



AAC Publications

Kang Yatze IV, West Face and Northwest Ridge

India, Ladakh

A view of all four summits of the Kang Yatze Group from Hangkar to the northwest: (A) KYI, (B) KYII, (C) KYIII, and (D) KYIV. Photo by Sonam Yangjor

On August 1, Sonam Yangjor, Stanzin Wangial, and I made the first documented ascent of Kang Yatze IV (6,130m).

Kang Yatze (commonly called Kang Yissay in the past) is the high mountain group at the head of the Markha Valley; the highest summit is Kang Yatze I (6,400m), with a subsidiary summit to the northwest called Kang Yatze II (6,175m). British climber Mike Ratty, who visited the area twice in the 1990s, noted two more peaks on a southern arm that he suggested should be named Kang Yatze III and IV.

A three-man British party made the probable first ascent of Kang Yatze III (6,310m) in August 2015 (see AAJ 2016). After much research and talking with knowledgeable climbers, I concluded that Kang Yatze IV remained unclimbed. However, just as the British did, I have been careful to call our eventual climb the first documented ascent, since there have been many undocumented climbs in Ladakh.

Our climb took three attempts. Alope Kumar Das and I first tried in winter. We ventured deep into the Markha Valley at the end of February 2021, but at a crucial stage, one of Alope's almost new plastic boots came completely apart.

I came back in April with Sonam and Stanzin, approaching Kang Yatze IV directly from the Langthang Chu valley. We placed our final camp at 5,400m, but the night before our summit push, we were hit by a fierce storm and eventually retreated.

On July 24 we left Leh to begin our third attempt. Earlier in the year, we had taken a good road constructed during the lockdown in 2020 all the way to Markha. However, in July we could only go partway due to dangerously high river levels. On the 26th, we reached base camp at 4,410m in the Langthang Chu.

On the 29th, we established Camp 1 at 4,950m, where it then rained until late afternoon on the 30th. From a vantage above camp, the west face and northwest ridge of Kang Yatze IV looked long and tedious but doable.

On the 31st, in the rainfall to which we had now become accustomed, we walked to a summit camp at 5,180m. To our great surprise, at 5 a.m. the following day we set out under a starlit sky. The west face was at first steep scree, then ribs of shattered rock, then a snow slope. We arrived on the northwest ridge at 5,800m. Engulfed in dense mist, we ascended the ridge for nearly a kilometer, turning a succession of gendarmes on the west side. At 2 p.m. we were on the north summit (6,130m, 33°44'24.6"N, 77°32'25.9"E; there are two summits that appear to be of equal height). The grade of our route was AD. After a long wait on top for the clouds to lift so we could enjoy the view, we regained our camp at 8:30 p.m.

— Anindya Mukherjee, India

Images



A view of all four summits of the Kang Yatze Group from Hangkar to the northwest: (A) KYI, (B) KYII, (C) KYIII, and (D) KYIV. Sonam Yangjor



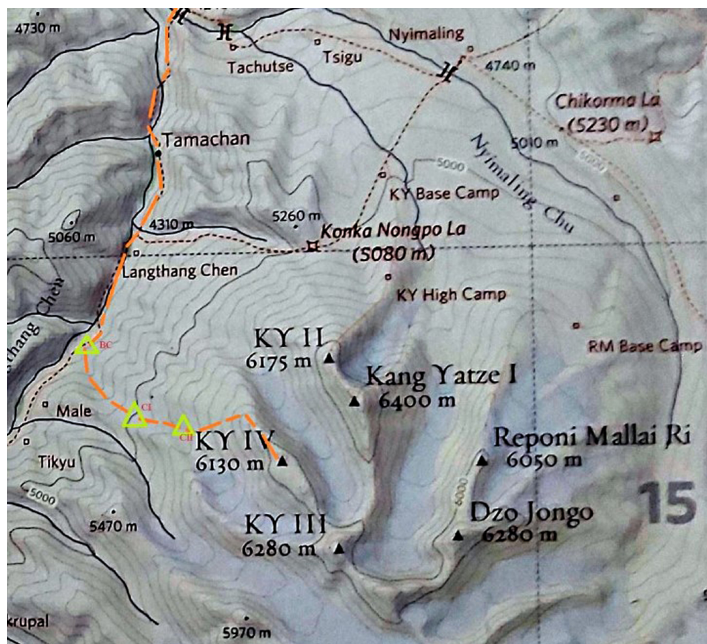
The last section of the northwest ridge to the summit of Kang Yatze IV. Toward the left edge of the picture, the rocky south ridge of Kang Yatze I is visible.



Looking southeast from the summit of Kang Yatze IV North. (IVS) is the south summit and (III) Kang Yatze III. The first ascent of III followed the northeast ridge on the left.



Seen from Kang Yatze IV are the southwest flanks of (II) Kang Yatze II and (I) Kang Yatze I. The connecting ridge between the two summits has rarely been crossed. The glacier below was named South Glacier in the mid-1990s by British mountaineer Mike Ratty.



Map showing approach to Kang Yatze IV and camps used in 2021.

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