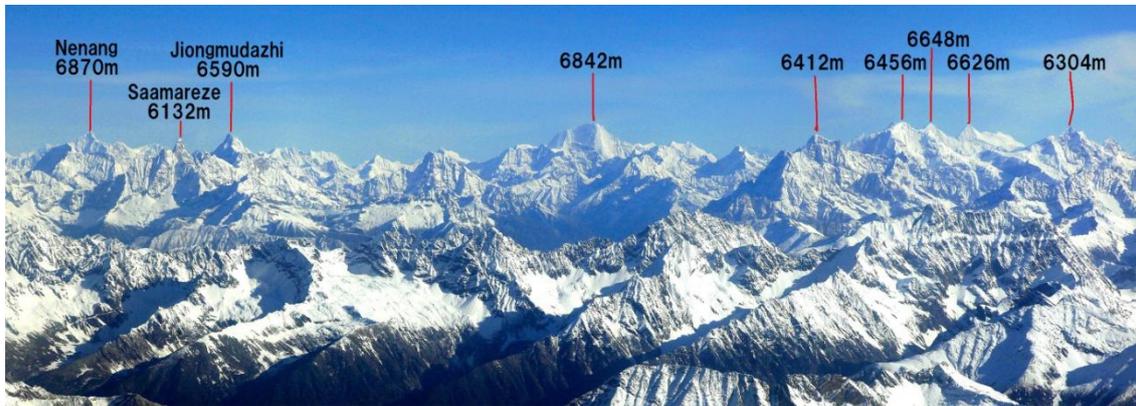


ASIAN ALPINE E-NEWS

Issue No.12, September 2017



Unclimbed Nyaiqentanglha East, Last Frontier in Eastern Tibet

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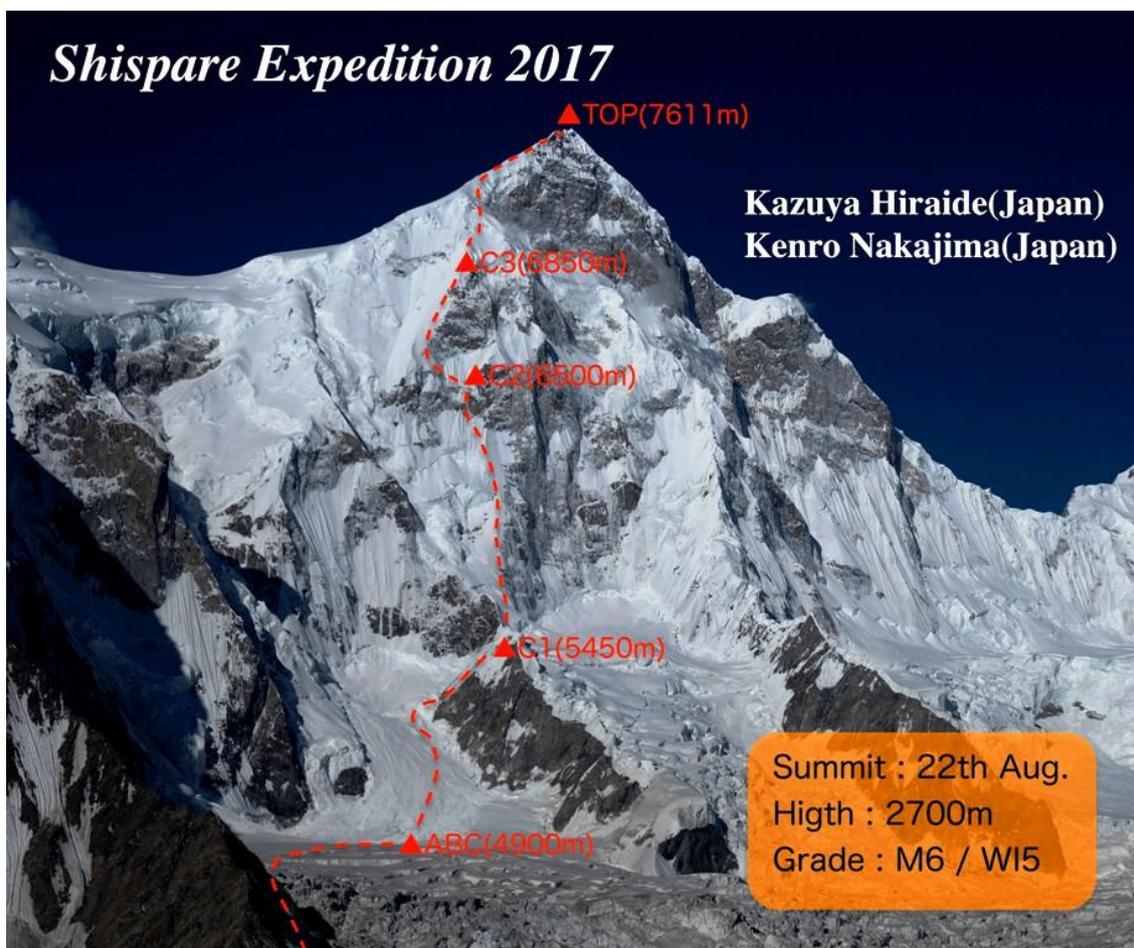
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KAZUYA HIRAIDE & KENRO NAKAJIMA
First Ascent of Shispare 7611m Northeast Face, Karakoram
Most Outstanding Climb of the Year 2017
(Translated, edited and supplemented by Tom Nakamura)



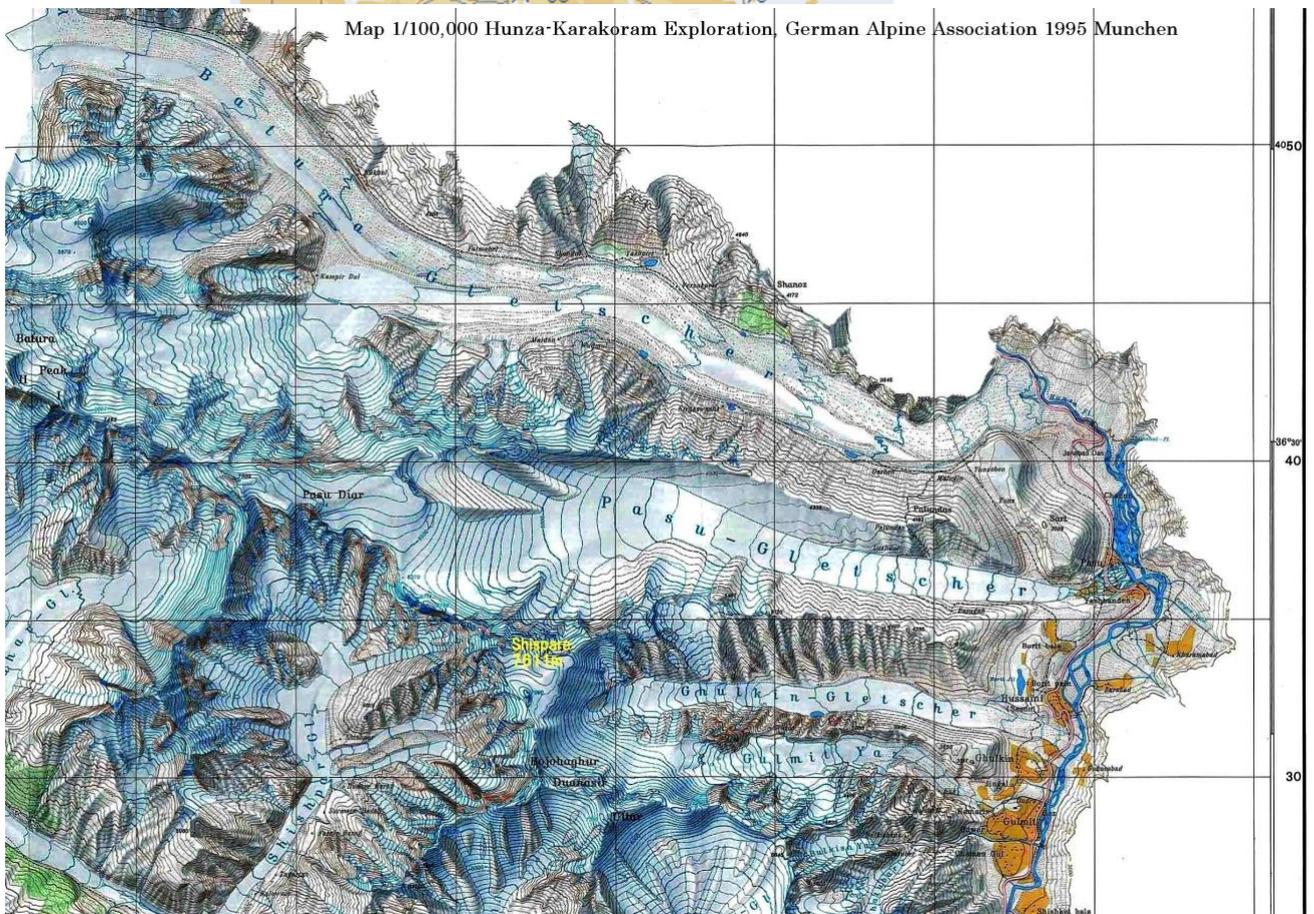
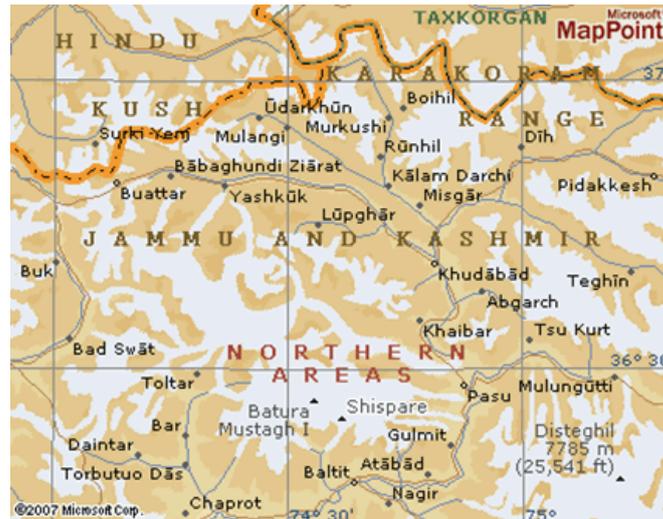
“Dear Kazuya and Kenro,

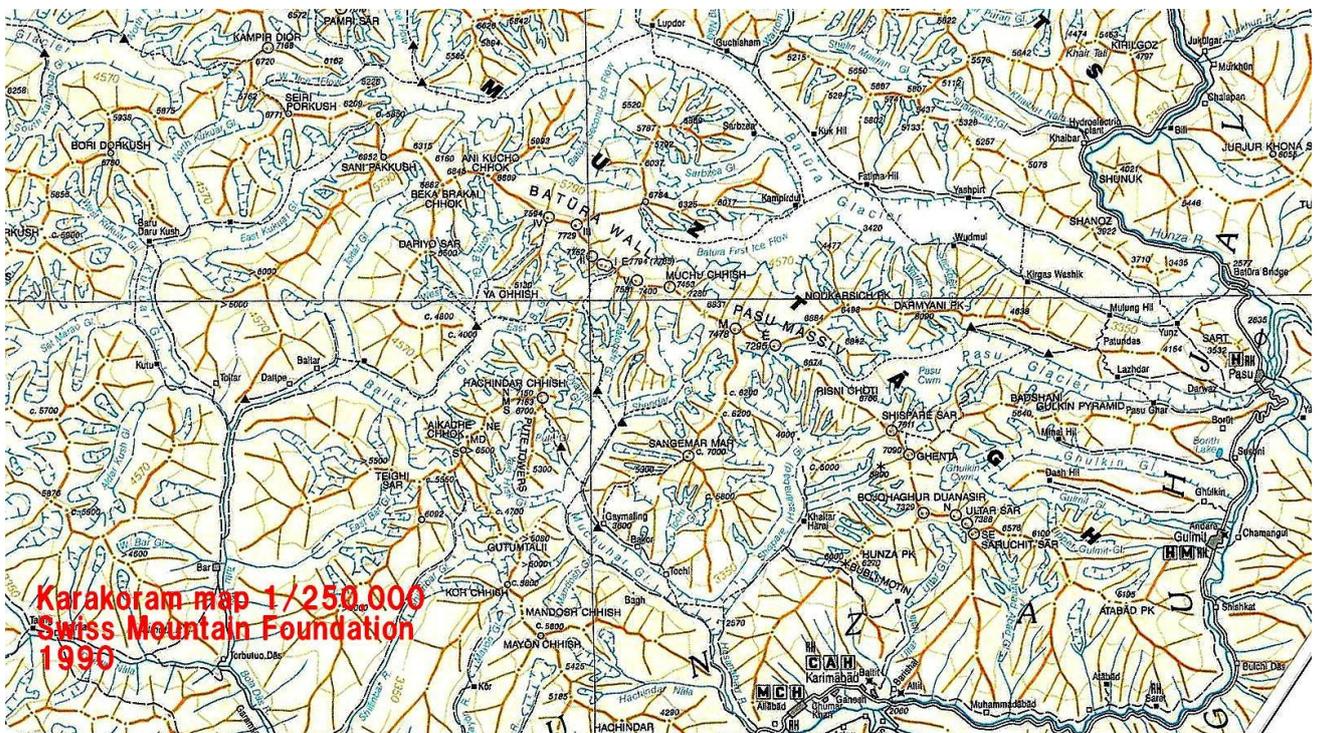
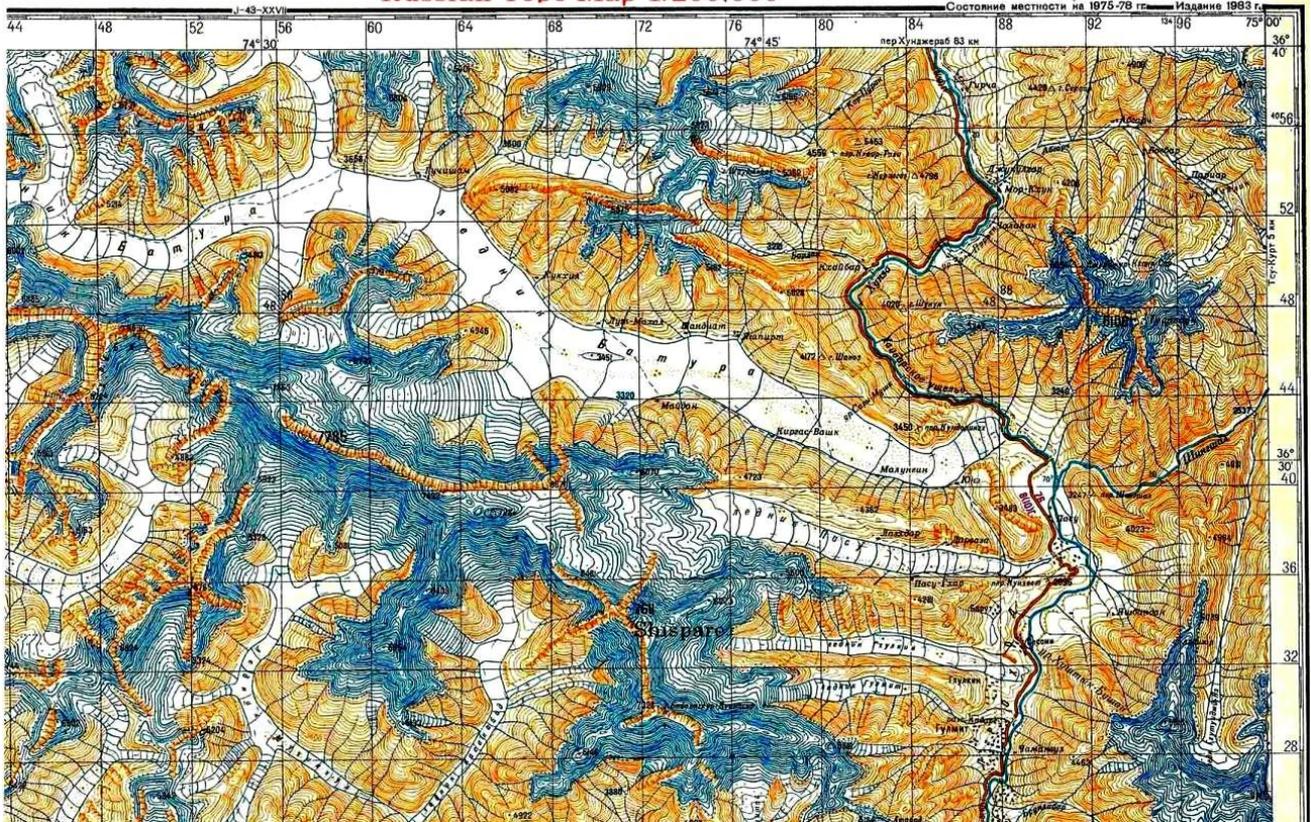
I am the editor of the American Alpine Journal (AAJ), and I am writing today to offer our congratulations for your beautiful ascent of the northeast face of Shispare. As you know, this is a face that many people have dreamed of ascending, and it was wonderful to see that you climbed it in such fine style.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





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, (Piolets 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

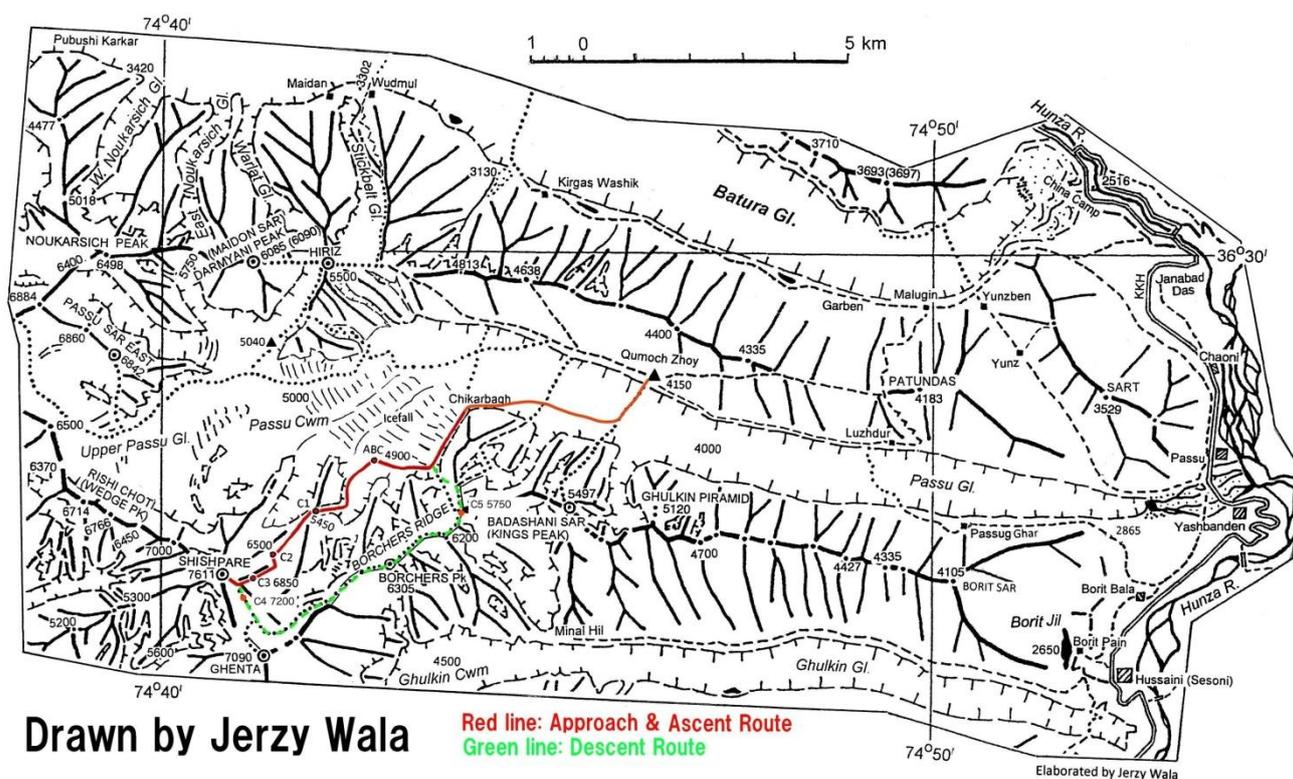
August 22: C3 – Summit (7611m) – C4 (7200m)

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.

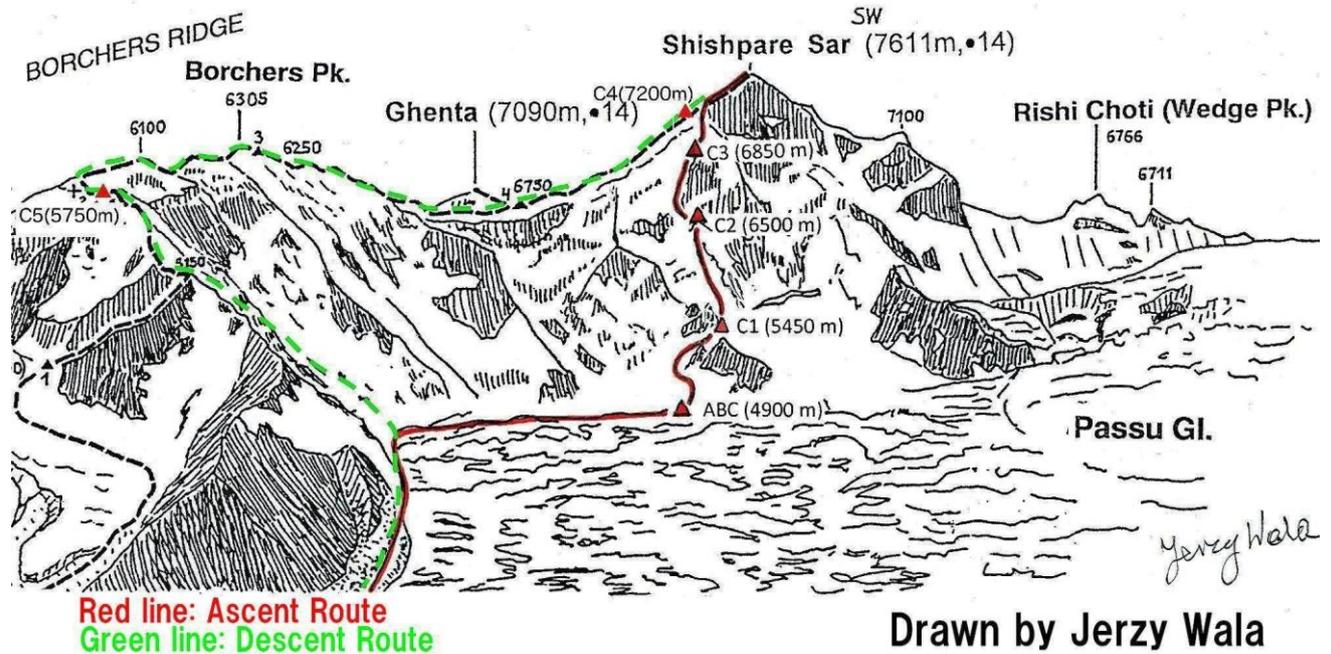
Acclimatization and Reconnaissance of Descent Route

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

West face of Arjuna, Kishtwar Himalaya, India

June 2017

Aleš Česen, Marko Prezelj and Urban Novak, Slovenia

The report was written by Urban Novak

Visiting the Kijaj Nullah valley was on our bucketlist since 2015, when we were climbing above Chomochior glacier. At the end of our expedition we were planning to have a look at the Kijaj Nullah valley, since there was so little information – who knows what kind of interesting climbing objectives could be lying in the untraveled corners? Climbing on Cerro Kishtwar kept us busy for longer than we thought, so we postponed our visit to the next fall. I planned a climbing trip to Kijaj Nullah Valley with Hayden Kennedy and Marko Prezelj for 2016. A week before our departure we were shocked by the news about the accident of our dear friend Kyle Dempster and his climbing partner Scott Adamson. We cancelled the climbing part of expedition, but instead myself and Marko went to India to check out few potentially interesting climbing objectives. We visited Kijaj Nullah valley and were most impressed by the magnificent West Face of Arjuna (6250 m). This valley has had a few alpine visits, especially in the end of the 70's and the beginning of the 80's.

The first ascent of P6013, which lies on the west bank of Kijaj Nullah, was made by Polish climbers in 1979, (Krzysztof Łoziński, Stanisław Gorgon, Jan Marczak, Józef Makinia and Stanisław Pelczarski). That same year there was an attempt to climb Arjuna by Polish climbers, Jacek Szczepański and Jan Oficjalski. When not returning after four days, Jan's wife Barbara, who was with them in base camp, started the search. After eight days of searching for any sign of them she decided to descend, which was also a story for itself. Polish climbers returned to the area in 1981, when they were successful at climbing on the South summit of Arjuna (Wacław Otręba, Janusz Bartos and Piotr Puzyrewski). They climbed the East ridge.

In 1983, Tomasz Bender and Przemysław Piasecki climbed the West Face on the South summit of Arjuna in alpine style. That same year, Mirosław Dąsal,

Jerzy Barszczewski and Zbigniew Skierski climbed the West Face of Arjuna to the main summit. They fixed the ropes in the lower 500 meters of the climb.

In 1994 the valley also got a visit from the German climbers with an objective to climb on Arjuna. American climbers Chriss Gibisch and Jeff Shapiro came to the valley with the same goal in 2016. Because of unfavorable conditions on the West Face of Arjuna, they redirected their attention to the South Face of Brammah II, where they climbed a new route and completed the third ascent of the summit.

In the past few years we were visiting the Kishtwar Himalaya in the fall. This year we decided to visit it in spring, mainly because we were expecting much better conditions for mixed-climbing. On May 29th, we put up our base camp on the West side of the glacier (4008 m). The first impression showed that surrounding peaks were covered with much more snow than they were last fall. For acclimatization objective, we decided to try P6013, which lies on the West side of the valley and offers a nice view on the West Face of Arjuna.

P6013 (6038 m); North Ridge, D (2.6.2017 – 4.6.2017), new route, 2nd ascent of the summit

A snow and ice climb – the ascent was via the glacier to the west of our base camp. We set up our first bivy on the glacier around 5000 meters and the second one at the end of the glacier around 5500 meters. From the second bivy we ascended a side peak of P6013, around 5700 meters – from where we could see the possible route to the summit of P6013. The next morning, we climbed to the plateau on the west side of P6013, at which point we traversed under the NW face towards the North ridge. In quite variable snow conditions on the North ridge we reached the summit of P6013 on June 4th. GPS device measured 6038 meters.

There was nice weather on the summit of P6013, so we could see our main objective from there – the West Face of Arjuna. We saw a line that was really standing out which started in a gully to the right of the main summit. We all agreed that this line deserved our full attention. Motivated and full of expectation for the days to come, we descended to base camp on the same day.

In variable weather on June 10th, we carried part of our gear and food to the glacier under the West face of Arjuna where we were planning to set up our advanced base camp. We returned to BC on the same day in a heavy snow-storm. On June 15th, we came back to ABC. The weather was nice, so we put up a tent and later in the day broke a trail to the base of our planned route. It started snowing again that evening. The next day we were planning to leave at 2am, but had to postpone the departure until 5am, when the fog cleared and the northern winds calmed down.

Arjuna (6250 m); All or nothing, ED+ (M7+, Wi5+, A0), 1400 m (16.6.2017 – 18.6.2017), new route, 2nd ascent of the summit, 1st in alpine style

Mixed climbing and steep ice – we found good snow and ice conditions in the lower part so we climbed most of this section un-roped. On the first day we did another 6 pitches of mixed terrain where we had problems with some occasional avalanches of wet snow. We set up our first bivy site under what we believed would be the crux part of the route. The next morning it took us an entire eight hours to do three hard mixed pitches. We climbed one more steep ice pitch, followed by seven other snow pitches. The second bivy was set up late in the night about three pitches under the summit ridge. We reached the main summit of Arjuna the next day around noon (GPS device measured 6250 m) and rappelled via the route of our ascent the same day. Beside the lower part of the face, where rappelling looked more like a canyoning, rappelling went fine and we reached the ABC around midnight that day.

On June 19th around noon we packed up our ABC and returned to base camp with heavy backpacks. Half an hour after our departure from ABC it started to rain and it didn't stop for the next three days. On June 24th we were leaving our base camp in Kijaj Nullah valley with huge smiles on our faces; rarely do you get all the dots to connect – conditions, weather and personal feelings that fit in so precisely as they did for us this year. Truth to be told, this year we could easily leave this valley without climbing or even trying our main objective and we could walk out with our “heads held high”.

The Kishtwar region offers some interesting climbing objectives. The Kijaj Nullah valley is not an exception. This whole area has exceptional playground for the modern style of climbing as well as in rock as in mixed and snovy-icy terrain. Therefore, we believe the area may get a lot more visits from the climbers in the future. We could also say that this valley characterizes as an upgrade of a very popular Pakistani Charakusa valley (in the sense of terrain complexity).

(Marko): "This year's expedition to the valley beneath Arjuna was very intensive from the adventurous point of view. Urban and I knew the ascent to base camp and the area itself, which represented some kind of relief and pressure at the same time. We knew there is no consolation objective on the West face of Arjuna. It's steep and high face is showing one characteristic mixed line from the base to the whole top. The biggest difference between my two other expeditions to this area was, that we came to base camp with really defined expectations, which were not in favor to our wanted casualness. We were forced to wait for the climbing appropriate time until the very last hour, because of the poor weather conditions. In thirty years of my expeditions I have never witnessed such an accurate utilization of time. All the years of experience may have contributed to our success, but right these experiences show me, that we won a jackpot in a fairly uncertain game."

(Aleš): "Only when we were walking back from base camp among blooming flowers and herbs in perfect sunny weather, we slowly started to realize just how lucky and rewarded we were for our persistence. There were only six days of precipitation free weather during our stay in and above base camp. First two of those days we spent climbing on P6013, where we acclimatized really well for our further climbing goals. In the next three days of precipitation free weather window we managed to climb a hard new route on the West face of Arjuna. An additional precipitation free day was a day before our return to the valley. We were able to dry out all of our soaking wet gear and clothes before packing it for departure. They say that luck favors the brave. I don't know how brave we were, but I can definitely say that we had luck, lots of it."

Some photo material can be found:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ykkm5b3w6ftv2ad/AAB61C-nX7OzdzB-CoTJqbGma?dl=0>

Picture name	Description	Author
0_MarkoPrezeljDSCF1965c	Base camp.	Marko
1_AlesCesenIMG_3862c	West face of Arjuna in the evening sun.	Aleš
2_MarkoPrezeljDSCF1427c	Acclimatization climb on P6013's side peak. P6013 in the background.	Marko
3_AlesCesenIMG_4056c	Acclimatization climb on P6013's side peak (around 5700 m).	Aleš
4_AlesCesenIMG_4095c	Acclimatization climb on P6013 (6038 m).	Aleš
5_AlesCesenIMG_4421c	First day of climbing on the West face of Arjuna.	Aleš
6_UrbanNovakDSCF3854c	First day of climbing on the West face of Arjuna.	Urban
7_UrbanNovakDSCF3909c	First day of climbing on the West face of Arjuna. Beginning of greater technical difficulties.	Urban
8_UrbanNovakDSCF3930c	First day of climbing on the West face of Arjuna.	Urban
9_MarkoPrezeljP2130181c	First day of climbing on the West face of Arjuna.	Marko
10_AlesCesenIMG_4524c	Last rope-length of the first day.	Aleš
11_MarkoPrezeljP2130214c	Second day of climbing on the West face of Arjuna.	Marko
12_UrbanNovakDSCF3953c	Second day of climbing on the West face of Arjuna.	Urban

13_MarkoPrezeljP2130218c	Second day of climbing on the West face of Arjuna.	Marko
14_UrbanNovakDSCF3963c	Second day of climbing on the West face of Arjuna.	Urban
15_MarkoPrezeljP2130236c	Second day of climbing on the West face of Arjuna.	Marko
16_MarkoPrezeljP2130247c	Second day of climbing on the West face of Arjuna.	Marko
17_MarkoPrezeljP2130257c	Second bivy.	Marko
18_MarkoPrezeljDSCF1187c	Team (from left: Marko, Urban and Aleš)	Marko
19_Arjuna_Marko	All or nothing, West face of Arjuna	Marko
20_Bobang_Marko	Acclimatization climb on P6013.	Marko

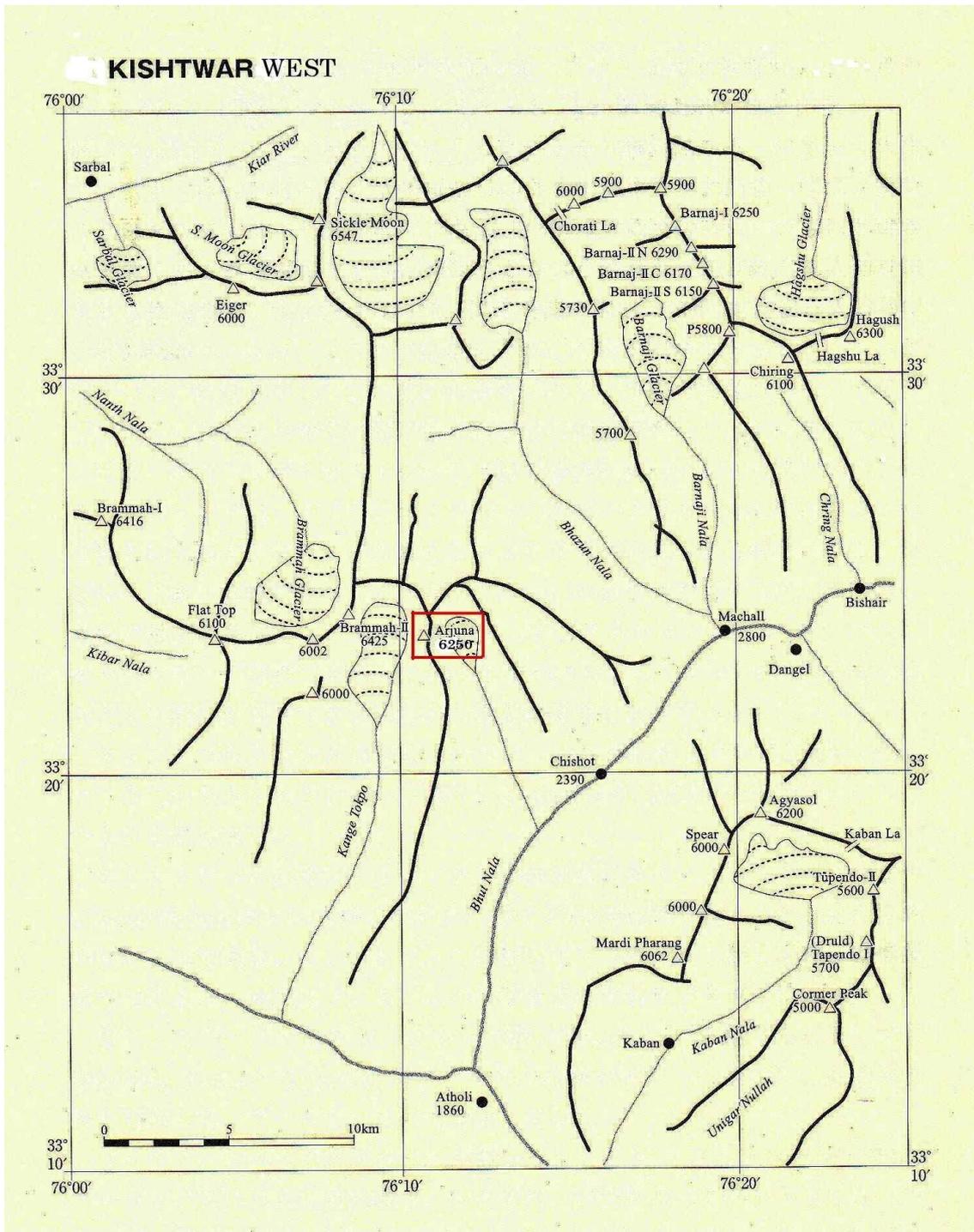
For additional information you can contact:

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Urban Novak (unovak@gmail.com)

Marko Prezelj (mark@markoprezelj.com)

Map and Pictures
West face of Arjuna, Kishtwar Himalaya, India – June 2017
Ales Cesen, Marko Prezelj and Urban Novak, Slovenia





Base camp Photo: Marko Prezelj



West face of Arjuna in the evening sun Photo: Ales Cesen



Acclimatization climb. P6013 in the background Photo: Marko Prezelj



Acclimatization climb on P6013's side peak (ca. 5700m) Photo: Ales Cesen



Acclimatization climb on P6013 (6038m) Photo: Ales Cesen



First day of climbing on the west face of Arjuna Photo: Ales Cesen



First day of climbing on the west face of Arjuna Photo: Urban Novak



First day of climbing on the west face of Arjuna. Beginning of greater technical difficulties Photo: Urban Novak



First day of climbing on the west face of Arjuna Photo: Urban Novak



**First day climbing on the west face
Photo: Marko Prezelj**



**Team (from left-Marko, Urban and
Ales) Photo: Marko Prezelj**



Last rope-length of the first day Photo: Ales Cesen



Second day of climbing on the west face of Arjuna Photo: Marko Prezelj



Second day of climbing on the west face of Arjuna Photo: Urban Novak



Second day of climbing on the west face of Arjuna Photo: Marko Prezelji



Second day of climbing on the west face of Arjuna Photo: Marko Prezelji



Second day of climbing on the west face of Arjuna Photo: Marko Prezelji



Second bivvy Photo: Marko Prezelj



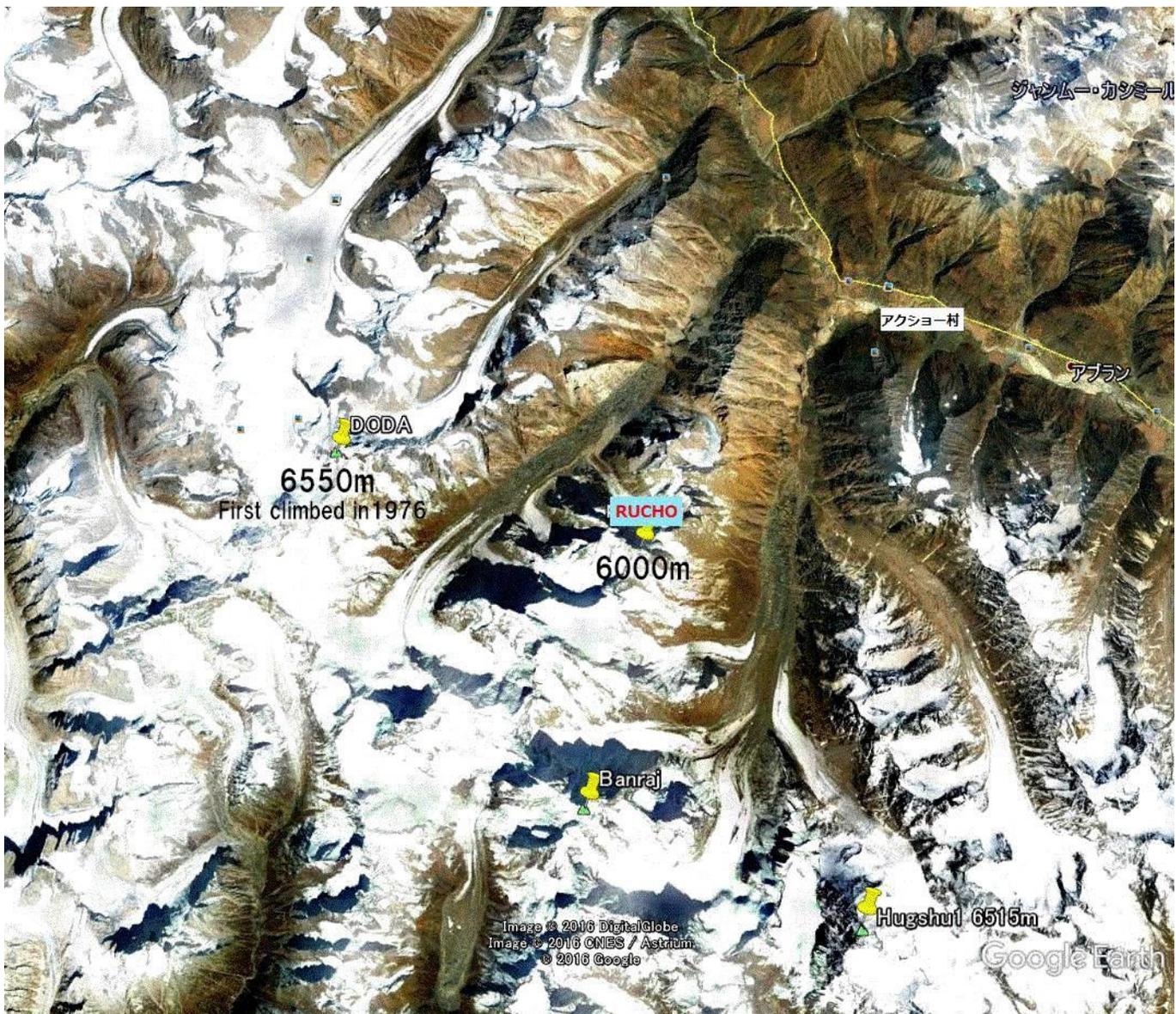
West face of Arjuna – climbing line shown Photo: Marko Prezelj

Team Members: Mr. Yasushi Yamanoi (Expedition Leader), Mr. Takaaki Furuhata

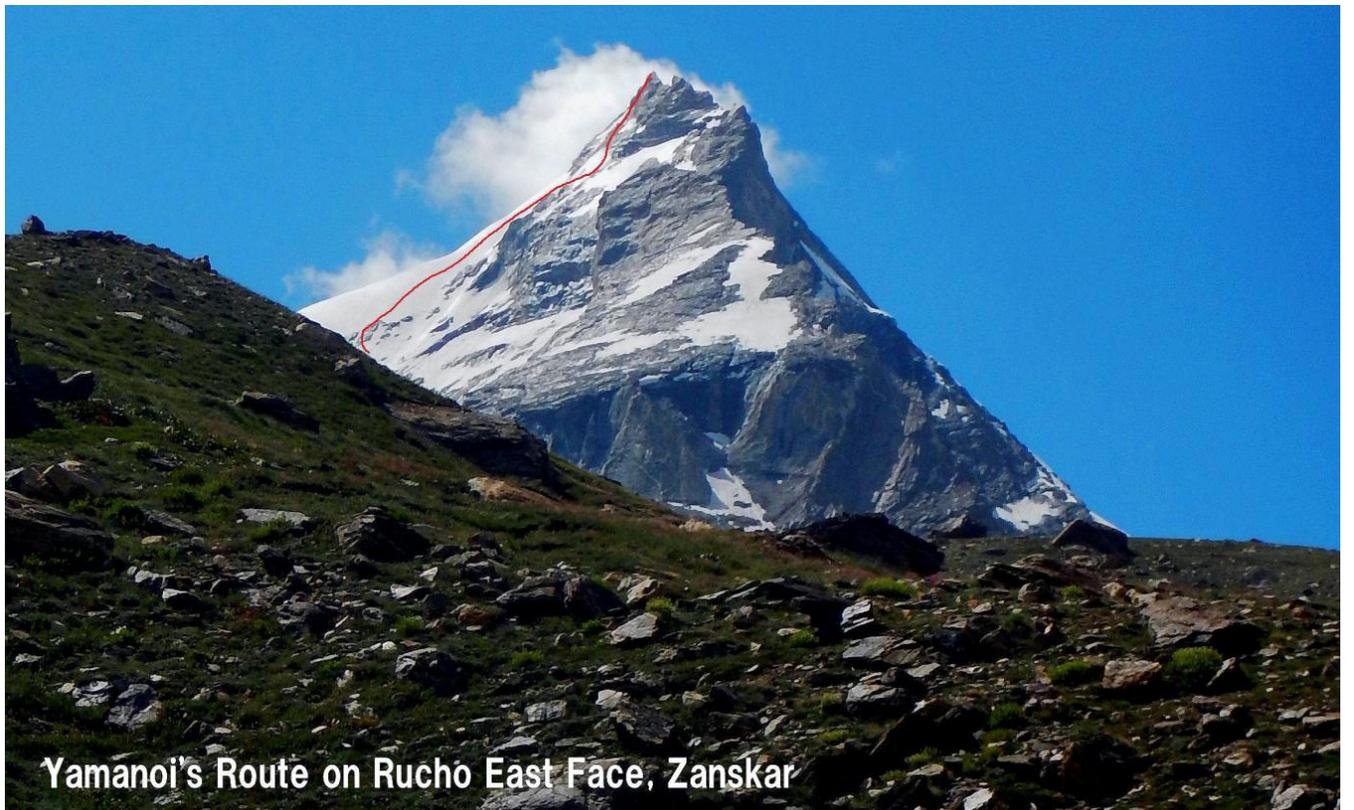
Mr. Sartaj S. Ghuman (L.O.)

Travel Agency: Ibex Expeditions, New Delhi

Yamanoi chose “Rucho” among the 104 open peaks as it looked fantastic and enchanting.



Yamanoi’s altimeter showed 5970m on the top of “Rucho”.



We flew in to Leh on the 19th of July and on the very next day left for Kargil. The drive took us a little more than 5 hours as the road is quite good. It was apricot season and we made the most of it. On the day after that, 21st, we drove to Rangdum (sometimes Ringdam) and camped just outside the village. This drive through Suru valley is again about 5 hours long but that's because the road past Sankoo is not so good; the views, however, are spectacular and more than make up for the bumpy ride.

From Rangdum on the road is really quite bad, sometime little more than a rough, rocky, dirt-track. You climb up to Pensi La and cross over into the Zanskar valley proper. The 60 odd kilometres to Akshow village the next day took us about 3 hours and we camped that night in the village.

The next day, 23rd July, we started out with 10 ponies and walked into the Akshow valley, towards Hagshu la. This pass goes over the Hagshu glacier, (next to Hagshu peak) and leads into Doda district, from where we saw atleast two parties of locals coming and going over the next two weeks. We walked for about 3 hours, using some google earth printouts as maps, until we spotted our peak on the right. We set up our Base Camp at the base of a grassy slope just above the lateral moraine on the west side of Hagshu glacier, at a height of 4150m.

The BC was manned by Devendra, the cook and Dorje, his helper, both affiliated to IbeX expeditions and both exceptional gentlemen who managed all the work that they had been given the responsibility of perfectly. Infact, all the arrangements made by the travel agency were efficient, and the BC was actually luxurious beyond our wildest imaginations.

The peak itself looked nothing like the google earth image of it. It appeared much steeper and more jagged in person. The next day we went for a recce up the slope to get a closer look at the mountain. The images from google earth suggested that the best route to approach the peak was from the souteast, where a moraine spur led right unto the glacier. We went up to an altitude of 4750m that day, taking it easy.

Then after a day of rest, on the 26th of July, we went back up the slope and established Advance Base Camp on a rocky moraine next to the glacier. The slope that led up from BC to ABC, through it appeared to have a ridge when seen from below, was actually just a steady climb, composed of three steps of about 300m each, with relatively flat places in between. It went from a grassy slope, to mixed terrain and then finally to loose rock and moraine interspersed with patches of snow.

The next day was spent conducting a recce of the south face, especially the east slope of it, which is where the chosen route of ascent lay. And the day after that was dedicated to a thorough reconnaissance of the descent route that lay further to the left, along the south ridge. That day Yamanoi and FuruHata went onto the south ridge, at an elevation of 5500m, and then, having safely stowed away their equipment and some food at the site of

the ABC, descended all the way to BC. The days until then had been clear, the afternoons actually hot, but that evening it became overcast and it rained in the night, showing us that we couldn't take the weather for granted. But then the day dawned clear again and the sky was a brilliant blue.

After two days of good rest and recuperation, they were ready for the summit bid and on the 31st of July we hiked back up to ABC under a partly cloudy sky. They were palpably nervous as they checked their equipment one final time and then after an early dinner, settled down to rest as best as they could. The L.O. only went as far as the ABC, and Yamanoi and Furuhashi went on ahead for the summit bid.

The attack started at 1:30 am in the night. They first cut across the undulating mass of the glacier in about 45 minutes to reach the base of the mountain where the climbing proper began. The climb consisted mostly of hard snow with some patches of ice, the slope going to a maximum of 70°. It was a clear cold night and their progress was swift. By the time the sky was beginning to lighten up, at 5:30 am, they had already reached the ridge and decided to stop here for a short breather and a quick snack. This ridge had been their goal for the day in the worst-case scenario. They had pinned their hopes on getting this far that day at all costs, but now they found themselves here at dawn and the whole long day before them!

From here a traverse to the right on an exposed, 70° snow slope brought them to a treacherous bottleneck where the snow was dangerously thin and embedded with rocks that kept coming loose and shooting down every now and then. From the bottleneck there were 6 pitches of snow climbing until the final stretch of 20m of loose exposed rock that led to the summit. Some careful technical climbing under a flawless azure sky followed and then they were on the precarious table-sized slab of the summit! It was 9:11 am, seven and a half hours since they'd left ABC. They were elated, but the exultations would have to wait. Before them lay an extremely dangerous descent and they were more than aware of it.

The first clouds of the morning were beginning to float past the summit as they began their descent. Six carefully considered pitches on their 60m rope brought them back down to the bottleneck. Cautiously negotiating this obstacle they traversed back to the ridge and had gained it by 12:30 pm. The descent route led along the ridge for a while and then down an easier slope to the left of the ascent route. Once back on the ridge, they rested again and had another quick snack, debating whether to push on down or spend the night there. They had with them a tent and enough food to last them three days, and they were tired, having climbed for 11 straight hours until then. But they had time on their side and they decided to push on, choosing the safety of the ABC over spending the night on the ridge.

The snow was soft by this time of the day and kept sticking to their shoes and their crampons, making the descent slow and tiring. They frequently checked for landmarks to

make sure they were on the correct route and were eventually relieved of the monotony of trudging in the snow as they reached a rocky scree slope. Lower down, this bare slope led onto the final snow band and a relatively easy traverse to the right brought them back onto the glacier. At 4:30 pm, exactly 15 hours after they had left, the exhausted but triumphant summiteers arrived back in camp, safe and sound! Now the emotions came flooding in, now they could finally let themselves exult in the success of their feat.

As we fussed over another early dinner, we could see rain clouds building up and approaching from the east and indeed it rained in the night. The decision to descend to base camp thus proved to be a wise one and it was a good that they was back at ABC and sleeping soundly in their tents after a good dinner.

The next day, 2nd August, dawned clear and we slowly headed back to BC after breakfast, tired but happy.

23rd July Setup Base Camp (4150m)

24th July Recce; went up to 4750m

25th July Rest 26th July Setup ABC (5050m)

27th July Recce;checked east slope

28th July Recce; checked descent route, went up to 5500m on south ridge. Descended to BC

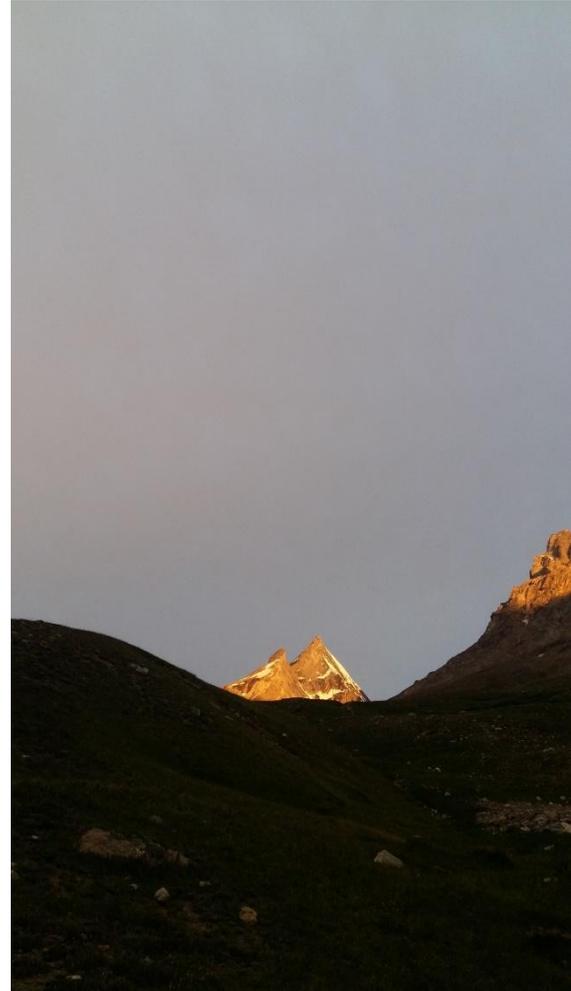
29th July Rest 30th July Rest 31st July Hiked back up to ABC

1 st Aug	1:30 am	Started from ABC	5:30 am	Reached the ridge
	9:11 am	Summit	12:30 pm	Back to ridge
	4:30 pm	Back at ABC		

2nd Aug Back to BC

In conclusion, the peak was named by Yamano as an expedition leader, as follow.

“In view of the fact that this was the first successful ascent of this yet unnamed peak, we would like to suggest a name for it. After much thought and prolonged discussion, we have decided upon the name, **Rucho**, which in the local dialect and also in Ladakhi means horns, which is what the peak reminded us of. It would be most kind if you would consider the suggestion and make the name official.”



Top left: Walking into Akshow Valley

Bottom left: Setting up Base Camp (4100m)

Right: Ruch, lit up at dawn



Left: Looking for possible routes. **Top center:** Hiking up to ABC

Right: Setting up ABC **Bottom center:** One of the climbers on the way back from the summit





The mountain as seen from the South East with the approximate route of ascent (yellow) and descent (red)



Near 5800m



Just below the summit



On the summit

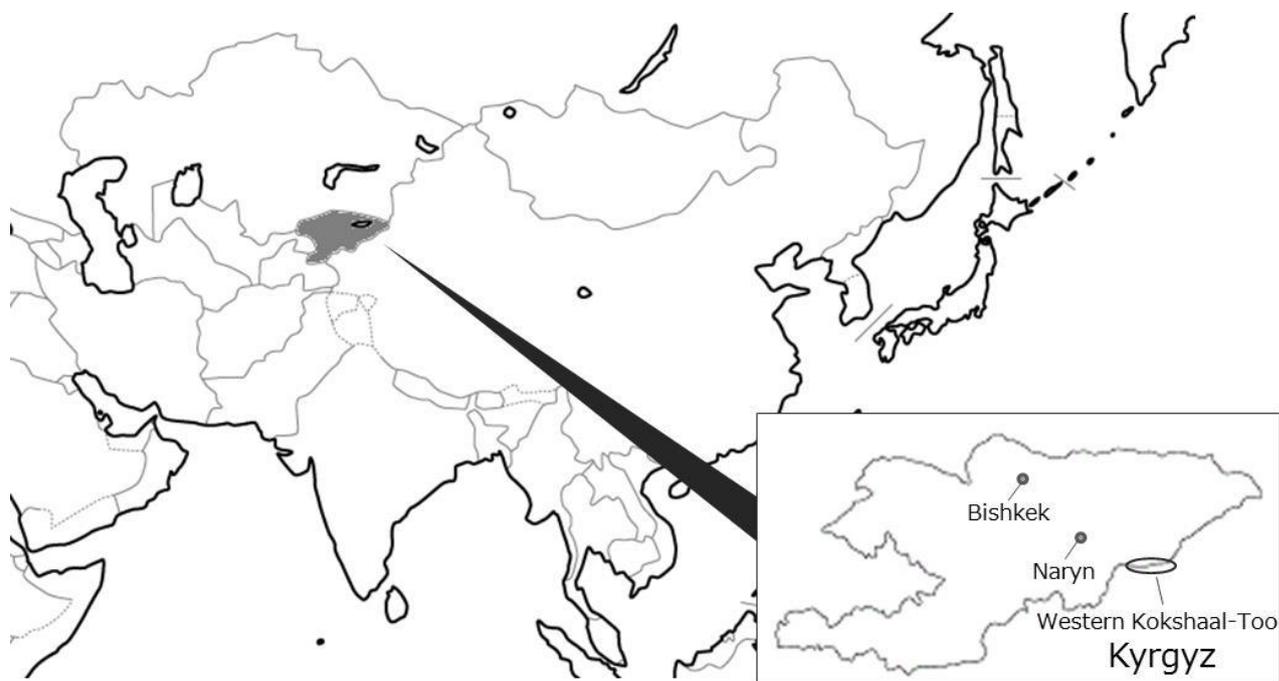
SHU HASHIMOTO & SHO OKUDA
Western Kokshaal-Too 2016 Expedition
Tomon Alpine Club – Waseda University

Summary

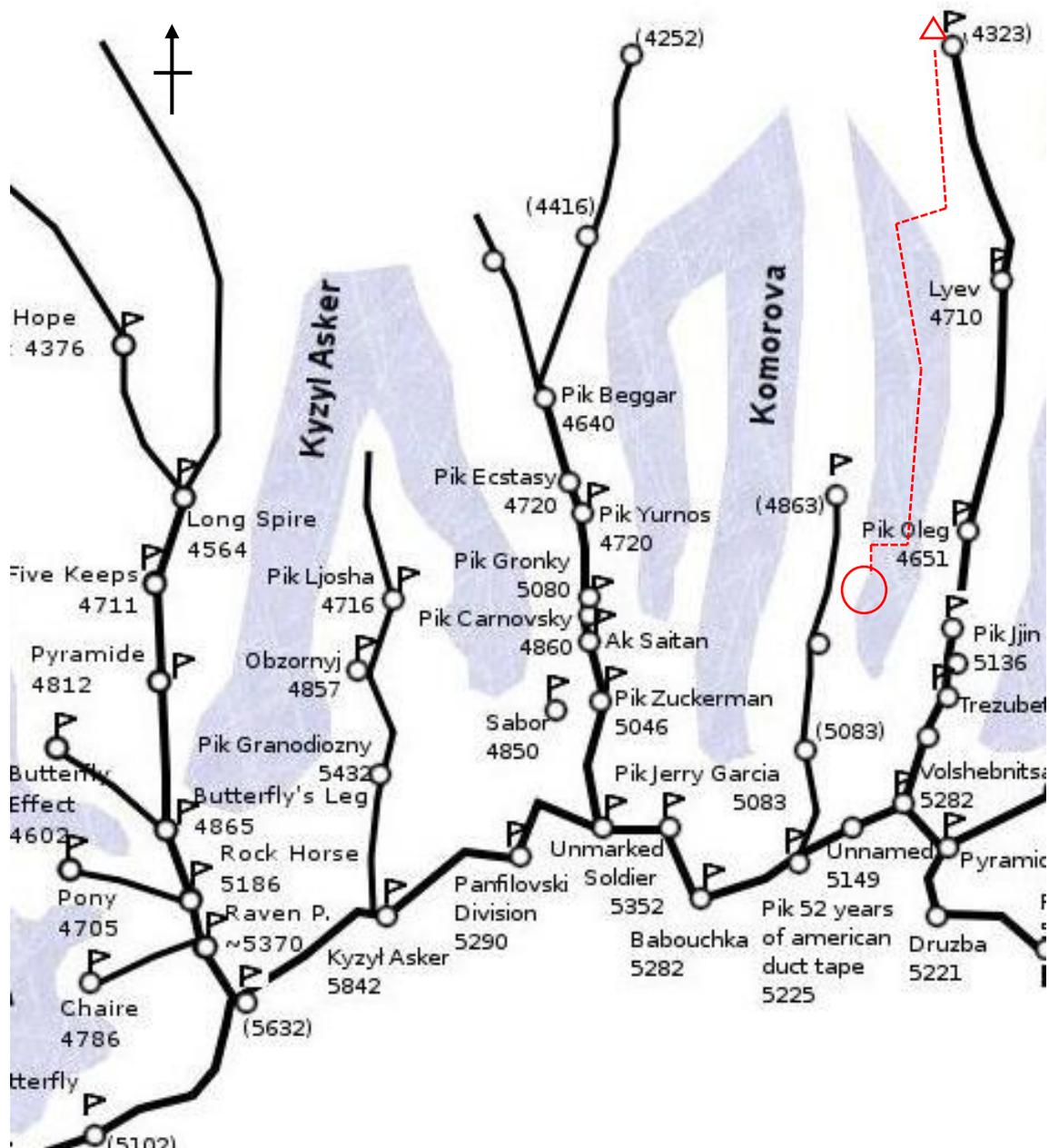
In the summer of 2016, Shu Hashimoto and Sho Okuda tried to ascend an unnamed peak in the Western Kokshaal-Too range that spreads along the border of Kyrgyzstan and China. While we were, unfortunately, not able to reach the summit, we recognized from this expedition that it is possible to attempt the 5,000m-high unclimbed peaks around the area even if you only have a limited period of time, such as ten days. This report briefly introduces our expedition.

1. Introduction

The Western Kokshaal-Too range was closed until the late 1990s as the government regarded the area as a military region. This is the main reason why there are still so many unclimbed peaks remaining in the area. In 1997, some American and German climbers succeeded in the first ascents of major peaks in the area. Today, virgin routes of the major peaks are now open to climbers. In this expedition, we aimed at making the first ascent of one or more of the unexplored peaks. The details of our expedition are as follows.



Location of Western Kokshaal-Too Range



Location of unnamed peak attempted. Red line shows the route.

2. Expedition data

Members

- Shu Hashimoto (27), male: Expedition Leader
- Sho Okuda (27), male

Itinerary

7th August 2016 - Moved to Naryn from Bishkek by car

8th Aug - Moved to Western Kokshaal-Too from Naryn by car
9th Aug - Studied a climbing route from the glacier next to the Komorova glacier
10th Aug - Walked to the end of the glacier and set up attack camp
11th Aug - Attempted an unclimbed peak up to 5,000m and returned to the glacier
12th Aug - Returned to base camp
13th Aug - Rested at base camp
14th Aug - Moved to Naryn from Western Kokshaal-Too by car
15th Aug - Moved to Bishkek from Naryn by car

3. Advantages of Climbing in Kyrgyzstan

We observe that the following are especially notable characteristics of the region.

i. Easy approach - Even from Japan, Kyrgyzstan is not so far as one would imagine. The Ala Archa range is a typical example, and it takes only an one hour car ride from the capital city and a three hour hike to its base camp. The other areas also provide for approaches which are far shorter than those in the Himalayas. The short approach means that it allows climbers to enjoy spectacular climbing experiences during a relatively short vacation.

ii. Adventurous Environment - In Kyrgyzstan, there are still many peaks which remain unclimbed. Therefore, for those seeking untouched mountains, Kyrgyzstan is a top candidate to take into consideration.

Moreover, there are many other attractive mountains in Kyrgyzstan, not only are there well-known peaks such as Khan Tengri and Mt. Lenin, but there are also lots of other attractive climbing targets in Kyrgyzstan. Taking the closest base camp at the Ala Archa range for example, you can enjoy multi-pitch mix climbing on 500-800m-height walls through numerous different routes.

Kyrgyzstan still remains as a relatively unbeaten area. Climbing in Kyrgyzstan is quite popular among Russia and European climbers, yet for climbers in other countries like Japan, Kyrgyzstan may not be recognized as a climbing destination. In fact, we did not come across any other climbers in the western Kokshaal-Too range. This makes it more difficult in terms of communication with locals, but this helps to make the journey even more of an experience. English is not widely

understood, and we sometimes had trouble communicating with the drivers as they couldn't speak English.

4. Support

Fortunately, we were able to receive the generous support of Montbell Co., Ltd., which provided us, free of charge, with climbing wear and equipment, including "Dyna Action Parka" four-season foul weather gear, "Balance Light 40" ridge line packs, and "U.L. Thermawrap Parka" thermal jackets.

5. Daily Reports

August 8: at 6:15 pm, our car got caught in the mud; at 7:15 pm, we gave up trying to get it out of the mud

Finally, the Western Kokshaal-Too range came into view. We were excited and thrilled to spy the outstanding Kyzyl Asker. Taking in view along the way, at 6 pm we reached a large boulder embedded with a plaque. This was the junction point for the Komorova Glacier. We had our driver keep driving up to the glacier as scheduled, but soon after our car got stuck in the mud. Though we all struggled for an hour to find a way out of this situation, we found it difficult to deal with. Although we should have gone much further to reach the base camp, there was no choice remaining but to spend the night there. After enjoying a light dinner in the cold weather, we slept in a small tent.

August 9: cloudy, breezy, -6°C; sunrise at 5:00 am; woke up at 6:30 am; left the car at 10:55; left the tent at 3580m at 1:55 pm; reached the end of the glacier at 4:50 pm; reached 4200m on the glacier at 5:40 pm; left the tent at 7:10 pm; returned to the tent at 10:20 pm

We slept in as we were fatigued due to our long journey. Our driver and his wife were still doing their best to get the car out of the mud, but it seemed difficult to move it. Reluctantly, we told the driver to catch up with us later at the base camp, and we packed our tackles and tents to scout the area on foot. One and a half hours later, we reached the furthest point reachable by vehicle. Hoping that our car would reach us later at this point, we set up our tent and went forward to the glacier. We hiked for three more hours and reached the end of the glacier. It was not such a long distance but we felt quite tired walking through the damp ground. After making our way through the damp area, we needed to stay aware to safely walk on the moraine and find a suitable route. Climbing for about 30 or 40 minutes from the end

of the glacier, we reached a stepped plateau at 4200m. The glacier turns right at such point, so we could not see through the approach route connecting to our planned climbing route. At least we were able to grasp the condition of the snow and ice there. There was sediment at the bottom, with hard snow above and wet snow covering the top. There were no crevasses so far. Surprisingly, we found new tracks at the bottom. Judging from the direction, it seemed that they were climbing the mountain which lay to the opposite side of the glacier to ours. It seemed that their group was made up of only one or two climbers but we did not meet anybody during our walk. We decided to go back from the 4200m point. After returning to the end of the glacier, we deposited our tackles. We chose a shorter route so that we could get back early. We reached our tent at 7:00 pm. The car had not yet arrived at the breaking point, and since we had been expecting it to have arrived by the time we returned, we had not brought any food or clothes or the rest of our tackles. Thus, we spent another hour returning to the point where the car had gotten bogged. We returned only to witness that our car was still there. Darkness was beginning to descend as we made another try to get the car clear of the mud, so we quickly removed our belongings from the car and packed them. One and a half hour later we finally got back to the tent.

August 10: rainy, breezy, 5°C; woke up at 8:20 am; started at 12:00 pm; reached the boulder at 1:20 pm; set up attack camp near the boulder at 3:15 pm; slept at 7:00 pm
We woke up late at 8:20 am due to our hard work the night before. It began to rain around 9:00 am and this continued until the evening. We prepared in a careful and unhurried manner and started at noon, heading toward a sandy place close to the end of the glacier, which was this day's destination. Our luggage was quite heavy but there was no need to hurry so we took our time. We arrived at the tent site after three pitches. It was the first day to work as usual since beginning of this expedition and we clearly recognized the importance of keeping to our own rhythm. We went to bed early, after preparing for the next day. Though our preparation was not perfect, given the situation, we managed to complete it and get ready for the following day's push for the summit.

August 11: sunny, occasional blizzard, breezy, -1°C; woke up at 3:00 am; started at 4:25 am; finished crossing the glacier (4250 m) at 6:25 am; reached the beginning of the slope (4450m) at 10:30 am; reached the north ridge col at 2:30 pm; reached just

below the summit at 6:20 pm; returned back to the beginning of the slope at 7.30 pm; reached the bivouac point (4350 m) at 8:30 pm

We started with our headlamps on under a cloudy sky. At the first pitch, we headed for the opposite side of the glacier. Although we walked carefully, with a rope connecting the two of us, we had some slight falls down hidden crevasses. After crossing the glacier, we took a rest. Our pace was not as fast as we had planned due to the thin air, strong sunlight and heavy knee-deep snow. With a four hour walk, we reached the beginning point of the slope leading up to the north ridge col of a peak behind the lower glacier. Initially, we had targeted two peaks to climb this day, but we came to the conclusion that it would be better to focus on one of the two peaks and climb it from this slope. We deposited our items other than climbing gear, drinks and food. There was debris on the lower part of the slope with snow cornices. We climbed the first two thirds of the slope without any major concerns, but we felt threatened by snow cornices on the last third of the slope. It took two and a half hours from the bottom of the slope to the col.

From the col, we started climbing with a rope connecting the two of us. The ridge we were climbing started with the first two pitches of a mild snowy slope, then changed into a steep slope featuring many rocks. While climbing up the third pitch, we were caught in a blizzard and whiteout. Due to the unpredictable weather and the risk of lightning, we decided to go down at the time. Although we wanted to descend as quickly as possible, we had trouble locating suitable points for our protective pins. In the end, we rappelled down carefully due to the unreliable anchoring and managed to reach the col. Then, we climbed further down onto the glacier and moved toward the deposit point. However, while descending the cornice area, the weather started to recover and become clearer again so we changed our minds and decided to attempt our ascent again, with the aim of reaching the summit at our time limit of 5:00 pm. Through continuous climbing and three-pitch snow climbing during scattered snowfall, we managed to reach the end of the summit ridge, which was about 100m below the peak. At this point we found a new sling on the nearby rock, which meant that someone else had probably set it up within the last year. At that moment, we decided to begin our descent as it turned out not to be a virgin peak after all and it seemed that it would take us around an hour to reach the summit due to the severe conditions there. Accordingly, we rappelled down carefully to the col. From the col, we climbed down to the deposit point, including one rappel down. While it should have been a relatively easy hike, we stopped every 20 to 30 steps to recover our breath. At long last, we arrived at the

deposit point and took a rest. Looking back, we only came face to face with one strong snowstorm during the day, and were fortunate enough to have had mainly stable and clear weather. Upon taking a break with a cup of hot tea, we started walking down to our tent. Again, due to our fatigued state, our descent was made in a rather stop-start fashion. In the end, we had to accept making our bivouac at the edge of the glacier after having walked through a number of rough pitches. We felt that such point was relatively safe and that it was better to take a rest there before crossing the crevasse area to get back to our tent. Coincidentally, this was the night of “Mountain Day” in Japan. We enjoyed a freezing cold night in the chilly mountain air.

August 12: sunny, breezy, -10°C; woke up at 5:00 am; started at 6:00 am; back to attack camp at 10:00 am; reached the parking point at 2:50 pm

We made our regular communication with our colleague in Japan at around 5.00 am. Actually, we weren't able to perform this routine work the night before due to our intense fatigue. The sun started rising and we realized that the snow had now hardened, making our walk far easier and smoother than yesterday's approach. We passed the crevasse area while being secured to one another with a rope, and made it safely back to the attack camp. After a long rest, we packed up all our gear and headed back to the truck parking point. When we arrived at the point, we found the truck was waiting for us in a grassy field near the point where it had gotten bogged. The driver and his wife explained that they managed to free the truck the day after it got bogged and decided to wait for us nearby such point, since they foresaw the risk of getting bogged again on the way. We understood their thoughts and proposed setting up a sleeping tent and kitchen tent there and we took a break for the rest of the day. We hungrily swallowed down various kinds of food and had a well-earned nap in the comfortable, newly pitched tent. We then received a weather forecast saying that the next day would be sunny in the morning but unstable in the afternoon, and that it would be sunny in the morning but rainy or snowy with thunderstorms on August 14. We had various options available, such as retrying the peaks we had attempted to climb the day before or going to check and see the north ridge and walls of Kyzyr Asker or the east side area like Dankova. However, taking all the possibilities into consideration, we decided to enjoy bouldering around the area we had stopped on the 13th and then make the return trip to Bishkek on the morning of the 14th. We then enjoyed a relaxing day with plenty of food and a comfortable living environment...



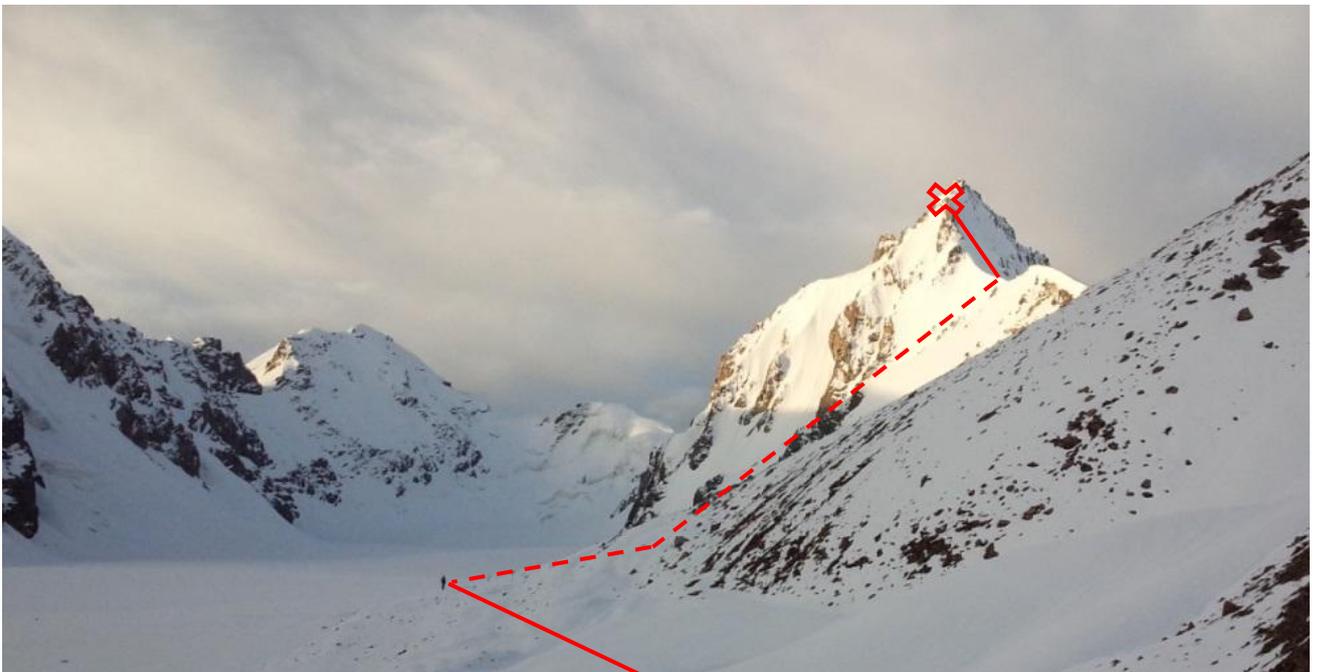
Expedition vehicle



Distant view of Western Kokshaal-Too range



The peak we attempted to ascend.



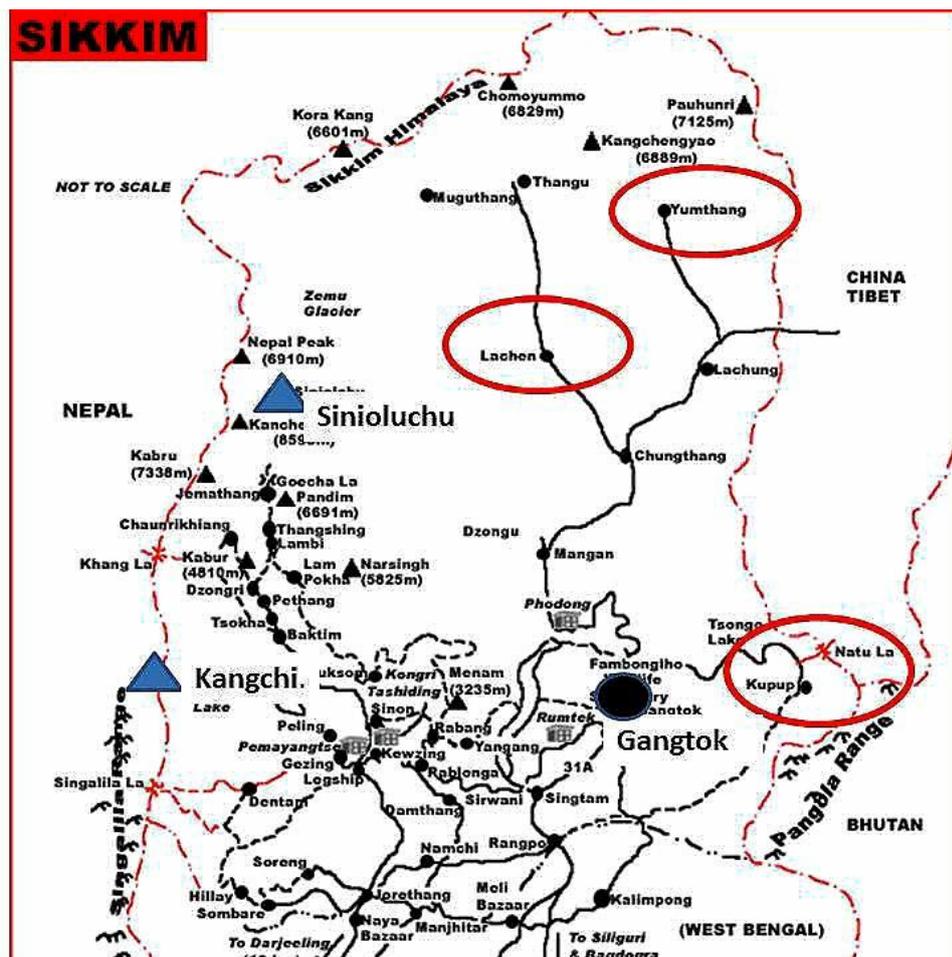
Climbing route: We returned at the point marked with the cross.

MASATO OKI

Recent Information on Mountaineering in the Sikkim Himalaya

Preface

Sikkim, as the 22nd state, joined to India on 16 May, 1975. The capital and principal town of Sikkim, Gangtok, is a plateau city where buildings are crowded now than on old days and the slopes of the heap which did not change since 18th century. Average altitude of Gangtok is approximately 1,676m above sea level. The numbers of hotels have increased, but the hotels from old days are kept in good conditions and even furnitures of the old time are the same. The property built by the Sikkim King in 1932, Elgin Nor-Khill Hotel where the Kanchen Garden which hotel guests always enjoyed just remains. But the vehicles in the city have increased more than Tokyo, and the movement in the town takes time, and getting a parking space is difficult. I visited Sikkim in May 2017. This is a short report of my journey.



Sikkim outline map

Mountaineering, trekking permission

Approximately 20 glaciers, 30 peaks of more than 6,000m and 230 lakes are in or close to the border of Sikkim with Nepal, Tibet, and Bhutan in the west, north and east, and it may be said that it is the mountainous country. Sikkim is classified roughly into four areas, i.e. the north, south, east and west. The venerable temple and village including the Pamayangtse monastery are in south Sikkim, but there are not the notable mountains. Several peaks are located in east, west, and north Sikkim for mountaineering and trekking.

For the entry into Sikkim, IPL (Inner Line Permit) is essential in addition to the tourist visa. IPL of 30 days in Sikkim House easily accept free of charge in New Delhi (New Sikkim House, Panchsheel Marg, Chanakyapuri, New-Delhi). IPL can be extended two times of 15 days after arrival at Gangtok.

Trekkers can be applied through the registered Travel Agency where the special travel permit out of Gangtok is recognized officially by the Sikkim State Government of Gangtok. Trekkers cannot go out from Gangtok only with IPL. It is the condition that the guide of the tourist bureau is accompanied by if there are more than 2 members. Furthermore, RAP (Restricted Area Permit) is necessary for trekking and mountaineering to go to more far areas of out of Gangtok. RAP takes 2-3 months for the acquisition of permit in the jurisdiction of Home Department, Government of Sikkim. An authorization of permit can be received at the mountain climbing section in charge of Sikkim Tourist Information Center in downtown M.G.road of Gangtok.



Gangtok town

It is strongly recommend contacting Sonam Gyatso Mountaineering Institute (SGMI) of Gangtok in Baluwakhni near Himalayan Zoological Park of Padmaja Nandu of Yamate of Gangtok or Sikkim Amateur Mountaineering Association (SAMA) below Zero Point Bank. However, SGMI is in the control of the armed forces and does not allow without an introducer. Military affiliated Mountain climbing instruction positively and the mountain climbing party which SGMI organizes reach the summit of Mount Everest and Pandim (6,698m). It is established in 2009 and offer approximately 160 Basics Mountain Climbing Course, approximately 30 Advance Courses and it is said that approximately 8,000 people were trained. SAMA is a private enterprise mountain climbing group and organizes a joint mountain climbing with the foreigner. But it is a little difficult to contact because of office is not always open

Mountaineering information

The trekking peaks include five open mountains which were opened from 1990. For mountain climbing, permission is required except for trekking peaks. Following is the booking fee charged by Sikkim Government. For foreign expeditions, US\$ 500 is charged for a team of four members and US\$ 700 up to 8 members and US\$ 100 per member for additional members. This rule is subject to change and for more details, please visits the homepage of the Sikkim mountain climbing.

<http://www.trekkinginsikkims.com/expedition-in-sikkim.html>

Of course it is essential to apply The Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) for Sikkim Himalaya climbing permit.

<http://www.indmount.org/>

West Sikkim

West Sikkim where high peaks such as Kanchejunga (Khangchendzonga 8,586m), Siniolchu(6,887m) etc. is the main part of Sikkim Himalayas. However, the mountain climbing permission acquisition for these high peaks is very difficult. It is for the 3 following mountains that a foreigner can relatively easily acquire mountain climbing permission which is open peaks in west Sikkim.

(1) Frey Peak (5,830m)

It is situated in the north of Yuksom (1,700m), the upper Chauriangang River. This

mountain was named after mountaineer George Frey, who climbed the mountain with Tenzing Norgay, but died in a slipping down accident because did not put on crampons. His ice axe and crampons were offered to an accident monument in Lamo Andgen of Lachen Valley.



Road head near Kasang Lake (c.4,200m)

(2) Tingchen Khang (6,010m)

Since opening of 1990, it is a mountain climbed by most of the mountain climbing parties. The parties can enter Yuksom in one day by using the car from Gangtok to Yuksom in a standard schedule of the mountain climbing, and the trekking start from there. Day 1 Yuksom to Tshoka(Choka), Day 2 Tshoka to Dzongri, Day 3 Dzongri to Thangsing, Day 4 Thangsing to ABC, Day 5: ABC to Camp 1, Day 6: Camp1 Rest, Day 7 Camp 1 to Summit, Day 8: ABC to Gocha La back to Thangsing, Day 9: Thangsing to Tshoka. Day 10: Tshoka to Yuksom.

In addition, a peak called Tangchung Khang(5,303m) is a mountain of the similar name in the Thomphyak Stream, which is in the upper reaches of northwest , approximately 20km of Lachen.

(3) Jopuno (5,603m/5,936m /6,010 m)

This is the heap of (2) and (3) in Thangsing valley of Khangchendzonga National Park and is located in the upper Prek River (east side), and there is a lake near by, and the view of the snowy mountains is splendid. The upper Prek River leads to Onglaktang (Onglathan) Glacier. It can also be seen at Pandim (6,691m) during the trek to Gocha La (4,940m) from Onglathang. And on the way to Gocha La, Rathong (6,679m), and Kabru (7,353m), Siniolchu and Khangchendzonga, and Makalu (8,485m) in Nepal can be seen from Onglathang Valley. The trekking to Gocha La. it takes 3-4 days from Thangsing to Gocha La on foot. Approximately 3km west of the Gocha La, Gocha Peak (6,127m) is situated.

North Sikkim

(4) Lama(Lamo) Wangden (5,888/5,868 m)



Lachung and Thangrar Peak(c.5,500m) Yumathang(3,597m)

It is situated in the beautiful valley via a hydroelectric power station and Chungthang with the dam lake from Gangtok to Lachen among a rock and snowy mountains can be

seen into a day trip. Close from the east side can be climbed the mountain from here or come close from west to Kisong La (4,786m). Climbing this peak is easy if the party employ a guide knowing the route well, and it is said that one can reach the summit even in winter.

(5) Burumkhangse (5,635m)



Yumthang(3,597m) and unnamed peaks

Lachung can be reached in one day from Gangtok by car. In Lachung there is a simple hotel. I stayed here for four days, peoples of the village were easy to get close with simplicity, and were able to spend it comfortably. But maintenance of the infrastructure was not enough, and there was often a blackout by night. There is little winter snow and but can be reached by car. From Lachung, we can also reach Yumthang (3,597m) in one day by car and can stay in small hotel by the hot spring. From the ground called Burunmkhangcha, and, from the point called the Burum La, make route through the forest and in the snowy field which seem to climb it. It is said that mountaineers can climb most easily all the five peaks. I took a walk through neighborhood to Yumthang, a grassy open plain, and a yak was put out to pasture and it was a splendid place. But I

was a little out of breath because the altitude is about 3,800m. In addition, the road extends to Yume Samdang (Mome Samdong) (3,810m) to the north from Yumthang, but the foreigner needs permission (RAP) in addition to IPL.

The approximately 5km rhododendron high plateau, which is very large in Shigha where I traveled along Yumathang River from Lachung and was the full bloom of the flower of the rhododendron which has more than 15 kinds in



Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary Gate and one of rhododendron

the beginning of May when I visited there. There is another rhododendron plateau in Varsey, Dzungri in Sikkim, and there is a place where the orchid is also seen. There are many birds and butterflies of high altitude too.

As other mountains, Eagle Peak (5,540m), Chogyl (c.5,710m) in the west of Yumthang, Frontier Peak (5,650m) seem to be climbed, but the details are unclear.

Afterward

All visitors are naturally not only impressed and spellbound by the glacier, peaks and lake beauty, but also by the tranquility, serenity and pollution free atmosphere. I have no image above mentioned peaks by myself but most of all images of these peaks can be seen by some home pages of trekking companies in Internet. Finally, thanks to peoples who supported my travel, especially for good arrangement by Shikhar Travels Ltd. New Delhi.

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KAORI INABA
**In the Footsteps of Monk-Early Explorer
“Ekai Kawaguchi”
Supplemented with Photo Gallery of “Dolpo Now”**

I couldn't believe my own eyes. Incredible landscape suddenly came into my view before getting to Crystal Mountain. Something like a flag pole was seen on the summit. Crystal Mountain “a mountain of crystal where a dragon howls” is a largest Holy Place in Dolpo. There is a rock cave which Senge Yeshe's having opened the holy mountain dug while he was flying in the air as written in a sutra. It is a story of 900 years ago.

It is one of the three sacred religious places in Tibet. Mount Kailas represents them. They are not allowed to ascend these holy mountains. There is a Kora (pilgrimage route) around the mountains.



1 Crystal Mountain



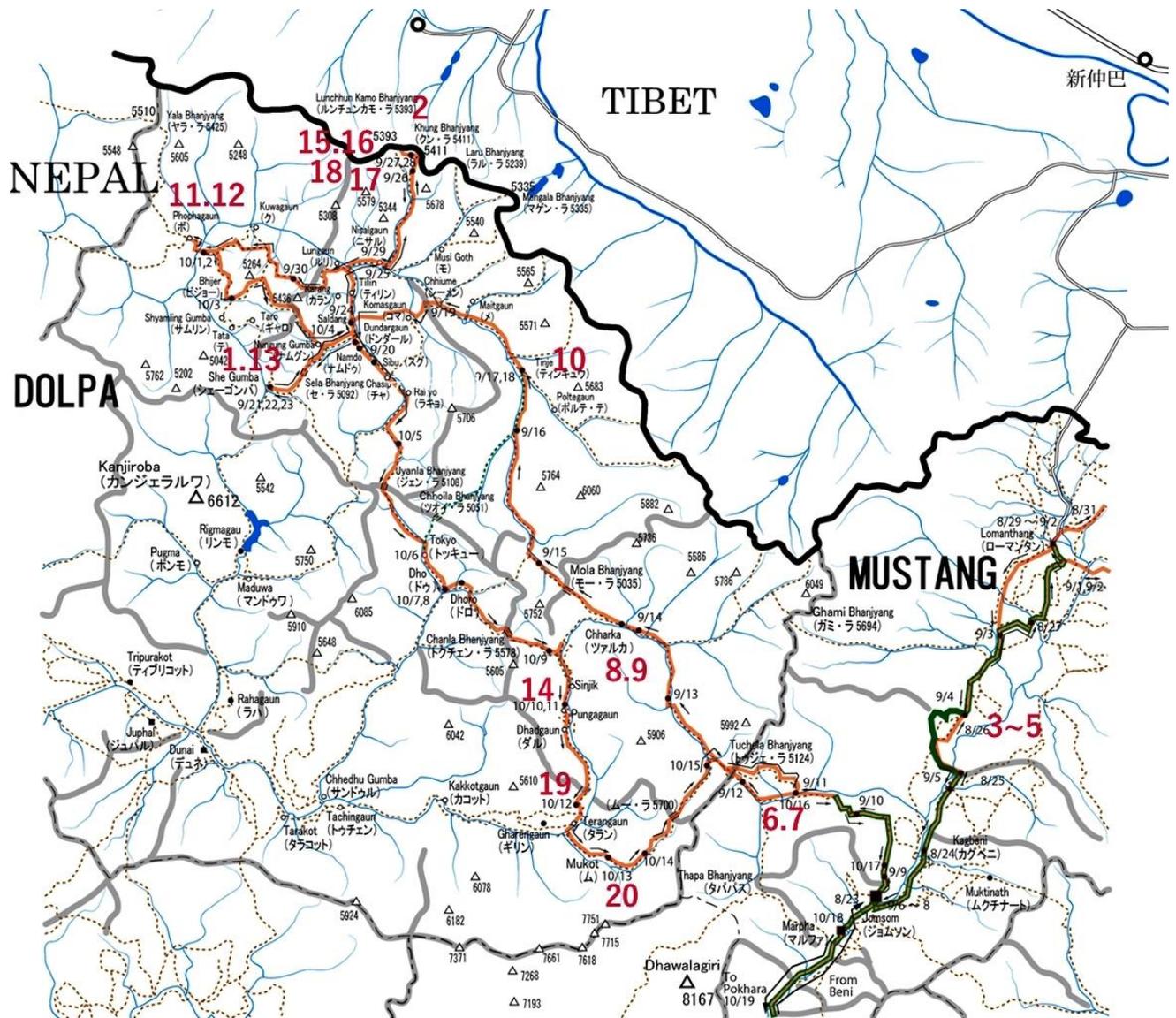
2 Khung La, Ekai crossed the border here to Tibet

2016 was the Eikai Kawaguchi's 150th year of his birth and the 116th year after he had crossed the border to Tibet heading for Lhasa. Objectives of my journey was to retrace the Ekai's footsteps and to touch his wisdom, spirit of inquiry, mind of adventure and pursuit of truth as an early monk-explorer in the late 21th century, and to seek for enchantments of contemporary Dolpo.

I left Japan on August 17 and returned home on October 24. Most part of Ekai's route was in Dolpo. To enter Dolpo they must cross a high pass at 5000m from any direction. Average altitude of villages in Dolpo is 4000m. I crossed 5000m high passes more than 10 times in this trip.

Editor's note: Ekai Kawaguchi, First Japanese entered Lhasa, Tibet

In 1897 Kawaguchi went to India. At Darjeeling he learnt the Tibetan language under Sarat Chandra Das. He secretly entered Nepal. In disguise he headed to Tibet through detoured route in west Tibet: Lake Manasarowar, Kailas, then to east. In 1901 he finally arrived at Lhasa via Shigatse. He identified himself as a Chinese monk and was admitted to Sera Monastery. In May 1902 he had to escape from Lhasa.

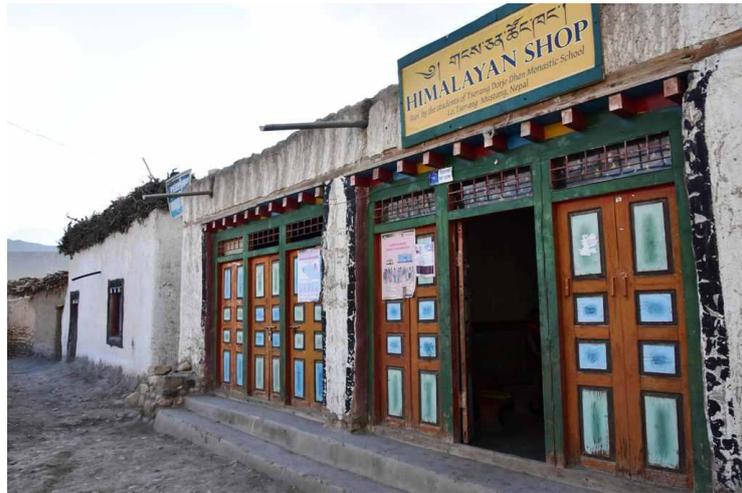


Place name: 1/50,000 map of Survey Department of His Majesty's Government of Nepal
 Brown line; Inaba's footsteps (journey route) Green line: Journey route by car roads
 Red number; Place to have taken picture

In 2004 I saw a statue, which some told me was of Ekai Kawaguchi, in an old temple of Chharang in Mustang where Ekai had stayed 10 months. After returning home I verified it. Makoto Nebuka wrote in a Japanese mountain mag. “Yama To Keikoku” that the statue was not of Ekai but of a monk of that temple. This fact let me again visit the temple for confirm the truth. In those days of 1900 the temple was managed by three monks, Lama dorje, Lama jamyang an Lama nyandak and I was told that Lama nyandak was Ekai Kawaguchi. Also in 2017 of my third visit to Dolpo the same answer returned. Villagers felt peace of mind when they prayed for the stature recognizing it as Ekai Kawaguchi. I didn't make further questions knowing of villagers 'thoughts for Ekai. At Chharang I found a site of the building where Ekai had stayed and heard of Ekai from a villager. He showed me a statue that was the only remaining one as his father of a heavy drinker had sold out all except for this at Jharkot. After the father's death his soul was passed to the other person and ill-omened happenings took place. The villager donated all of his lands to the temple. They used to be his property, he said.



3 Elai's statue

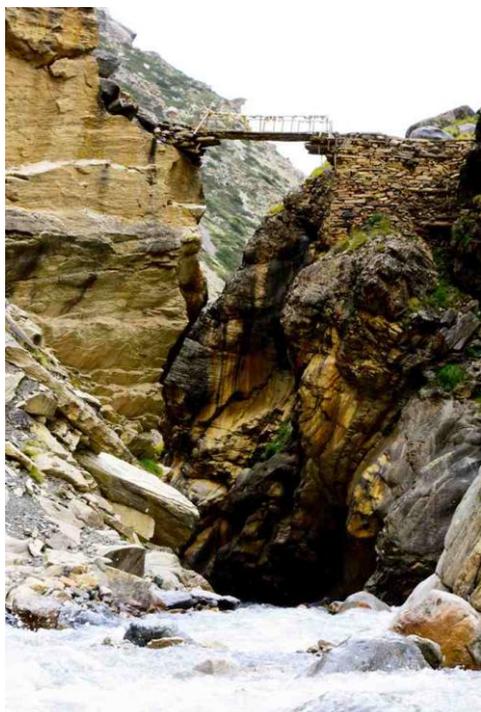


4 A shop near place where Ekai stayed



5 Statue sold at Jharkot

An awful “Hundred-jou Bridge” of Ekai was actually measured by late Tamotsu Ohnishi, and it proved to be ten-jou (abt. 23m) high. A hand-rail was made recently for safety. It is said that the Gods dwell in Tashing Thang. The path is very steep but no one gets hurt as the Gods are guarding, a villager whom I met in a way to the village so explained. He added that as the path disappeared on the way he came back. We forded streams many times, paths disappeared sometimes. I traversed slippery slope after porters paved the way by ice-axes. Frequent stone-falls were terrible. Careless mistake would cause an accident to fall down to river. Winds were fierce. Animals would have caused the stone-falls. These paths are so dangerous that they would not be used often.



6 Hundred-jou bridge of Ekai



7. Traversing slippery slope

Various Chinese goods such as beer, confectionaries, rice, eggs, etc. are abundant in Chharka close to the border with China. There were two surprises. One was that under direction by the government toilets were being constructed. The other was that there lived still minority people, called as “Door” tribe whose forehead was painted with a letter “a” (see Tibetan letter)

The remote frontier is changing fast as in Tibet. In Tinkyu I was shocked to see villagers to carry cropped grasses and barley by a couple of motor-bikes. Not to mention some villagers carried crops on foot. Ten years ago there were already motor-bikes but useless because no fuel was available, but now fuel tanks are stocked. Motor-bikes were seen on the road from Kinkyu to Tokyu. Komatsu bulldozers were working for construction.

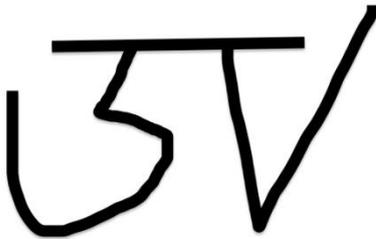
I questioned in each village how they spent winter time. Rich villagers go down to Kathmandu or Pokhara. In this borderland there is a gap of earnings among inhabitants. Some families caravan to carry Yaks down to lower and warmer land in winter. Only Do of the Low Dolpo is in communication network. Solar panels are becoming larger. Recently Dolpo people are individually sending their messages by BP, etc. (see Picture 10)



8 Motor-bikes



9 Toilet



Tibetan letter



10 Solar panels

I departed from the opposite side of Poe village to go down the bottom of valley and crossed a bridge (see Picture 12) and again took a route to ascend. In the 2009 expedition (Northwest Nepal Mountaineering Expedition led by late Tamotsu Ohnishi) they traversed Dolpo westwards from Mugu to Po. It was a journey of several days passing uninhabited area of two 5000m high passes, ascending 1000m for another 5000m pass. This time I travelled eastwards. After crossing Yambur La 4815m I went down to a deep valley and again ascended. The land is not easy to access from any direction, east and west. How local people could settle down in such isolated place hard

to live is beyond my imagination. Is it because of full of sunshine? There were 100 houses of Taman 800 years ago but the village once disappeared due to shortage of water supply, but it again survived 500 years ago. Now Gurun and Lama tribes speak Tibetan language. Someone speaks Nepalese language. The 1958 Northwest Nepal Mountaineering Expedition led by late Prof. Jiro Kawakita recorded that this village could not be maintain due to shortage of water supply and population was 30 villagers. In 2009 the population was 50. In 2016 it was 75, surely increasing. Lama 55 years old, two female of 66 years old but no male over 50 years old, average life-span is short (they are short-lived.) Government constructs no bridges as population is very less. Villagers make it by themselves. There is no support from abroad at all. It comes only to Bhijer. I was moved by villagers' self-reliance to live in a community.



11 Poe village



12 Bridge



13 Crystal Mountain 5556m



Thinmer Gompa

A villager, Phurba tinle (from Saldan) who put the flag pole on the top of Crystal Mountain has parents. He made 13 times Kora (pilgrimage) around Crystal Mountain and in the 14th Kora he went to Mount She. He continued to make the Kora everyday for the 14 times. He did one Kora in five hours. It took 10 hours for me. The cave has a space where four persons may enter. Only such monks as having completed 13 times

Koras are allowed to stand atop of the Mountain. I left tarchos, etc. Thinmer Gompa is now abandoned. A picture of Eric Valli taken in 1981 shows red colored Gompa. 18 lamas were lost in 900 years. This indicates the Lama's average life-span to be some 50 year. New Thinmer Gompa was re-constructed in the right bank 200m away from Thinmer Kholal. A lama came to my tent and told that it begin to snow before long. It was the day when we crossed Mu La 5700m. Finest weather lasted.

Dhaulagiri massif cannot be viewed from a border point of Khung La 5411m but the massif is seen in distance from Yemelung Kang 6048m, which is located on the border where both sides of Nepal and Tibet can be seen at one time. We can look over the Ekai route. In Khumbu area it is fine in the morning but get cloudy with strong winds in the afternoon. On the contrary we can enjoy sometimes good weather in Dolpo. We ascended Yemelung Kang being exposed with stone-fallings. Panorama of 360° from the summit was fascinating. In the next morning BC was covered snow telling us the season was changing.



15 View of Nepal side from the summit



16 View of Tibet side from the summit



17 Lung Chhung Kang 6034m unclimbed



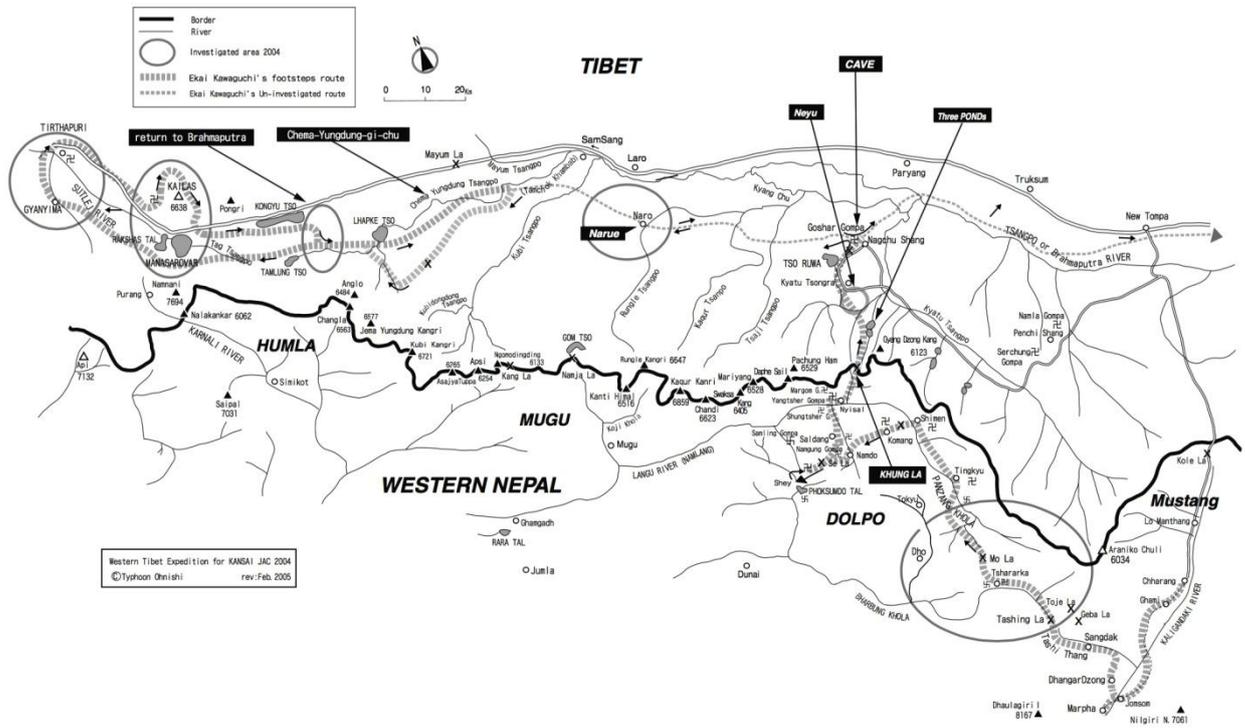
18 Tsokarpo Kang 6558m seen from Yemelung Kang 6048m



19 Dhaulagiri II West Ridge



20 Top of Dhaulagiri II seen behind



The above map was drawn by late Tamotsu Ohnishi in 2005. He led JAC Kansai West Nepal Academic Mountaineering Expedition in 2004.