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Under Moonlight (6,035m), southwest flank; Hana's Men (6,191m), east face; Hagshu (6,515m), southeast ridge, attempt

India, Zanskar

In June, Jonn Jeanneret, Dan Kopperud, Jake Preston, Gabriel Thomas, and I (Australian or American, but all based in Asia) traveled to India to attempt a peak in the Gangotri. On the 17th, Uttarakhand state was hit by the largest flash flood in nearly a millennium, taking the lives of more than 10,000 people and flattening infrastructure. All access to the area was closed for rescues, recovery, and rebuilding.

Zanskar became our alternative destination, and we reached base camp on July 8 at the northern foot of Hagshu, close to the Zanskar-Kishtwar divide. By July 14, after following the Hagshu Glacier southeast, in front of the east-northeast face of Hagshu, we had established a high camp on the upper plateau. The following day Dan, Jake, and I made an attempt on unclimbed Peak 6,191m to the east of Hagshu. Dan turned back due to illness one kilometer from camp (forgetting to give us the V-threader), leaving Jake and I to continue up a couloir on the south flank, reaching a small lagoon in a hollow 200m below the top. Here, we were hammered by a storm, and tried to wait it out. After six and a half hours we headed down in a whiteout, having to downclimb the entire way. We regained camp after a total of 30 hours, exhausted, but now hopeful for a second attempt later in the trip.

On the 19th the entire team attempted Peak 6,035m, which lies on the southern rim of the upper Hagshu Glacier plateau, and southeast from the summit of Hagshu. Thomas became ill three pitches up the east ridge, and Dan and Jake accompanied him down, leaving Jonn and I to continue (again, the V-threader went down with Dan!). After 20 pitches of snow and ice, we climbed the summit block at around 1 p.m. (GPS readings of 6,029m and 6,032m). We then found a walk-off descent (with a couple of rappels where we had to leave screws) on the south face, which unfortunately left us with approximately eight kilometers to return to camp below the north face. This entire descent took 14 hours, much of it in a full-blown storm. We regained the tents after a total of 25 hours, and named the peak Chand Ni Raat (Under Moonlight).

On the 26th we made an attempt to climb Hagshu via the southeast ridge. Hagshu was formerly considered to be around 6,330m, but the Survey of India marks it as 6,515m [6,330m is mostly likely the height of the distinct north top, which sits above the much-attempted north face]. We spent two days reaching ca 6,440m. We had just climbed the first rock pillar, which was connected to the second by a curtain of ice. Crossing it would have been very difficult, protecting it impossible. We retreated, one pitch down finding an old piton and sling. On the way back to base camp, we saw that we still had been a fair distance from the summit longitudinally, but not much in altitude. We also noted that the south face, while difficult, has a direct line to the summit.

On the 28th, Dan, Jonn, and I headed back up Peak 6,191m. We had only one day's food left, but the weather was excellent. We were able to simul-climb the ice sections and reach the summit at 11 a.m., after a final scary pitch. GPS readings averaged 6,191m. This time we had the V-threader, so the descent went easily and we were back at camp by 7 p.m. We named the peak Hana's Men, after my five-year-old daughter. VIDEO

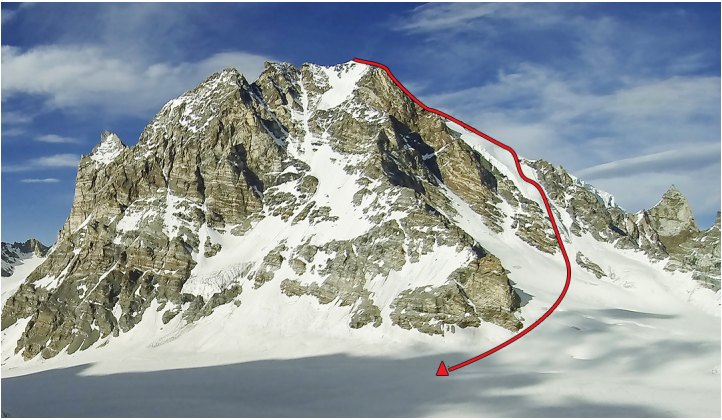
Bryan Hylenski, South Korea

Editor's note: The history of ascents of Hagshu, possibly the highest mountain in eastern Kishtwar, has not been properly recorded. In 1988 a Polish expedition approached the mountain from Zanskar to the north. They ascended the glacier below the east-northeast face and eventually reached the plateau at ca 5,700m below the southeast ridge. In 1989 they returned, but this time from Kishtwar to the south. Approaching up the Hagshu Nala, they made a base camp and reconnoitered a way up to the plateau. They were then confined to camp by a long period of bad weather. Most of the team eventually decided to cross the Hagshu La (4,973m) and visit monasteries in Zanskar, but Pawel Jozefowicz and Dariusz Zaluski opted to stay. The day after the others left, the weather cleared. The two Poles climbed through a crevassed area and then a 500m couloir (up to 60°) to reach the plateau. From here they climbed the southeast ridge in two days, reaching the summit on September 9; there was a rock step of UIAA VI- and a 15m ice step of 80°. They descended the same way and walked out to the north, arriving at the base camp of a British party. Their four friends, worried, had come back up the valley, meeting them at this camp. Exhausted, and with Jozefowicz suffering frostbite, they all went out to Srinigar, from where Zaluski returned to the south side to collect the base camp equipment (finding it had been damaged by bears). As the Poles did not have a permit, this ascent remained undercover.

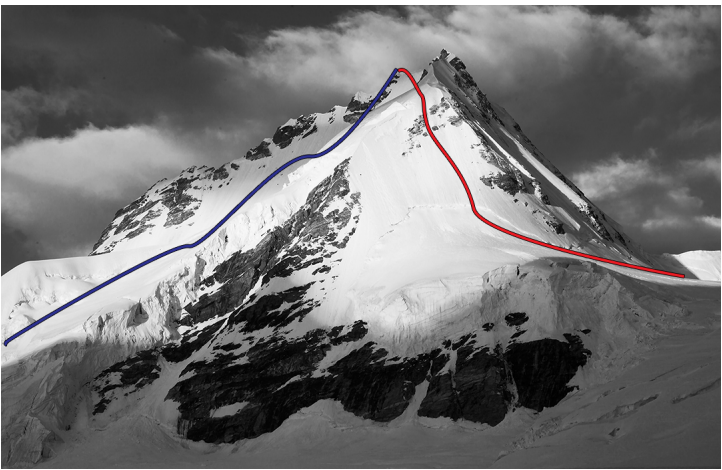
The first official ascent was made on September 16 of the same year by Phil Booth, Max Halliday, and Ken Hopper (U.K.), who had approached from Zanskar. They climbed a steep glacier system to reach the serac-torn east-northeast face, where they climbed a line up the center with two bivouacs. They took a day's rest at each bivouac site, the second on a small shoulder. The hardest climbing was above this bivouac—a couple of pitches of Scottish 4. They followed the summit ridge southeast to the highest point (1,200m, TD, with much 55° névé).

Hagshu saw multiple visits by John Barry and various partners attempting the impressive north face; probably the best effort, in 1994 with Seb Mankalaw, reached ca 6,000m. After a hiatus of nearly 20 years, the peak was attempted again in 2010 by a large French expedition, which made little progress on the mountain.

Images



Hana's Men from the west, with camp on the plateau and route of first ascent.



Under Moonlight from the east: Red shows route of ascent on east ridge, and blue the descent of the south face. The rocky foresummit (on right) appears higher in this picture.



The summit of Hana's Men with an expansive view south over the Kishtwar peaks. Far left is the flat-topped Kishtwar Kailash; right of center is Kishtwar Shivling.



Hagshu from the southeast. Yellow line shows the Polish 1989 ascent and two bivouacs. Red line is the 2013 attempt to ca 6,440m and camp at 6,200m.



The east-northeast face of Hagshu showing the line of the 1989 British route and two bivouac sites. The north top lies directly above the northeast face (with large curving snow couloir), while the north face is almost in profile. The Polish 1989 ascent route lies behind the left skyline.



The much attempted north face of Hagshu, where climbers have concentrated on the line right of center.

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