



## AAC Publications

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### **Rucho, East Face and South Ridge**

India, Zaskar

**IN EARLY 2010, the government of India opened 104 peaks in the Zaskar region. One of these was unnamed "Peak 6,000m," located above the west bank of the north Hagshu Nala. It is a little north of Lagan (5,750m), which was climbed in 2014 by a Slovenian team, prior to their ascent of the north face of Hagshu (AAJ 2015). It is also the eastern summit of a higher unnamed peak (6,019m on Russian map).**

With Takaaki Furuhashi, we flew to Leh on July 19. Next day we began our road journey via Kargil, over the Pensi La, to the village of Akshong, which we reached on the 22nd. On the 23rd we walked south up the north Hagshu Nala (a.k.a. Akshong Valley) for around three hours, using Google Earth printouts for maps, until we spotted the peak on the right. We established base camp (4,150m) at the foot of a grassy slope, just above the lateral moraine on the west side of the Hagshu Glacier. The peak looked nothing like its image on Google Earth. It appeared much steeper and more jagged.

Next day we went for a reconnaissance: Google Earth suggested that the best approach would be from the southeast, where a spur of moraine led directly onto the glacier. Two days later, on July 26, we established an advanced base on the rocky moraine alongside the glacier, and the next day inspected the east face of the peak, the proposed line of ascent. The following day, Furuhashi and Yamanoi climbed to 5,500m on the south ridge, depositing some food and gear for their planned descent route.

After two days of rest at base camp, all three of us returned to advanced base under a partially cloudy sky. At 1:30 a.m. on August 1, the two Japanese left camp, crossed the glacier in 45 minutes, and began climbing the east face. It was a clear, cold night and progress was swift, the terrain consisting of mostly hard snow with occasional ice patches (70° maximum). By the time it was getting light, at 5:30 a.m., the two were on the south ridge.

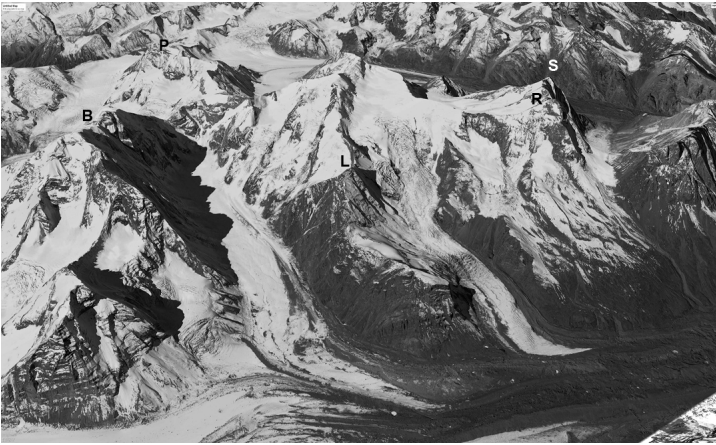
The climbers had pinned their hopes on reaching this point in one full day, but now found themselves already there at dawn with a whole day in front of them. A traverse right on exposed 70° snow led to a bottleneck where the snow was thin and the rock loose. Above this obstacle, six pitches of snow climbing led to a final 20m of loose rock and a precarious, table-sized slab on the summit. It was 9:11 a.m., about 7.5 hours since they'd left advanced base. The GPS read 5,970m and the ascent was rated TD.

After retracing their route as far as the top of the east face, they continued down the south ridge. Eleven hours after leaving advanced base, they debated stopping: They were carrying a tent and food for three days, and were now relatively tired. However, time was on their side, so they continued down to advanced base, arriving at 4:30 p.m. Their decision had been sound: During dinner, clouds began to build, and it subsequently rained all night. Next morning we all descended to base camp.

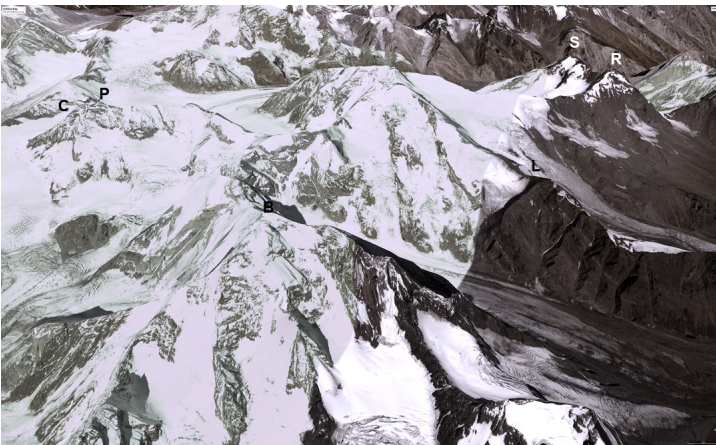
After much discussion the two have proposed naming the peak Rucho, which means "horns" in both local dialect and Ladakhi. Yamanoi was particularly happy with their success. In 2002 he lost many fingers to frostbite during a difficult climb and descent of Gyachung Kang (7,985m, Nepal). Since then he has continued to climb and has put up new routes in China, Greenland, and Peru. But success in the Himalaya had eluded him until now.

Yasushi Yamanoi, Japan, and Sartaj Ghuman (Liaison Officer), India

## Images



Looking west at (B) the Barnaj peaks, (P) Puita, (L) Lagan, (R) Rucho, and (S) unnamed Peak 6,019m.



Looking northwest at (C) Chobani La, (B) the Barnaj peaks, (P) Puita, (L) Lagan, (R) Rucho, and (S) unnamed Peak 6,019m.



Takaaki Furuhashi on the final rock band of the south ridge of Rucho.





Rucho from the northeast and the upper section of the Japanese route from August 2017.



Rucho from the east. (1) Ascent via east face and south ridge (2017). (2) Descent via south ridge.



Takaaki Furuhashi on the upper south ridge of Rucho, with the unnamed Peak 6,095m (Russian map) behind.



Takaaki Furuhashi at ca 5,800m during the climb of the east face and south ridge of Rucho.

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