



## AAC Publications

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### **Raru Valley: Exploration and Attempt on 6,100-Meter Peak**

India, Ladakh, Zaskar

**An exceptionally heavy monsoon washed away many of the roads and bridges leading to the Kullu-Spiti area, where Takaaki Furuhashi, Toshihiro Ueda, and Yasushi Yamanoi had hoped to make a first ascent on one of the Dibibokri peaks.** A quick change of plan led them to the Raru Valley, accompanied by liaison officer Sartaj Ghuman.

In its upper section, the Raru Valley has three main offshoots: the Tetteh, Nateo, and Katkar nalas (from west to east). The Nateo drainage is steep-sided with several hanging valleys, each holding a debris-covered glacier. It rises southwest to an amphitheater of gleaming glaciers, rimmed by an arc of mountains.

While parties have climbed peaks from the Tetteh and Katkar nalas, including summits on the watersheds with the Nateo, there is no record of peaks being attempted from within the Nateo Nala. In 2009, Japanese explorer Kimikazu Sakamoto visited the Nateo Nala, taking photos and making a sketch map, but did not attempt any of the mountains. [Peaks at the head of the Nateo valley also lie on the watershed with the Miyar Valley to the southwest, specifically the Jangpar and Dali glaciers, and several may have been climbed from that side in the 1980s.]

We drove from Leh via Kargil, then over the Pensi La and past Pandum to the village of Raru on the Tsarap River. From there, on September 13, we walked seven hours to the start of the Nateo Nala. The next day, we crossed the Nateo River and made base camp at an ideal site on its south side at 4,350m.

A ten-hour reconnaissance walk up the valley and onto the glacier gave glimpses of the peak that would become the team's objective. Situated at 33°7'31.98"N, 76°51'11.25"E, it is probably peak R22 on Sakamoto's sketch map. Google Maps showed the peak to be about 5,800m, but our reconnaissance made us believe it might be higher.

On the 19th, we went back up the glacier and established an advanced base on the central moraine at 4,910m. After reconnaissance of a route up our proposed peak the next day, we all headed back to base camp.

On the 26th, Furuhashi, Ueda, and Yamanoi started out from advanced base at 4:30 a.m. with a small tent. After ascending the glacier to the left, they came back right and reached the crest of the east-northeast ridge via snow slopes on the north flank. At 9:50 a.m. they were at 5,600m, their intended bivouac spot. After a rest, since it was still early in the day and they felt good, they decided to go for the summit.

The climbing was steeper than it had looked, with 15cm of soft snow over hard ice. As the team carried only two ice screws, the climbing was slow and rather scary. Mixed snow and rock, interspersed with two long traverses, took them to a shoulder on the ridge, where more difficult climbing gained the top of the shoulder, at a measured height of 5,950m.

Although from below the ridge had looked continuous, they now found their way barred by a rocky gap around 150m wide and 40m deep, with overhanging, loose rock walls. With only a single 70m

rope, there was no way they could cross the gap and return safely. They turned around and descended all the way to advanced base camp, which they reached at 8 p.m.

They estimated the summit of the unnamed peak to be 200m above their high point, making its elevation closer to 6,100m. Surrounding peaks, marked between 5,800m and 6,100m on various maps, also seemed higher. Some would make very interesting objectives for future expeditions.

— **Sartaj Ghuman, India, and Yasushi Yamanoi, Japan**

## Images



On the approach up the Nateo Glacier, looking toward the Katkar Glacier.



Unnamed peak of about 6,100m on the Nateo-Miyar watershed attempted in 2023 by the left (east-northeast) ridge.



At the high point on the east-northeast ridge of the unnamed peak of about 6,100m attempted in 2023, looking north along the Nateo-Miyar watershed. The visible peaks probably overlook the Dali

A photograph of a snow-covered mountain peak, likely Mount Everest, under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The foreground shows rocky terrain with patches of snow.

Kimikazu Sakamoto's sketch map of the Raru Valley from 2009, showing the Tettleh, Nateo, and Katkar nalas (valleys). The peak attempted by a Japanese team in 2023 is likely R22 on this map.

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