



Rolwaling Kang, South Face

Nepal, Rolwaling Himal

In October-November 2015, we organized our first “Himalayan Camp,” with the aim of helping Japanese newcomers to the Himalaya climb safely and motivate them to step up their Himalayan experience. Approaching through the Khumbu and then operating from a base camp in the Chhudunbo Valley, we climbed Langdak (6,220m) via the southeast ridge, a route more difficult than expected (Sho Kamasawa, Koji Shiogai, and me, November 8) and Raungsiyar (6,224m) by crossing the col to its south—between the peak and Pimu (Pamalka, 6,344m)—to reach the Drolambau Glacier, and from there traversing the mountain from south to north (Sho Kamasawa and me, November 14). [These peaks likely have seen a number of climbs since their first ascents in 1952 and 1955, respectively, so it is not possible to say if any new ground was covered; see also AAJ 2016.]

Our original plan had been to attempt Rolwaling Kang (6,664m, 27°53'51.44"N, 86°31'14.61"E), but the earthquake made the approach to the Rolwaling Valley impractical. In 2016, our second Japanese Himalayan Camp also targeted Rolwaling Kang. We left Kathmandu on September 29. Because conditions on the approach were none too good so early in the season, we were forced to establish base camp at 4,700m, at the entrance to the Drolambau Glacier, lower than planned. We started our reconnaissance on October 7, marking a route with cairns through the complex moraine of the glacier. The monsoon came to an end on the 10th, and the following morning we left for four days of acclimatization. The first day, which followed the trekking route used to cross the Tesi Lapcha Pass, was difficult, and we finished by camping at 5,000m. Next day we camped at 5,500m, farther up the Drolambau Glacier, and on the third reached 6,000m before returning to base camp.

We set off again from base camp on the 17th, and on the night of the 18th camped at 6,100m, near the head of the glacial cwm south of Rolwaling Kang. That same day, Yuchiro Iida and I inspected a direct ascent to the south ridge but found it difficult to establish belays due to poor snow conditions. Instead, we climbed four pitches up the face to the left, cached some gear, and descended to camp.

We all left next morning at 5:30 a.m. It was sunny and windless. We split into two teams and climbed the broad south face, left of the south ridge, in parallel. There was more snow than expected, so finding good ice for anchors was difficult. We reached the edge of the summit plateau around noon and were pleased to find it no different than what we had presumed from the map and Google Earth. An easy walk led northeast to the highest point, which we reached a little after 1 p.m. Summiters were Yuichiro Iida, Maho Ishio, Youhei Kayama, Keisuke Tsunoda, Takuya Yoshikawa, and me. This was the first known ascent of this mountain.

– Yasuhiro Hanatani, Japan

Images



Base camp at 4,700m on the Rolwaling Glacier. The massif in the center is Liphu Chuli (I, 6,719m, left, and II, 6,659m, to the right). On the left edge of the image is part of Parchamo (6,279m).



Yasuhiro Hanatani on the south face of Rolwaling Kang (6,664m), with the unclimbed west face of Tengi Ragi Tau (6,938m) seen across the Drolambau Glacier.



Youhei Kayama near the top of the south face of Rolwaling Kang (6,664m) during the first known ascent.



Rolwaling Kang from the Drolambau Glacier to the south-southeast, seen over a foreground ridge. The summit is on the left and the south face is hidden.



Rolwaling Kang (6,664m) from the south. The route of ascent climbed the middle of the snow face left of the south ridge (facing the camera), then northeast across the summit plateau.



On the south face of Rolwaling Kang with Takargo (6,771m) behind.



Looking south down the Drolambau Glacier. Langmoche Ri (6,552m) and Tengi Ragi Tau (6,938m) are on the left. Partially shrouded by cloud in the distance is Likhu Chuli (6,719m).

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