



Lugula (6,899m): First official ascent, by south couloir and west ridge

Nepal, Damodar Himal

On April 10 an eight-member expedition from the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Alpine Club, led by Lim Il-jin, arrived in Phu. Here they hired a local guide to lead them to base camp (5,050m) on the Bharchapk Glacier.

Lugula is the highest point of the Lugula Himal in the most northerly section of the Annapurna Conservation Area. Seen from base camp to the south, it stands between Bhrikuti Sail (6,361m) on the left and Chako (6,704m). The east-west ridge connecting Bhrikuti Sail to Chako forms the Nepal-Tibet border.

The team climbed steep moraine hill and narrow valley for three kilometers to reach the left side of Lugula's south face. Here they established advanced base at 5,450m and then set about climbing the couloir falling from the col between Bhrikuti Sail and Lugula. They placed Camp 1 on the ridge leading into the couloir. (The friable rock on this crest led them to dub it Biscuit Ridge.) Fixing ropes, they moved upward until the 18th, when they were forced down to base camp to collect the equipment needed to break through the final 80°, 60m ice face leading to the col.

On the 22nd climbing leader Hong Seung-gi forced the route to the col, and the team established Camp 2 on the crest of Lugula's west ridge. The dry Tibetan plateau was visible to the north; a large snowfield, dubbed Minerva (the university motif) unfolded above.

At 2:30 a.m. on the 23rd, five members, including Lim Il-jin and two Sherpas, set out for the summit. Due to strong wind and snow it was hard to see, but by the time the sun came up they had reached the point where the west ridge turns more toward the northeast. A slip from this narrow ridge would have resulted in a fall of ca 1,000m in either direction. As the wind increased, Lim and two other members decided to retreat from 6,550m.

The remaining climbers surmounted the steep Hong's Step, and at 9:10 a.m. Hong Seung-gi and Feme Sherpa reached the top. They were joined five minutes later by Bum Won-taek and Lakpa Sherpa. All returned to Camp 2 that afternoon and were safely back in base camp the next day.

Provided and translated by **Lim Sung-muk**, Man and Mountain, Korea

Editor's note: This team may not have been aware of an unauthorized ascent of Lugula in 2010. In autumn that year a French party climbed Bhrikuti Sail by the south face and upper southwest ridge. The three French went to the summit on November 1 from a bivouac halfway up the face at 6,070m, and returned to this bivouac the same night. On the 2nd one of the French reports moving east from the bivouac, gaining the west ridge of Lugula, and following it to the summit. He descended to the bivouac, and the same day all three climbers went down to their lower camp at 5,500m.

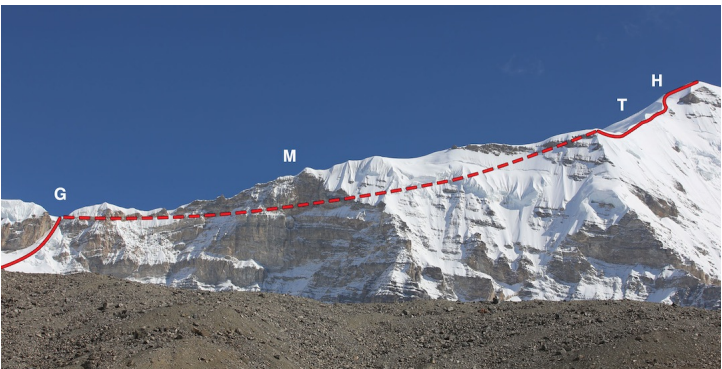
Images



Climbing the Biscuit Ridge. The Korean Gate at the start of the Lagula's west ridge is the notch visible above and right of the climber. The ridge on the left leads to the summit of Bhrikuti Sail.



Climbing the couloir leading to the Korean Gate.



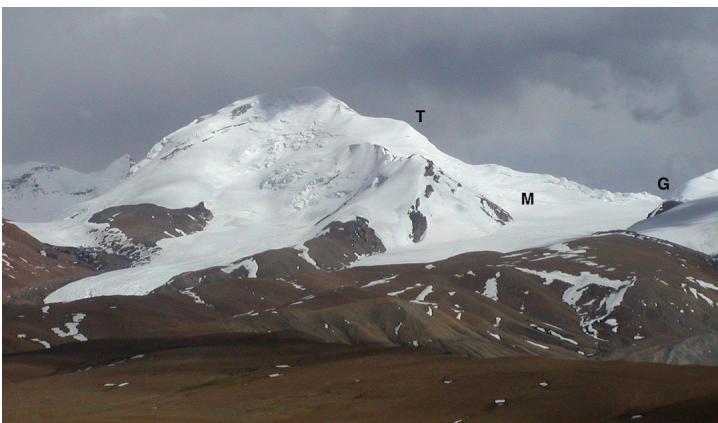
The west ridge of Lugula seen from the south. (G) Korean Gate. (M) Minerva snowfield rises gently on the far side of the skyline ridge. (T) Tiger Ridge. (H) Hong's Step.



Looking south-southeast from Lugula. The pyramidal peak in left foreground is Chako (6,704). Behind it and to the right lies the Himlung Himal-Nemjung group and Kanguru. The Phu Valley is clearly visible running down toward Manang. Far right is the eastern part of the Lamjung Himal–Annapurna Range.



The upper section west ridge of Lugula, showing (T) Tiger Ridge, and (H) Hong's Step.



Lugula from the northwest with (T) Tiger Ridge, (M) the broad and gentle Minerva snowfield, and (G) Korean Gate.

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