We chose a route of the first ascent of Shispare with less danger of avalanches and seracs, but it was not a easy route. Snow plateau of the east ridge was so wide that if there was no visibility, no descending route could be found. We prayed for recovery of weather in the tent. At 6:3 am, though winds were strong, we departed taking a chance of a few moments when visibility a bit recovered. We descended to the sub-east ridge that was recognized in a moment through clouds. But we were stopped by vertical wall of seracs. We had reconnoitered the lower part of the first ascent route, the middle and upper parts were unknown. We thought the route would be easy, just to descend up-down of the snow ridge. But the route was rather difficult. We detoured large seracs and lapped down tongue of seracs. The past record was useless. On the way down there were three peaks not easy to climb, but visibility became good and winds dropped. We concentrated to descend as much as possible. When we came down to a point we reached at reconnaissance, we felt the safe return was ensured and set up the tent with no fear. We safely returned to a place not bothered by snow shower after six days after departure from the BC. A tent was set up on a safe and flat place.

On the last day as our body might felt that we had returned to a safety zone, we walked with heavy steps. We traversed glaciers several times with some difficulty and returned to the base camp going this way and that. We felt more emotion, something hot welled up in our mind for safe return when came back to BC than when stood atop the summit of Shispare.



Picture taken just beneath the summit of Shispare since weather was worst and climbing route was treacherous. (Left) Kazuya Hiraide (Right) Kenro Nakajima



After summiting – (Left) Kazuya Hiraide (Right) Kenro Nakamima