



AAC Publications

Chiling I, East Ridge, and the Enigma of Z2

India, Zaskar

Chiling I (left) and II from the Lalung Glacier to the northeast. The east ridge of Chiling I, climbed in 2017, is marked, as is the 2016 Spanish route on the east ridge of Chiling II. Four Americans attempted a similar line on Chiling II in 2015 and estimate they got to a point 80m below the summit. Photo by Tad McCrea

In August 2017, Jon Griffin and Tad McCrea (both USA) climbed the east ridge of Chiling I (6,349m). Beginning from a high camp at 5,575m, the pair simul-climbed the ridge in six long pitches over snow and ice up to 70°, with an easy mixed section at two-thirds height. They climbed through a “frozen silver fog” and reached the top just after dark. Here, they opted to traverse the summit and descend the south ridge to regain their camp. The route was named Wantonly Tarnished (600m, 70°), and although the altimeter was not checked at the very top, they are sure the peak was at least 6,333m.

Griffin and McCrea's ascent of Chiling I was meant to provide acclimatization for another objective, but afterward they both came down with bronchial infections that lasted two weeks. They finished their expedition by packrafting for three long days and 135km along the Zaskar River from Padum to the confluence with the Indus. This, they said, was by far the highlight of the trip.

In 2015, McCrea had hoped to attempt Chiling II but deferred to the American team of Kitty Calhoun, Renny Jackson, Jay Smith, and Jack Tackle, who had made their own plans for the mountain. These four attempted the east ridge, and after six days they reached a point estimated to be 80m below the summit before retreating in extreme cold. This route was completed in better conditions the following year by Oriol Baró and Lluç Pellissa (AAJ 2017). These two were well acclimatized from climbs elsewhere and were able to reach the summit in a round trip of just 23 hours from their camp below the route at 5,400m.

– Lindsay Griffin, with information provided by Tad McCrea

An annotated Google Earth image of a northern section of the Zaskar Range, with peaks and valleys referred to in this report. Peak locations are according to current IMF designation. (S) Shafat Valley. (RG) Rangdom Gompa. (DT) Dalung Tokpo. (CG) Chiling Glacier; the valley to the north of the Lalung Valley (L) is also referred to as Chiling or Chiling Tokpo (CT), and can be reached from CG by crossing the Chiling La (about 5,280m on Survey of India). (C1 and C2) Chilings 1 and II. (L1, L2, L3) the three Lalung peaks. (PL) Pensilungpa. (DD) Durung Drung. (H) Haskiria Valley. Z1, Z2 and Z3 are also marked, as is (N) Nun (7,135m).

The Chiling and Lalung Peaks and the Enigma of Z2

The Chiling peaks are located on the boundaries of Zaskar, Kishtwar, and Suru. The climbing history of the area is only roughly documented, and a plethora of names and altitudes have been granted erroneously to many of the peaks, features, and valleys. In the past, the Chiling peaks have variously been referred to as Lalung or Z2. However, if we adopt the status as it currently stands “on the ground,” the locations of these peaks, as designated by the Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF),

are as follows (see also the annotated map):

Chiling I (6,349m): The IMF places this at 33°48'43"N, 76°09'44"E, designating it an open peak (permits available) at the head of the Chiling or Chilung valley, on the watershed with the Lalung Valley extending to the northeast. In the past the Lalung has sometimes been called the Rumdum or Rangdum Valley.

Chiling II (6,253m): The IMF places this at 33°49'09"N, 76°10'E. It is also an open peak per the IMF.

Z1 (Zanskar I, 6,155m, although 6,250m on Google Earth, which most often underestimates altitude): First climbed in 1980 by Japanese via the southwest ridge, Z1 has always been placed by IMF and maps at around 33°56'N, 76°08'E, on the southern rim of the Shafat Glacier, south of the Nun-Kun group and north of the Chiling peaks. However, the IMF mistakenly notes this open peak is accessed from the Haskaria (Haskira) Glacier, some six valleys to the south of Z1!

Z2 (6,152m): The IMF designates Z2 at 33°41'N, 76°18'E, and Z3 (6,270m, first climbed by Italians in 1913) at 33°42'N, 76°19'E, both on the southeastern rim of the Durung Drung Glacier, north of Doda Peak (6,573m). However, the IMF confusingly notes they are approached from Lalung, a couple of valleys to the north. Even more confusingly, most maps have marked Z2 on the Chiling-Lalung divide, more or less at the location of the IMF's Chiling I. The Himalayan Index's coordinates of 33°47'24"N, 76°09'E for Z2 place it on the lower south summit of Chiling I (the two peaks are connected by a high snow ridge).

It would appear that most documented ascents of "Z2" were probably of Chiling I. In 1977, Gino and Silvia Buscaini summited "Z2" in a five-day round trip from the Pensi La. They went up the Pensilungpa Glacier, crossed west (possibly by a pass sometimes referred to as Mummer Col) to the Lalung, then up glaciated slopes to reach the south ridge of "Z2," the line of least resistance. Southwest of this summit, across a high connecting ridge, lies a peak of approximately 6,180m (Google Earth). In 1982 an Italian team appears to have attempted this lower peak via the south ridge before finally climbing it via the southeast face, a difficult mixed ascent. At the same time, one member of the Italian expedition climbed, and then descended on skis, the "south face" of the higher summit. These descriptions would match the geography of the IMF's Chiling I and its south peak—they can't be fitted to the IMF's current Z2.

Lalung I (6,243m): The IMF places this at 33°45'35"N, 76°14'13"E. Lalung II (6,157m) is placed at 33°47'N, 76°12'02"E, and Lalung III (6,120m) at 33°45'22"N, 76°12'E. All are open peaks and possibly unclimbed (at least from the Zanskar side). They lie at the western head of the Lalung Glacier.

– Lindsay Griffin

Images



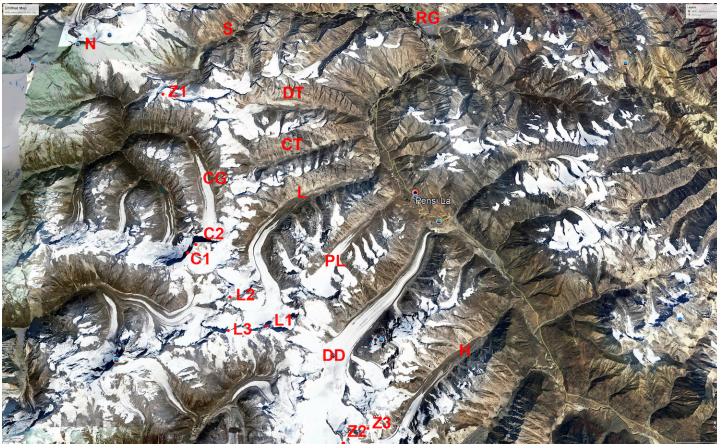
Chiling I (left) and II from the Lalung Glacier to the northeast. The east ridge of Chiling I, climbed in 2017, is marked, as is the 2016 Spanish route on the east ridge of Chiling II. Four Americans attempted a similar line in 2015 and estimate they got to a point 80m below the summit.



Jon Griffin climbing through "frozen silver fog" on the east ridge of Chiling I.



Rock Peak 6,048m on the eastern rim of the Lalung Glacier.



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Looking southeast from the approach to the east ridge of Chiling I, over the upper Lalung Glacier, to unnamed high peaks at the head of this glacier and the next one to the east (a small southeasterly offshoot of the Lalung with a snowy col at its head leading to the Pensilungpa Glacier). (A) Peak 6,274m. (B) Peak 6,048m. (C) Peak 6,197m. (D) Peak 6,067m. It is not known if any of these have been climbed. The three Lalung peaks designated by the IMF are off picture to the right.

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