



## AAC Publications

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### **Phu Kang, First Ascent via Peak circa 6,400m and Northwest Ridge**

Nepal, Peri Himal

**As we began our trek from Koto at 2,600m on the Annapurna Circuit, I was excited.** With all the restrictions caused by COVID-19, how long had it been since I was last climbing in Nepal?" I asked myself. Ours was an eight-person team, including trekkers. Only three had visited the Himalaya previously. We trekked via Phu and Yak Kharka, finally reaching base camp at 5,100m, at the foot of the long unnamed glacier north of Himlung Himal's west ridge, on April 22, seven days after leaving Kathmandu.

Our goal was unclimbed Phu Kang (6,694m), which lies along the frontier with Tibet to the northeast of Himlung Himal. Advanced base was placed on the moraine of the glacier at 5,400m. The wind was strong, and every day it would start snowing at 11 a.m. On top of that, some of the team were not well.

The trekkers began their return, and on the 27th the climbers descended to Phu for a rest, before returning to base camp on the 29th. Unfortunately, one of our key members, Kang Sin-wong, who had much experience in the Alps, failed to improve and was unable to eat anything. On the 30th we headed to advanced base, four hours above base camp. However, it was obvious Sin-wong was still unwell, and he was forced to leave the next day.

On May 1 we climbed to Camp 1 at 5,600m, about 200m lower than we had originally planned. The camp was placed at the foot of the southwest ridge of Peak ca 6,400m, which rises along the frontier ridge northwest of Phu Kang. To reach it from advanced base, we had to spend four hours passing through an icefall.

Above Camp 1, we ascended easily for 150m and then climbed steeply up the ridge (mainly on snow, though we sometimes saw blue ice beneath), fixing rope, to cross a snow dome. On the far side we dropped a little, and on the 3rd established Camp 2 at 6,200m. While the other members set up tents, I and one other climber fixed rope up the initial section of the next day's route. Snowfall increased gradually after 4 p.m., but by 2 a.m. the following morning all seven of us—Hwang Sun-su, Jang Dae-boo, Lee Kun-jin, Kim Min-soo, and I, with Chhiring Sherpa and Dawa Tshering Sherpa—were ready to head for the summit.

By 4:40 a.m. we had reached the ridgeline, close to the summit of Peak ca 6,400m. We crossed the latter, which had a difficult descent on the far side, to reach the sharp northwest ridge of Phu Kang. This was about 700m long, and after fixing the first section, it took a further 3.5 hours (with sections of 40–60°) to reach the top. The highest point was a flat expanse of snow, situated not on the frontier ridge as expected, but around 150m into Tibet. The time was 11:30 a.m.

We stayed on the summit until 1 p.m., then set off on the return. Quickly it began to snow, and this became heavy on the difficult section of ridge, making it tricky to find the fixed ropes. We were back at Camp 2 by 3:30 p.m. and the next day (May 5) descended to base camp.

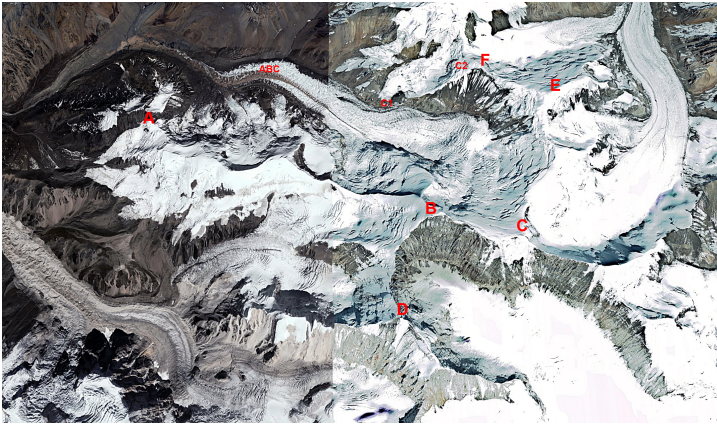
— Kim Mi-gon, translated by Kim Dong-soo, Korea

**Editor's Note:** Phu Kang was brought onto the permitted list in 2003, and in 2008 was the goal of a

primarily Swiss expedition led by Gerard Tejedor. This team planned to try the mountain from Himlung Himal base camp to the south but was unable to find a route. Instead, they climbed Himlung Himal. At the end of the expedition, several members walked up the main valley of the Phu Khola toward Ratna Chuli base camp, where they could see much of the unnamed glacier described above as well as Phu Kang itself. This was the route chosen by the Korean climbers in 2022.

In 2014 the Ministry of Tourism also opened a peak they defined as Phu Kang North (6,580m, 28°49'15"N, 84°26'16"E). These coordinates place it as a border point, north of and with a similar height to Peak 6,566m on the HMG-Finn map, at the end of the southwest ridge of Peak 6,665m in Tibet. However, it is simply a point on a ridge, not at all a distinctive summit, so it seems more logical that Peak 6,566m, which is a separate peak, should bear the name Phu Kang North.

## Images



(A) Sangha Peak (5,935m). (B) Himlung Himal (7,126m). (C) Himlung East (6,932m). (D) Himjung (7,092m). (E) Phu Kang (6,694m). (F) Peak ca 6,400m. (ABC) 5,400m. (C1) 5,600m. (C2) 6,200m.



Looking north along the frontier ridge at the Phu Kang group from the summit of Himlung East. (A) Peak 6,566m. (B) Peak 6,665m. (C) Phu Kang (6,694m). (D) Peak 6,642m.



Heading toward the snow dome high on the southwest ridge of Peak ca 6,400m. Camp 2 for the Phu Kang ascent was situated in a hollow just beyond the dome.





Tracks leading to the snow dome on the southwest ridge of Peak ca 6,400m. Camp 2 (6,200m) for Phu Kang was placed just beyond this dome.



Camp 2 at 6,200m on Phu Kang. The route of ascent came over the small dome to the left and along the ridge. The view is to the southwest: (A) Karma Himal (6,421m), (B) Dharma Himal (6,416m), and (C) Sangha Peak (5,935m), all of which lie on the long west ridge of Himlung Himal. The old normal route to Himlung Himal (out of the picture to the left) reached the ridge left of Sangha from the far side.



Camp 2 for Phu Kang near the top of the southwest ridge of Peak ca 6,400m. The distant peak above and right of the tent is Phu Kang, and the ascent followed its left-hand ridge.





Descending the southeast ridge of Peak ca 6,400m en route to the summit of Phu Kang.



The 2022 team on the summit of Phu Kang. Behind, to the south, the high summit on the right is Himlung Himal, while the shoulder, up and left from the climber in green, is the border peak of Himlung East.

Article Details

Author	Kim Mi-gon
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	97
Page	
Copyright Date	2023
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions