



Historical Climbs at the Head of the Langtang Valley

Nepal, Langtang Himal

Tilman's Col seen from Peak 6,102m on the east side of the upper Langtang Glacier. Left of the col stands Chumsundo (6,581m, the summit lying on the Tibetan side of the border), while to the right is part of the southwest ridge of Langtang Ri. Photo by Victor Saunders.

In the latter years of the 20th century, the Langtang Valley had a certain reputation among some mountaineers as a venue for unauthorized climbing. Despite an arduous approach over loose moraine, various unrecorded activity surreptitiously took place from the hidden upper reaches of the Langtang Glacier. Certainly, there have been attempts and ascents of the southwest face of Xixabangma (Shishapangma, 8,027m) by parties approaching up the Langtang and illegally crossing Hagen's Col into Tibet.

The author was in the Langtang Valley in late November 1987 and, about half a day above Kyanjin Gompa, met two Polish men walking out. They looked extremely weather-beaten, carried enormous packs with poorly concealed ice climbing equipment, had trekking permits that were already three weeks out of date, and sported huge smiles. Who knows what they might have climbed farther up the valley?

European exploration of the upper Langtang began nearly 75 years ago. In 1949, Peter Lloyd and Bill Tilman reached a col on the western rim that now bears Tilman's name. This ca 5,750m col, not to be confused with the far more frequented and lower Tilman's Col, which leads from the Langtang to the Jugal Himal, lies at the foot of the southwest ridge of Langtang Ri and is technically in Tibet, the official border running a little to the east. Lloyd and Tilman surveyed the immediate area but did no climbing.

In 1952, the Swiss geologist and explorer Toni Hagen crossed a col of about 6,000m on the eastern rim (the frontier ridge) near the head of the glacier. From there he had clear views of the upper Nyanang Phu Glacier (Fuqu Glacier in Chinese) and the huge southwest face of Xixabangma directly opposite.

The tallest peak at the head of the glacier is Langtang Ri (7,205m), which has received around 10 attempts, all by the southwest ridge above Tilman's Col. Only four have been successful and none since the 1989 expedition from Korea that made the first winter ascent. The peak was first climbed by a Japanese expedition in December 1981.

To the southeast of Langtang Ri, and with its summit in Tibet, a little east of the frontier ridge, is Risum (a.k.a. Fuqu, 7,133m). It was climbed in 1997 by a Japanese expedition via the east ridge, approaching from the glacier plateau northwest of Xixabangma. There is no known attempt from the Nepalese side.

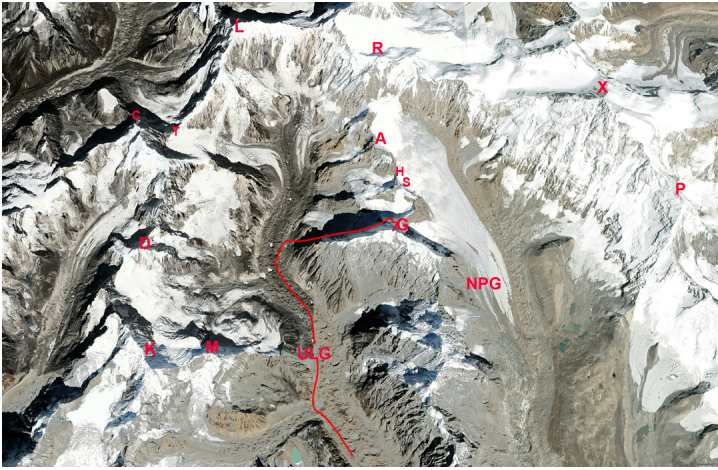
Farther south along the frontier ridge is Peri (6,174m), a little north of Hagen's Col. While probably climbed in the last century, this peak was only put on the permitted list in 2014 and was climbed on December 6, 2016, by Werner Frei (Italy), Pasang Sherpa, and Sandesh Sherpa. They followed the glacier leading to Hagen's Col and climbed to the summit from the southwest.

South of Hagen's Col lies unnamed Peak 6,102m and then Goldum (see report of first recorded ascent

in 2023). Peak 6,102m has a nice west-southwest ridge, which was climbed in December 2001 by Andy Parkin and Victor Saunders (U.K.), and possibly by another party, earlier, in warmer weather. Parkin and Saunders were able to benefit from the winter temperatures by having perfectly flat campsites each night, pitching their tent on frozen glacier pools and securing the guy lines with screws. Parkin, a noted artist, was able to attach his canvas to the ice while painting.

– **Lindsay Griffin, AAJ**

Images



Peaks above the upper Langtang Glacier (ULG) and Nyanang Phu Glacier (NPG, a.k.a. Fuqu Glacier). The Nepal-Tibet frontier arcs around the upper Langtang, following the ridge crests in the left and center of the map. The approach to (G) Goldum, climbed in 2023, is shown. (A) Peri. (D) Dragmorpa Ri. (K) Kyungka Ri. (L) Langtang Ri. (M) "Marie Ri". (C) Chumsundo. (T) Tilman's Col. (P) Pungpa Ri. (R) Risum (Fuqu in Chinese). (H) Hagen's Col. (S) Peak 6,102m. (X) Xixabangma (a.k.a. Shishapangma), with the huge southwest face prominent.



Hagen's Col from an ascent of Peak 6,102m. Beyond is the Nyanang Phu (Fuqu) Glacier in Tibet.



Langtang camping in winter, here below Hagen's Col.



The southwest face of Xixabangma (Shishapangma) seen in December 2001 from the frontier ridge on the opposite side of the Nyanang Phu (Fuqu) Glacier.



Andy Parkin on Peak 6,102m, south of Hagen's Col, in December 2001.



Tilman's Col seen from Peak 6,102m on the east side of the upper Langtang Glacier. Left of the col

stands Chumsundo (6,581m, the summit lying on the Tibetan side of the border), while to the right is part of the southwest ridge of Langtang Ri.

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