



AAC Publications

Dansam West, First Ascent, North Face and West Ridge

Pakistan, Karakoram, Western Saltoro Mountains

In 1981, members of the Kindai University Alpine Club made the first ascent of Dansam West (6,450m). Our team was 14 undergraduates plus a doctor and senior observer. In that era, a captain from the Pakistan Army also had to join us.

Forty years ago, we had to hike six days up the Kondus Valley with 45 porters to reach the village of Chogoglong (Chogron, just east of Kondus village). Due to our tight budget and the weak Japanese yen, each student carried 30kg, which was more than the porters' loads. In high temperatures like we had never experienced in Japan, it was exhausting. Our porters kindly offered to carry more weight.

Three valleys extend toward Dansam from the north, and we chose the westernmost. Nowadays you can study mountains on Google Earth, but we had merely a rough map showing the largest rivers and mountain ridges. We made base camp at the tip of the glacial tongue on July 25. After overcoming a small icefall and climbing to the top of the ridge that divided our valley from the central valley, we had our first sight of beautiful Dansam on August

2. The great pillar that we called the "Elephant's Nose," climbed by the French team in 2021, looked magnificent but beyond our ability, so we would like to express our sincere respect for their route Harvest Moon.

We placed Camp 3 on the glacier in the central valley, and on August 3 we started to climb the right side of the north face, leading toward the main west ridge of Dansam. A slightly bulging snow ridge invited us with a comfortable double-axe climb. It started snowing on August 9, after showing us clear ultramarine sky for several days. We fixed ropes on the some of steeper slopes, but not all; I deeply regret that we left some of these when we descended.

On August 11 our first group reached the west ridge at 5,900m. The long ridge above was like winter climbing in the Japanese Alps—where we sometimes receive a couple of meters of snow overnight—except for the diluted oxygen level and doubled mountain size. In all, we placed six camps above base camp, the highest at 6,220m. On August 18, in a white-out, the first group believed they were going to make the summit. As the first climber reached the top, the sky opened up and he shouted, "There is another summit over there!" He was pointing to the main summit of Dansam (6,666m). On August 19, a second group reached the west peak. With not enough food or time, we had to give up plans to attempt the main summit—it was too far, even though it was right there in plain sight.

The members of the first team on Dansam West were Yoshimitsu Harada, Toshiyoshi Izumi, Satoshi Nagata, Masayoshi Otani, and Norio Yasui. The second team comprised Osamu Amagata, Fuminori Fujita, Kozo Ishigami (leader), Katsushige Kotera, Hideki Kubo, Etsuhide Nakase, Satoshi Okano, and Sachio Teshima. In base camp were Masahiro Horiuchi, Hitoshi Iida (doctor), and Katsuhisa Ota (senior observer).

— **Katsushige Kotera and Satoshi Nagata, Japan**

Images



The 1981 route up the north face and west ridge of Dansam West.

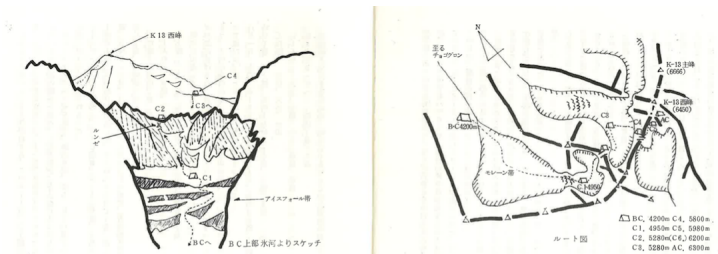


Diagram and map of the 1981 expedition to Dansam West.



Katsushige Kotera dancing in the sun near the top of Dansam West.



The view from Dansam West to the unclimbed main summit of Dansam.

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