



AAC Publications

Ryong Kharu Valley, Peaks 6,195m And 6,305m

India, East Karakoram

For the last four decades the Shyok Valley has been closed to trekkers and mountaineers, due to its proximity to the Line of Control with China. Also, the Shyok River is in spate from July to September, and movement up the valley impractical. However, recently the Border Roads Organisation has made improvements to enable the road to be used even in the summer months. Until the summer of 2015, the entire area south of Mandalthang remained unexplored.

The Ryong Kharu Lungpa (valley), eventually leading to the Sagtogpa Glacier, had never been entered by a mountaineering expedition. Our team comprised Rajesh Gadgil, Vineeta Muni, Sagar Shinde, Nikunj Vora, Kushala Vora, and me. We employed four climbing Sherpas, two high-altitude support staff from the Garhwal, and five Kumaoni people as cooking staff and low-altitude support. We all camped next to the road on July 23 and then spent three days walking to base camp at 4,665m. A further four hours led to the site of advanced base (5,070m), at the junction of the various branches of Sagtogpa Glacier that form the catchment area for Ryong Kharu valley.

Just above advanced base lay the first (eastern) subsidiary of the Sagtogpa Glacier, and we decided to attempt Peak 6,195m at its head (34°33'N, 78°04'E). On August 6, after a few days of acclimatizing, we established Camp 1 at 5,765m, and a group of us set off for the summit at 6 a.m. on the 8th. We approached up the easy glacier to the east-southeast of the mountain and climbed onto the southeast ridge via a pitch of 60° snow. The crest to the top was gently angled, with a couple of 10m steep sections, and we reached the summit at 11 a.m.

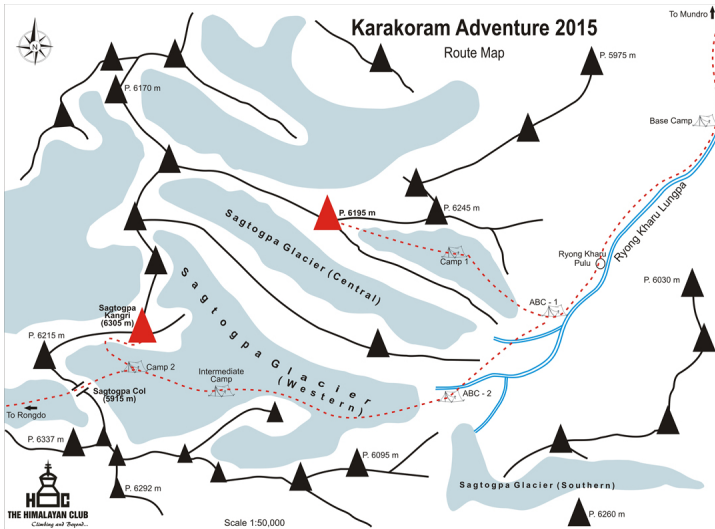
Views were excellent and showed that the next valley west (the Sagtogpa Central Glacier) had little of interest, but the western glacier had many enticing peaks. This is the main branch of the Sagtogpa Glacier, and we decided to attempt Peak 6,305m at its head (34°32'N, 78°02'E).

After traversing a lush green ridge, we established Paradise Camp at 5,270m by a stream fringed by beds of flowers. The distance to our peak was long, so we put in an intermediate camp before making summit camp at 5,860m on the 17th. On the 19th, ten of us approached up the glacier to the south of the mountain and started up the west ridge. We found that this culminated in steep rock towers, so we skirted the summit pyramid to the east until we found a 70m, 50° snow and ice gully leading to the top of the southeast ridge. We arrived on the summit at 11:30 a.m. We named our peak Sagtogpa Kangri, since it is the most prominent summit of the Sagtogpa Glacier.

We now spotted a possible route over to the upper Rongdo Valley, and the prospect excited us more than climbing another peak. With three days' rations and minimal gear we crossed Sagtogo Col (5,915m) and were fortunately greeted by a gentle glacier going down toward the lush Rongdo Valley. It took another two days to reach Rongdo village, a devastating cloudburst having destroyed the path in several places, requiring the use of our climbing skills to negotiate the route.

Divyesh Muni, India

Images



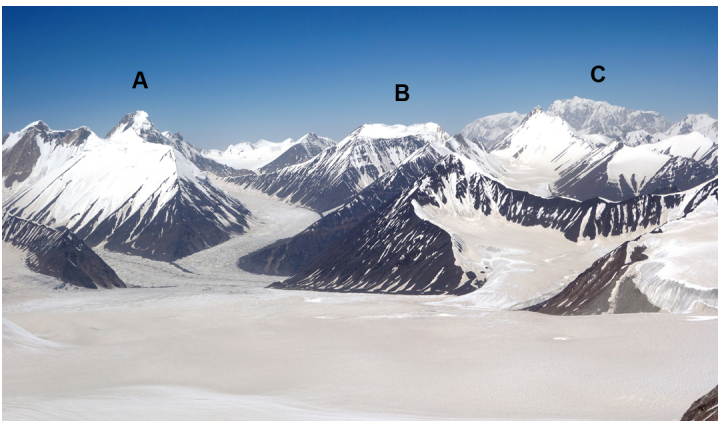
Seen to the north, unclimbed Peak 6,750m from the summit of Sagtoga Kangri.



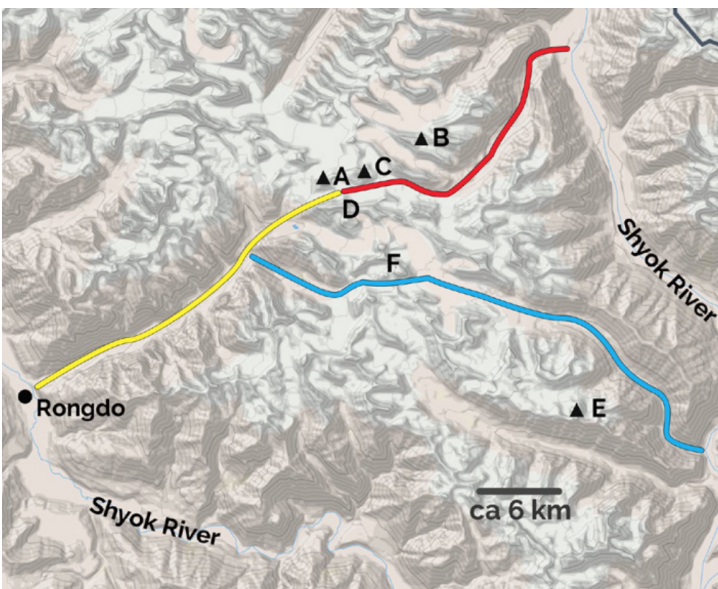
Seen to the southwest, Sagtoga Kangri from the summit of Peak 6,195m. The team climbed from the far side to reach the upper section of the southeast ridge (left skyline), which they followed to the summit. Behind and right is Peak 6,215m (a.k.a. Pyramid Peak or X3), attempted by a British team in 2015 by the southeast ridge (left skyline).



On the summit ridge of Peak 6,195m.



The view northwest from Sagtoga Kangri. (A) Argan Kangri (6,789m) and (B) Amale (6,312m) in the Arganglas Group. (C) Saser Kangri Group (Saser I, 7,672m).



In 2015, three expeditions explored various valleys inside the great bend of the Shyok River, east of Rongdo. Yellow line: British climbers attempted (A) Pyramid Peak via the Rongdo Valley. Red line: An Indian expedition climbed (B) Peak 6,195m and (C) Peak 6,305m via the Ryong Kharu Valley. After these climbs, this team crossed (D) Sagtoga Col and exited the mountains via the Rongdo Valley. Blue line: An Indian Air Force team explored the Kunzang Valley, climbing (E) Tak Jaal and other peaks. The military climbers crossed (F) Kunzang Col and exited via the Rongdo Valley.

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