



AAC Publications

Vajrayogini, Northeast Face and Northwest Ridge

India, Ladakh, Zaskar, Rangtik Tokpo

After the great fire of 64 A.D., the Emperor Nero built a vast complex on the Oppian Hill in Rome.

The Domus Aurea (Golden House) was based on the architecture of an Egyptian temple and magnificently decorated with birds, animals, and flowers. Indeed, Nero modeled himself as a pharaoh, making a bridge between the material and immaterial world. After Nero's death, the Domus was considered a symbol of decadence, and within 70 years all traces of it had gone, canceled (in today's parlance), filled in with earth, and completely forgotten.

Vajrayogini and the route of the first ascent via the northeast face and northwest ridge. Immediately to the right is unclimbed Peak 6,005m. Photo Yuri Koshelenko

In 1480, a young Roman, walking on Oppian Hill, fell through a hole and found himself in a strange cave surrounded by painted beasts, plants, and figures. Soon the great artists of Rome were being lowered into this part of the Domus on knotted ropes. For observers like Raphael and Michelangelo, the effect was both electrifying and profound.

In the West we have lost this ancient world with its diversity and metaphysical excitement. In our world, perhaps the calm, moderate life led by the majority can be balanced with the risk and conscious deprivation taken by a few. In today's world of serial production, when not only objects are replicated but also meanings and images, the search for the genuine and untouched becomes so important. For an experienced mountaineer like myself, this means seeking little-known mountain regions, with charismatic unclimbed peaks and faces.

Zaskar attracted me because I had never visited the area and it is filled with unclimbed peaks. Various climbers I asked could not go, so I posted a short note on the Russian social network VK. In the end, four people accompanied me: Bayarsaikhan Luvsandorj, a Mongol; Maxim Perevalov, a Ukrainian; Mikhail Pupeiko, a Belarussian; and Denis Sushko, a Russian now living in Thailand. I had no idea how capable they would be.

I like mixed lines, so we planned to arrive in the Rangtik Tokpo in June, assuming this would be a good time for such ascents. After a short period of acclimatization, we split into two groups. Bayar, Mikhail, and I opted for Peak 6,095m (33°27'47.35"N, 76°42'13.47"E), in the southwest corner of the Rangtik Glacier, by a route of medium difficulty. On June 11, we climbed from bottom to top in seven hours along the northeast face and northwest ridge. The GPS read 6,218m on the summit, and across the glacier to the northeast, Remalaye (6,278m, H5 on the Sakamoto sketch map) appeared to be of similar altitude. We called the mountain Vajrayogini after an important figure of Tibetan Buddhism, and the locals did not object.

At the same time, Maxim and Denis attempted Peak 5,820m, which we dubbed Potala. They tried the west-northwest ridge from the col between Potala and Shawa Kangri but retreated early due to Denis feeling unwell; the food cooked at base camp by our staff was not suitable for any of our stomachs and we suffered.

I next wanted to try the first ascent of Chanrasrik Ri (a.k.a. Chareze Ri, 6,080m, H2 on the Sakamoto sketch map), between Vajrayogini and Shawa Kangri. It had been attempted in 2018 by Italian climbers, but they stopped short of the true summit. [This peak was climbed later in 2024; see report [here](#).] On the 15th, we chose a mixed line of around ten pitches but had to retreat due to Denis's

health. There was no time for another attempt. I was impressed with the area and hope to visit in the future.

—Yuri Koshelenko, Russia

Images



On the summit ridge of Vajrayogini (6,095m), climbed by the northeast face and northwest ridge. Below is the Rangtik Glacier and in the distance (A) Remalaye (6,278m) and (B) Jamyang Ri (5,800m).



Seen during the ascent of Vajrayogini: part of unnamed Peak 6,005m on the left and the snow-terraced south face of Chakdor Ri (6,193m, H8 on the Sakamoto sketch map) behind. The latter peak was climbed by the southeast ridge in 2017 by Matjaz Dusic, Matic Jost, and Tomaz Zerovnik.



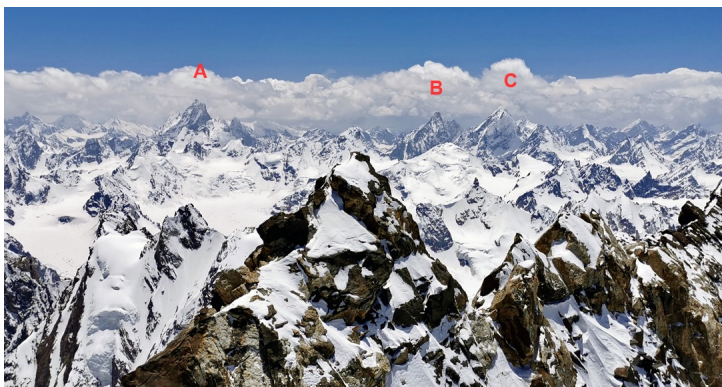
High camp on the Rangtik Glacier with Remalaye behind.



Vajrayogini and the route of the first ascent via the northeast face and northwest ridge. Immediately to the right is unclimbed Peak 6,005m.



The unclimbed northeast face of Chanrasrik Ri (H2) seen from the Rangtik Glacier; the face is about 550m high. An Italian team climbed the left skyline ridge to the central top (5,959m) in 2018 (AAJ 2020) but were unable to reach the main top via the long interconnecting ridge. The peak was climbed by the Italian route, continuing to the main top, in July 2024.



Looking southwest from the summit of Vajrayogini toward the big peaks of eastern Kishwar: (A) Kishtwar Kailash (6,451m), (B) Cerro Kishtwar (6,173m), and (C) Chomochior (6,278m).



Looking west-southwest from the col between Chanrasrik Ri and a small unclimbed peak on the watershed ridge to the west. (A map in AAJ 2018 marks two peaks between Chanrasrik Ri and Vajrayogini, but there is only one.) The high peak on the right is Vajrayogini; the unclimbed spires to the left lie on its southeast ridge, above the Satachan Tokpo (a side valley of the Haptal Tokpo).



The panoramic view east (left) to west from the summit of Vajrayogini.

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