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South Simvu Glacier, Exploration; Peak 6,130m, Attempt

India, Sikkim, Kanchenjunga Himal

In May I took part in an expedition organized by Alberto Peruffo to explore the Talung and Tongshyong glacier basins, southeast of Kangchenjunga. While the rest of the members busied themselves investigating the countless possibilities for new routes, I set off for the last unexplored glacier from the Talung Valley: the South Simvu.

Why a complete glacier basin so close to Kangchenjunga remained unvisited for so long is fascinating. Early maps had little detail of this region, and it wasn't until Douglas Freshfield's historic "circumnavigation" in 1899, complete with cartographer Professor Garwood, that we had a good map as close to perfect with reference to the other glaciers flowing into the Talung Valley. But there was no sign of South Simvu. It did not appear until the production of the Swiss map in 1951. It is also visible on Tadashi Toyoshima's 1977 sketch map, which in all my expeditions to Sikkim I have found to be most accurate.

My observations from three previous trips here had given me a fair idea of how to access the South Simvu. (Like the Tongshyong immediately to its west, this glacier is invisible from the Talung gorge.) On May 3, Lakpa Sherpa, Thendup Sherpa, and I left base camp at the confluence of the Talung and Tongshyong glaciers and climbed lateral moraine for five hours toward what we felt was the entrance to the South Simvu. For the next couple of days we reconnoitered up valley in poor visibility, until a clear morning saw us climbing the true right side of the icefall giving access to the upper glacier plateau. It took as seven hours to reach a camp on the névé at 5,300m.

Next day we awoke with excitement to clear skies and saw the Simvu twins (6,812m, 6,811m) to our north. To the north-northeast, beyond the 5,215m col leading to the Passanram Glacier to the east, lay Siniolchu (6,887m), while Narsang (5,825m), Jopuno (5,936m), and Pandim (6,691m) were visible to the south. To the northwest, on the watershed ridge dividing Tongshyong and South Simvu glaciers, stood two unnamed peaks of 6,350m and 6,130m. Thendup and I roped up and started for the nearest objective to camp: Peak 6,130m.

In the next four hours we climbed through a narrow gully east of Peak 6,130m and reached the base of its summit rock pyramid. However, not having come prepared for any real climbing, we could not continue. Our high point of 6,000m provided a perfect vantage for photo-documentation of surrounding peaks, and after doing so we descended. Next morning we set off for base camp. [More details and maps are in the full report.]

-Anindya Mukherjee, India

Images



The north face of Peak 5,833m (southeast of Jopuno).



Unclimbed Lhokamburichi (5,495m) above the South Simvu Glacier.



Pandim (6,691m) from the South Simvu Glacier.



Peak 5,666m on the watershed between the South Simvu and Passanram glaciers.



The previously unseen south face of the Simvu twins, across the South Simvu Glacier from 6,000m on Peak 6,130m.



Southwest face of Siniolchu from the upper South Simvu Glacier.

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