



## AAC Publications

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### **Rassa Glacier, Tusuhm Kangri, Rassa Kangri, and General Exploration**

India, East Karakoram

**In 2001 a glimpse of the Rassa Glacier during our expedition to the Arganglas Valley (AAJ 2002) indicated great potential for climbs and exploration. Due to security restrictions and a remote location, many mountains and valleys of the East Karakoram have been left untouched.**

In mid-July, Rajesh Gadgil, Vineeta Muni, Atin Sathe, and I arrived in Leh, and after a few days of acclimatization, we drove to the Nubra Valley and the Buddhist shrine at Tirit. From there we trekked three days up the Arganglas Valley until stopped, near our proposed base camp, by a raging river originating from the Phunangma Glacier. We were forced to trek to the glacier and cross the icy snout in order to reach our base camp at 4,820m. We later fixed a rope over the river to ferry supplies and climbers throughout the expedition. Three precious days were lost in the process.

On August 2 we established an advanced base at 5,220m and began to explore one of the many subsidiary branches of the Rassa, dubbing it simply Glacier 1. From a camp at 5,780m we attempted Peak 6,219m, as we felt it would give a good opportunity to view possible routes on all adjoining peaks. On our second attempt, and after fixing 300m of rope on the southwest face, Rajesh, Pasang Sherpa, Pemba Norboo Sherpa, Phurba Sherpa, Atin, and I reached the top at 11:20 a.m. and were rewarded with grand views. We named the peak Tusuhm Kangri (34°39' N, 77°51' E), which in Ladakhi means triangular peak in the corner. (All coordinates and altitudes are from our own GPS readings.)

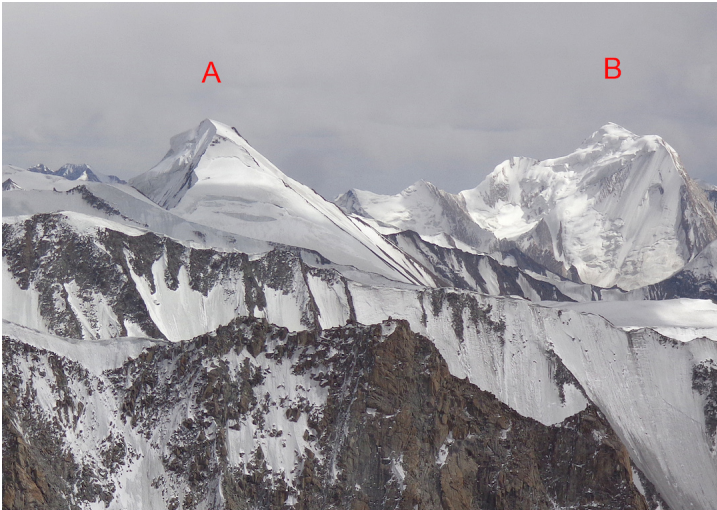
We now shifted attention to peaks above glaciers 2 and 3. Access was via a maze of boulders between the snout of the northern section of the Rassa Glacier and a peak at the northwest corner of Glacier 1. On August 18 we reached a new camp at 5,635m at the northwest corner of Glacier 2, but a quick reconnaissance convinced us that we would have better climbing options on Glacier 3 to the north. By the 20th we were at a high camp (5,810m) on this glacier, below Peak 6,250m, one of the most prominent summits in the area.

Next day we climbed a southeast-facing, 200m ice face (50-60°) to gain the summit ridge, which we followed to the west. This proved to be a knife-edge, and we had to pull the lowest two ropes from the face to safeguard the final stretch to the top. The whole team stood on the summit. Given the prominence of this peak, we christened it Rassa Kangri (34°40' N, 77°49' E). Next day we reached the head of the glacier and Shukpa Pass (6,110m), which we saw gave gentle access to the South Shukpa Kunchang Glacier, and onward to the Shyok River. This could provide a possible alternative to the well-known Saser La for linking the Nubra and Shyok valleys.

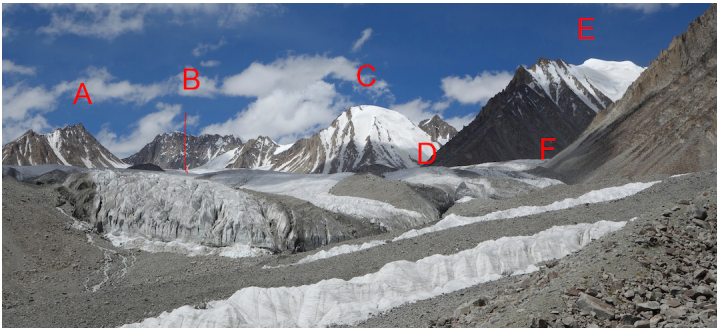
Our thoughts were now on exploring an alternative route back to the Nubra, and we had been eyeing a high col that would lead us to the Sumur Nala further north. With just three days left, we decided to give it a go, leaving most of our staff to wind up the camps and return down the Arganglas Valley. On August 24, Rajesh, Atin, Vineeta, Pasang, and I ascended Glacier 5, from which a gentle slope led to the West Rassa La (5,930m). Unfortunately, we found the far side to be a sheer, icy drop of more than 200m—impracticable with our limited equipment. With more gear and time it would certainly be crossable. On the 25th the same team made an early start and, ascending Glacier 4, reached the East Rassa La (6,000m) by 11 a.m. We were relieved to find a feasible route down the far side. Seventy-five meters of steep ice, followed by a snow slope, took us to the glacier. That night we camped at a beautiful spot by Sumur Lake (5,230m), and the next day walked down the remaining 18km of Sumur Valley to the Nubra at Samsthaling Monastery.



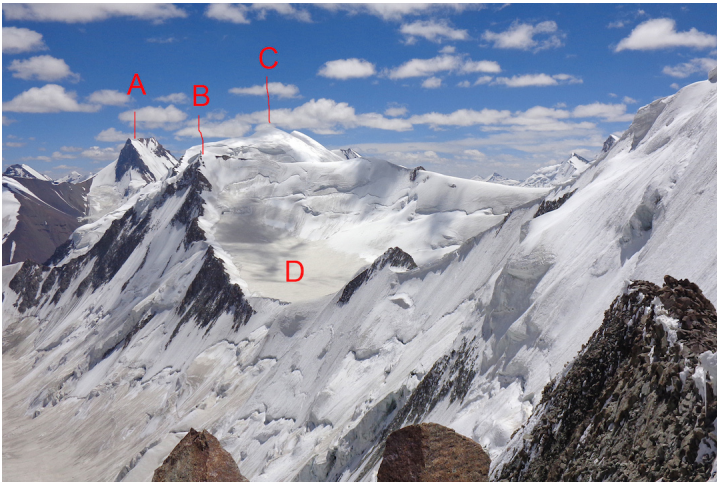
## Images



Looking southeast from the summit of Rassa Kangri toward (A) Abale (6,360m, climbed by in 2001 by Divyesh Muni, Cyrus Shroff, and Samgyal Sherpa) and (B) unclimbed Satti Kangri (6,639m).



Looking north from close to advanced base camp on the main Rassa Glacier. (A) Peak 6,128m. (B) East Rassa La and Glacier 4. (C) Rassa Kangri. (D) Glacier 3. (E) Peak 6,189m. (F) Glacier 2.



Looking southeast from the summit of Tusuhm Kangri to (A) Peak 6,273m, (B) Peak 6,267m, and (C) Peak 6,444m, all unclimbed. (D) is the head of Glacier 1.





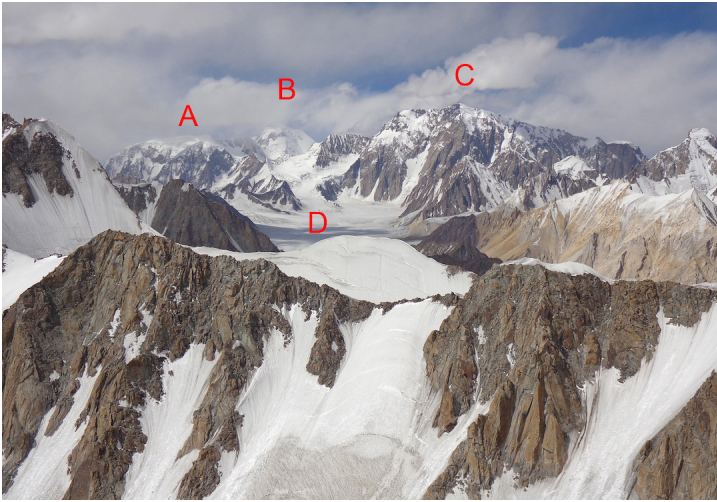
Camp 1 on Glacier 1 with unclimbed Peak 6,267m at right.



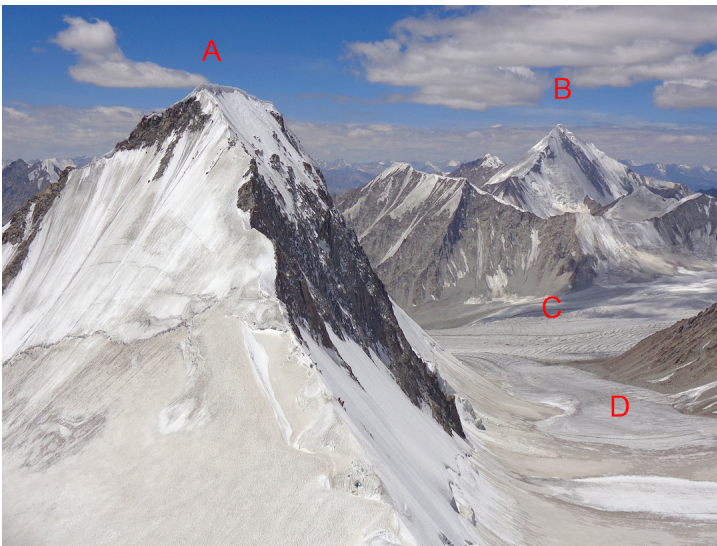
Map of Rassa Glacier area.



On the final ridge of Tusuhm Kangri.



The view north from the summit of Rassa Kangri. (A) Plateau Peak (7,287m). (B) Saser Kangri I (7,672m). (C) Saser Kangri II (7,518m). (D) South Shukpa Kunchang Glacier.



Looking west from the summit of Tusuhm Kangri. (A) Peak 6,222m. (B) Nya Kangri (6,520m; Divyesh Muni's expedition attempted this in 2008 but was unsuccessful on the south ridge). (C) Main Rassa Glacier. (D) Glacier 2.

Article Details

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