

Mt. Makalu (8,463m)



Makalu was Peak XIII of the Indian Survey, the survey suggesting, in 1884, that its name was Khamba Lung. This seems to have derived from the local area being called Khamba, through the valley to the north of the peak was called Kama Lung (the valley of the River Kama).

The French has negotiated permission for an attempt on Makalu from Tibet as early as 1934 but the Tibetans had changed their minds before any significant planning was underway.



Two teams, American and New Zealand were attempted to climb Makalu on the pre-monsoon on 1954, but both were retreated due to bad weather and physical troubles of climbing member.

First Ascent

The French team arrived the spring, 1955 led by Jean Franco. Jean Couzy and Lionel Terray, veterans of Annapurna as well as the 1954 reconnaissance trip, were joined by Lean Guido Magnone and André Vialatte. André Lapras was the team doctor and two geologists, Pierre Bordet and Michel Latreille,



Jean Couzy on the summit, photographed by Lionel terray

accompanied the expedition.

The team had no less than 23 Sherpas under sirdar Gyalzen Norbu and a Gurkha soldier, Kindjoch Tsering, who acted as a high-altitude porter.

The team's equipment showed a step change from that of previous expeditions to the great peaks. Though base layers were knitted jersey rather than man-made fiber, the one-piece down suite were very similar to modern suite, though they needed to be covered with a windproof nylon shell. The French also had improved lighter oxygen set.

Using, in part, ropes to the col where they set Camp V. The ridge was not attempted, a rising traverse being made across the north face to a last camp, Camp VI, at 7,800m. From it, at 7 am on 15 May Terray and Couzy set out. They crossed relatively

easy ground to the base of a spur which led up to the east ridge. The spur, which had looked formidable from a distance, was straightforward, the pair reaching the summit at about 11 am, having taken only four hours over the mountain's final 660m.

Mountaineering Chronicle

- 1954 (France): Sent reconnaissance party.
- 1955 (France): Jean Franco led expedition and climbed the summit by Jean Couzy and Lionel Terray on May 15 and rest of expedition member climbed in the next day.



From South
 1. Yugoslavians (1975)
 2. Beghin (1989)
 3. S Pillar, Czechs (1976)
 4. SE Ridge, Japanese (1970)



From Makalu La
 1. First ascent, French; 'classic' route (1955)
 2. NW Ridge, Kukuczka solo (1981)



West Face
 1. Polish/Brazilian (1982)
 2. Russians (1997)
 3. west Pillar, french (1971)
 4. NW Ridge, Kukuczka solo (1981)