



AAC Publications

Tetleh Nala, Exploration And First Ascents

India, Zaskar

From late July to September, Anastasija Davidova and I spent 35 days in the Tetleh Nala, one of the three main offshoots of the Raru Valley. Prior to our visit there had only been one reported climbing party here, the 2011 Imperial College (U.K.) Expedition (AAJ 2012). We believed the *nala* might be hiding some fine mountaineering challenges, but we also wanted to map the valley. There are numerous mountains between 5,700m and 6,250m, some having steep faces up to 1,000m high. I am old enough to remember how it was to climb in the Himalaya without a weather forecast. India still bans the use of satellite phones (though we did carry walkie-talkies to report our position each night to our liaison officer), and it was refreshing to be in remote mountains more or less on our own.

On July 29 we reached base camp at 4,623m in the Tetleh Nala, and on August 5, from a bivouac at 5,549m, made what we believe to be the first ascent of Khumchu Ri (R7 on Kimikazu Sakamoto's map, 6,064m, 33°14'32"N, 76°50'52"E) in a 13-hour round trip. We climbed snow from the north onto the southeast ridge, and then continued for 400m on high-quality rock (UIAA IV) before finishing up 600m of snow (50° maximum) on the east ridge. The climbing distance was ca 1,000m, but the height gain only 550m. We descended the south face and then traversed to the southeast ridge, which we used to regain our bivouac. The overall grade was D+.

We now felt suitably acclimatized to attempt an attractive peak on the east side of the valley. The left side of the west face seemed to offer a safe rock wall; the rocky part of the ridge above looked a riddle, while the continuation to the summit appeared straightforward. On August 13 we climbed 200m of good granite on the west face and bivouacked at 5,533m. After a night of rain we continued with 200m up to V+ to reach the north ridge at ca 5,700m. For the next 300m the crest was narrow with gendarmes. We made an initial foray, but it was tricky, so we returned to a point where we could bivouac, and on the 15th climbed along the east side of the ridge on less than perfect rock to the beginning of the snowy section (V 60°), where we bivouacked again at 5,689m. Next day we continued along the crest (65°), then across the west face (IV and 70° ice) to reach the summit, which we dubbed Kun Long Ri (6,058m, 33°14'19"N, 76°54'26"E). We called our ascent route Happy Journey (750m, TD+). We reversed the ridge as far as our last bivouac, from which we descended east to a glacier (dubbed Slovenian Glacier) and followed this down to the Raru Valley. We got back to base camp on the 17th.

In 2011, Joe Prinold and Virgil Scott from the British expedition attempted a fine pillar on the east face of R4, retreating in bad weather from 6,000m. We thought their line looked safe, so on August 25 we followed it to a good bivouac site at 5,920m. We first climbed unroped and then did ten 50m pitches (IV+ maximum) on fine slabs of good granite. Next day we continued in the warm sun with rock shoes, climbing six excellent pitches (up to VI-) to reach the southwest ridge at 6,149m. We first climbed the west flank and then the ridge crest to the summit (V+). Locals in Raru village refer to this as Ri Pok Te (6,210m, 33°15'59"N, 76°52'41"E), and we named our line From East to West (1,000m, TD+/ED1), feeling the climbing was worthy of five stars. We reversed the route, mostly by rappel.

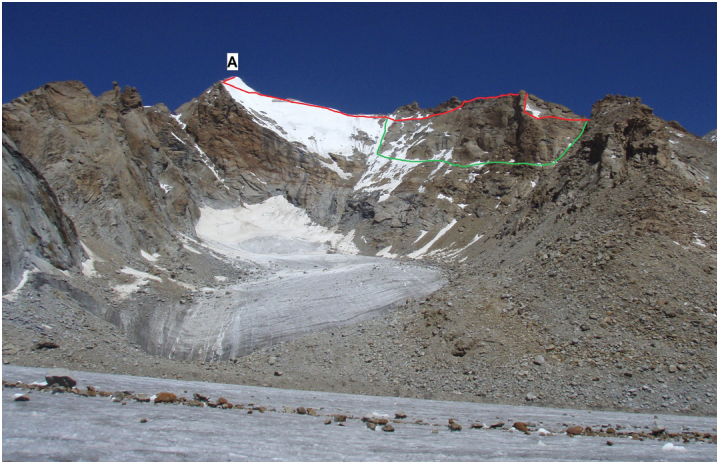
There is great potential in this valley. The upper section is rarely visited, even by locals, so feels unspoiled. We saw almost no evidence of the British and appreciate their respect of the natural surroundings—they left no rubbish, just a very nice report and part of their souls. We also tried to leave no trace. We climbed with nuts and cams; only one piton, which we used as a rappel anchor, pollutes the face of Ri Pok Te. Every expedition causes pollution, but we can minimize this by

operating in small teams with minimum comfort. We hope future parties in this valley will be satisfied with our efforts. [A full expedition report with much useful information and panoramic views of this valley can be downloaded [here.](#)]

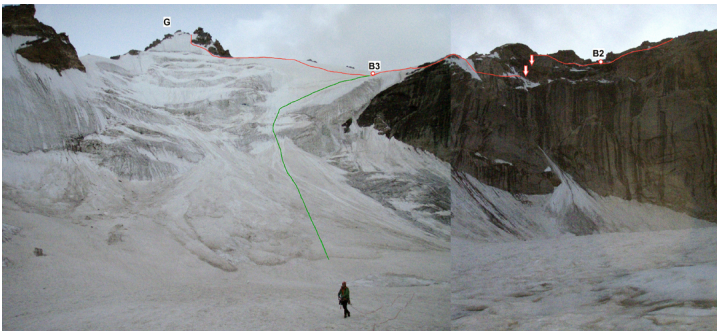
Matija Jost, Alpine Association of Slovenia

Editor's note: A large Swiss team led by Stephane Schaffter and Yannick Flugli was in one of the other two Raru side valleys and had completed a successful ski expedition when, during the walk out, Schaffter was swept away during a river crossing and drowned. No details of their ascents have been forthcoming.

Images



Khumchu Ri from the upper Teteleh Glacier to the south. The red line shows the ascent up the southeast and east ridge; the green line is the descent across the southwest slopes and back up to the southeast ridge.



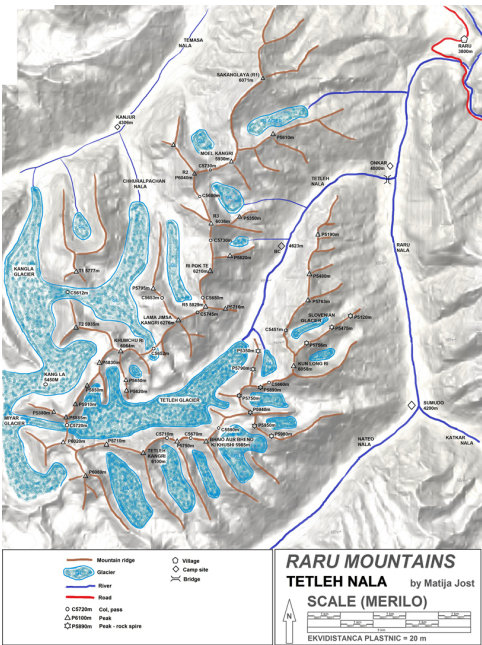
Kun Long Ri from the Slovenian Glacier to the east-northeast. The red line is the upper part of Happy Journey on the north ridge; the green line is the descent of the glaciated northeast face.



Kun Long Ri from the west. The line of Happy Journey, up the west face and north ridge, is marked; the second bivouac is hidden. (H) Peak 5,756m. (I) Peak 5,350m.



Lower part of the west face of Kun Long Ri seen from the Teteleh Glacier, with Happy Journey marked. The second bivouac is hidden on the north ridge.



The east face of Ri Pok Te and the line of From East to West in red. The green variation was taken on

the descent. (K) Peak 6,036m (R3, unclimbed).



Matija Jost following on the west face of Kun Long Ri.



Matija Jost starting on the snowy section of Kun Long Ri's north ridge.



Entering the Tettleh Valley just above Onkar, showing peaks on the west side. Left: Ri Pok Te; From East to West more or less follows the left skyline ridge. Right: Unclimbed R3 (6,036m).



Mountains on the west side of the Tetleh Nala. (C) 5,720m pass to Miyar Valley. (F) Peak 5,885m. (E) Peak 5,910m. (D) Peak 5,850m. (B) Peak 5,830m. (A) Khumchu Ri. (O) Lama Jimsa Kangri (6,276m, climbed in 2011 via the couloir facing the camera). (N) R5 (5,829m). (J) Ri Pok Te. (K) R3 (6,036m). (L) Moel Kangri (5,930m, climbed in 2011). (M) Sakanglaya (R1, 6,020m).

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