

TSUNEMICHI IKEDA

The First Ascent of Panbari Himal

Unclimbed Panbari Himal (22,595ft, 6887m) was opened for foreign expeditions only recently in 2001. The mountain lies to the northwest of Lharkya Bhanjyang Pass (5213m), which situated to the north of Manaslu and links Marsyandi Khola to Buri Gandaki. Six Japanese students from five different universities, led by Yoshimi Katoh, succeeded in the first ascent of Panbari Himal in the autumn of 2006 without using climbing Sherpa.

In 2004 university students section of the Japanese Alpine Club had sent a party under the leadership of Takeshi Wada to Chhiv Himal (6650m) and five members from four different universities made the first ascent of the mountain without Sherpa. The Panbari Himal Expedition 2006 was the second phase of their project.

They approached through the Marsyandi and Dudh Kholas and proceeded into the Fukan Glacier, lying to the east of the mountain, after crossing over Lharkya Bhanjyang Pass. Base camp was established at 4865m on the right (north) side of the glacier on September 6. Camp 1 at 5235m was made three days later.

Though the glacier looked gentle, it had complicated ice-falls with unstable seracs and hidden crevasses. It was like a puzzle to find a route through the ice-falls and took them considerable days. Camp 2 at 5740m was established on September 18, a week behind their schedule. The final camp 3 was established at 6280m below the Northeast Ridge on September 22. But they couldn't have any chance of reconnaissance for the route above due to whiteout conditions.

The summit bid was launched on September 27 by the leader Katoh, Yousuke Urabe, Sayaka Koyama, Kenro Nakajima and Gakuto Komiya from the base camp. These five set off camp 3 on 29th at 3:30 a.m. under the fine weather. They reached the col between Panbari Himal and unnamed Pt. 6767m on the Nepal-Tibet border. A broad ridge led them to the summit. The Northeast Ridge was covered by deep snow and forced them to struggle for hours. The five students finally reached the virgin summit at 9:40 a.m.

A broad view spread itself around them especially a magnificent pyramid of Manaslu captivated them. It was the first Himalayan Giant for the Japanese Expedition 50 years ago. They spent further two days to evacuate all camps and fixed ropes except three snow-stakes. Finally on October 1, all the members arrived safely at the base camp.

based on reports by Yoshimi Katoh and Sayaka Koyama

Expedition Itinerary:

[August]

23 Left Kathmandu.

29 Reached Bimthang (3800m). Acclimatization training for six days.

[September]

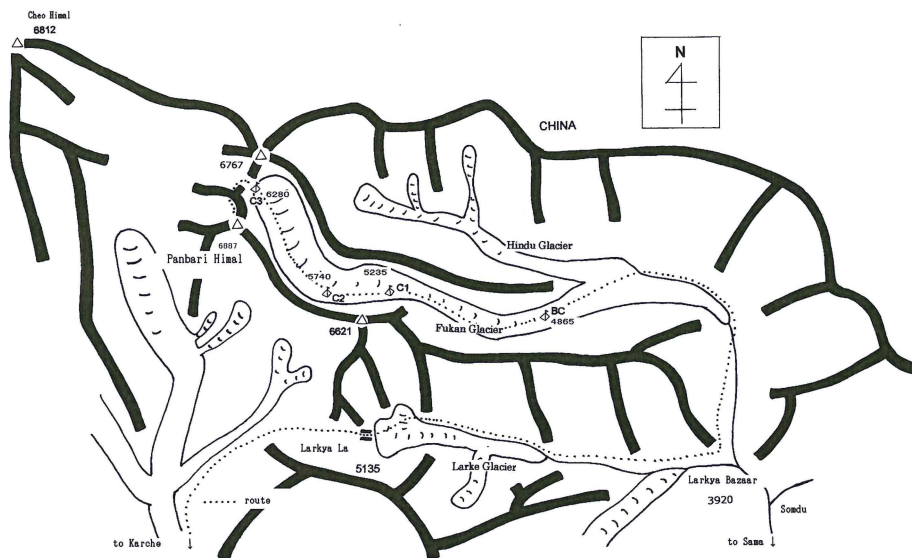
- 4 Crossed over Larkya Bhanjyang Pass.
- 6 Established base camp (4865m).
- 9 Camp 1 (5235m)
- 18 Camp 2 (5740m)
- 22 Camp 3 (6280m)
- 29 Reached the summit (6887m)
- 30 Descent to camp 1

[October]

- 1 Arrived at base camp
- 3 Trekked to Gya La
- 4 Base camp evacuated.

Members:

Yoshimi Katoh 21, the leader, Yousuke Urabe 25, Sayaka Koyama 22, Kenro Nakajima 22, Gakuto Komiya 21 and Tohru Sudoh 21, base camp manager





Panbari Himal—The summif (left) seen from 6,000m plateau



Panbari Himal—Ice fall at 5,600m