



AAC Publications

Ice Tooth, east ridge; Phola Gangchen, east pillar attempt

Tibet, Himalaya

My main project for the year was an expedition to Tibet in October with Miha Gasperin (doctor), Luka Krajnc, Tadej Kriselj, Nejc Marcic, Marko Prezelj, Luka Strazar, and Martin Zumer. There is an obvious unclimbed line on the south face of Phola Gangchen (Molemenqing, 7,703m), and to me it looked perfect.

We established base camp in a beautiful setting at 5,000m by a lake. Our first ascent was on Ice Tooth (6,200m, a peak south of Nyanang Ri first climbed in 1983 by Tone Skarja and Andrej Stremfelj from the west). Luka Strazar, Nejc, Marko, Martin, and I climbed the east ridge, which was difficult rock at first but became easier when we reached mixed and snow climbing on the upper part of the route. We made one comfortable bivouac.

Only Marko and I were motivated to try the line on the south face of Phola Gangchen. The approach was complex, taking much time and energy. In the moraine, we had to roll large rocks out of the way to make our passage safe. Our next obstacle was an extremely broken glacier. Less than 100m below the plateau under the face, I realized that it would be too dangerous to continue. Marko had already sensed this but stayed silent, knowing I would not be satisfied if I didn't try.

Instead, we looked at the east face, which has steep rock and mixed terrain in the lower section, followed by beautiful snow arêtes. Marko and I decided to try this line, joined by Luka Strazar, Nejc, and Martin. On our first day we climbed sections of ice and steep mixed, with difficulties around M6. Next day we climbed steep snow ridges to a perfect tent site at 6,600m. However, on the following morning it started snowing heavily, and the trio that had joined us the day before decided to rappel.

Marko and I climbed one more pitch through increasing snowfall and wind, stopping at ca 6,800m. We returned to the bivouac and decided to wait for the storm to pass. The forecast promised only one day of storm with little snow, and we had enough food to sit this out. Half a meter of snow fell that night, and the next day was no better. By the following morning we knew we had to escape. Visibility was bad, and it proved difficult to find rappel anchors.

We eventually gained flat terrain and began breaking trail through chest-deep snow. Despite being exhausted, we were still in good spirits. After many hours of tough travel, light from the moon enabled us to see through a gap in the mist to the lake where our second camp was located. What looked like a two-hour mission from this point took almost six hours. We then spent another hour digging out the tent.

On a normal day it would have taken three and a half hours to get back to base camp from our lake camp. But it wasn't until midnight that we reached safe ground on top of the moraine, and we needed all the following day to return to base, where we waited for Luka Krajnc and Tadej, who were still breaking trail from the other side of the valley. They had attempted Eiger Peak (6,912m), climbing ca 600m until forced down.

As a team we started a difficult descent to Nyalam, leaving our equipment at base camp to be retrieved after the snow melted.

Luka Lindic, Slovenia

Images



Luka Lindic high on the east ridge of Ice Tooth.



The escape from the mountains after nearly one and a half meters of new snow.



The east ridge of Ice Tooth (6,200m).



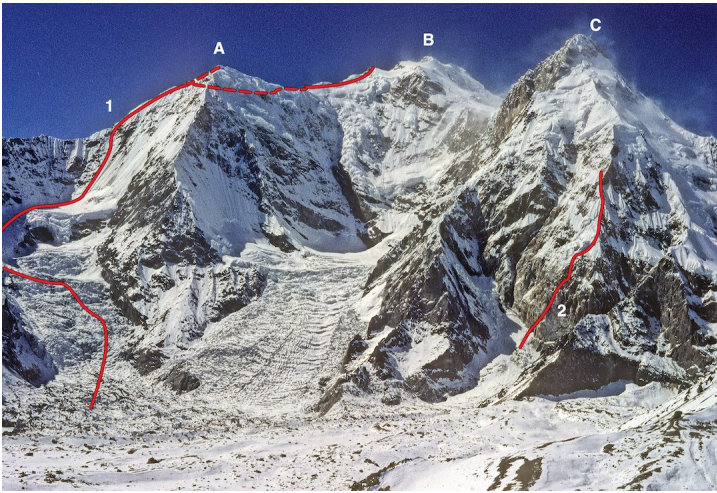
Approaching the foot of the east pillar of Phola Gangchen, with the attempted route and bivouacs marked.



Luka Lindic climbing through the initial steep mixed ground on the east pillar of Phola Gangchen. The summit of Nyanang Ri (7,119m) is visible far left.



Luka Lindic leads a difficult slab on the lower part of the east ridge of Ice Tooth.



The east side of Xixabangma, showing the only two routes attempted to date. (1) British attempt, 1987. After making the second ascent of (A) Pungpa Ri (7,486m) via the southeast face and south ridge, the British traversed below it and continued up the ridge toward (B) Xixabangma, before retreating at ca 7,650m. (2) The 2013 Slovenian attempt on (C) Phola Gangchen.

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