



## **Palzampiu Valley, Jungdung Kangri (6,060m), Shaft of Justice and The Monypenny Hall of Fame**

India, Ladakh

With Pakistan travel plans falling through, my good friend James Monypenny (U.K.) and I quickly regrouped. With nothing more than a photograph and an incredibly vague topographical map, we set our sights on a previously unattempted 6,060m granite peak known as Jungdung Kangri in the Ladakh Range.

Jungdung Kangri lies hidden in the Palzampiu Valley, only a few dozen kilometers from the heavily militarized border with Pakistan. We first tried to gain access from the south through the town of Likir, thus eliminating the need for military permits. However, we were told the pass was uncrossable by mules. Instead, we secured nine-dollar military permits through a tourist agency in Leh and headed north by road over the Khardung La to the Nubra Valley. As these permits are only valid for seven days, on the way out we planned either on a multi-day hike to the south, which would avoid checkpoints, or chance that we wouldn't be checked. We opted for the latter, and 21 days later our luck held. Climbing permits, however, need to be acquired well in advance, although recent reforms have simplified the process and dropped prices, as well as opening new areas.

After a two-day walk with a couple of mules, we reached base camp at 5,090m in a pristine alpine meadow. Above lay a playground of granite faces, alpine couloirs, and pointed summits. After hauling massive loads up moraine and glacial ice, we set high camp at 5,522m, below the west side of Jungdung Kangri.

We warmed up on what looked to be the easy central couloir. However, it soon steepened to 85°, with threatening cornices basking in the sun above. Our unacclimatized lungs burned, calves screamed, and heads spun. James led a pitch of 5.4 up to the central summit tower, and after many chossy dead ends I linked a 5.8 pitch to the central summit at 6,030m. We had established our first route, Shaft of Justice (630m, TD+ 80° 5.8), but in the process realized that the southwestern summit was actually the highest point.

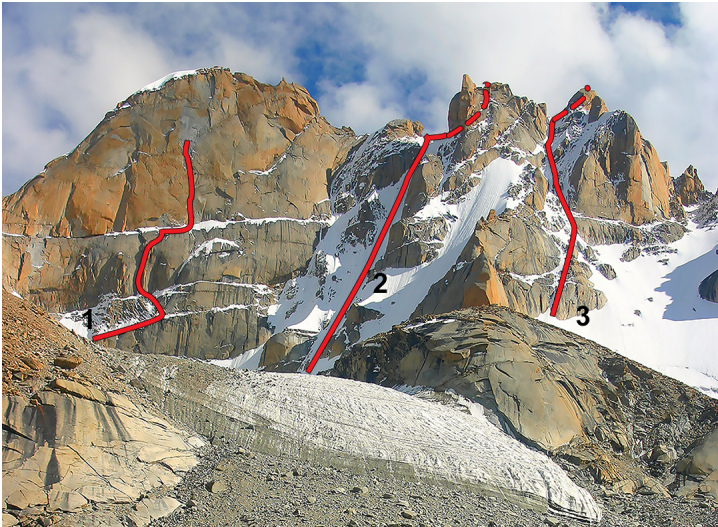
The large face to the left of the Shaft was calling, with 650m of icy, steep granite. A few days later, with a selection of rock and ice gear, and no bolt kit or bivouac gear, we launched into the unknown. Progress slowed as the brittle ice of the lower face steepened. A steep icy corner of M6, followed by an improbable 5.9 traverse, led to a 15cm offwidth—a lead that left me coughing blood. On a small, poorly protected ledge at 5,800m, we made an unplanned shiver bivouac. My legs dangled into the abyss as we spooned through the night. James led pitch after pitch of difficult aid and free next morning, but progress was slow. High on the chossy gray bands of the upper wall, snow fell and night approached. A second bivouac without water, food, fuel, or even a ledge was a daunting prospect. We bailed.

The mountain was still unclimbed, so once feeling fit we climbed simultaneously through mixed gullies to the right of Shaft of Justice, and in a few hours reached the col below the highest summit tower. I attempted a dangerous delaminated mixed pitch, but it quickly ended in unclimbable slabs. James then embarked on an epic three-hour aid lead, connecting discontinuous features via many large swings on poor gear, at one point tensioning off a pecker he pounded in with a belay device. I shivered. We eventually stood on Jungdung Kangri's true summit with a route to be proud of: The Monypenny Hall of Fame (650m, ED1 90° A2++).

An epic descent awaited, and of course our ropes jammed after pulling them just far enough to leave the other end floating in space and out of reach. James did the death prusik from hell up 60m of free-hanging, 8.5mm rope. Nothing but the jammed knot kept him alive. The constant unknowns and logistical challenges of this trip made it one of the most memorable to date.

Cory Hall, Canada

## Images



Jungdung Kangri from the west-northwest. (1) Attempt on west face of northeastern top. On retreating, Hall and Monypenny rappelled to the large horizontal snow ledge, moved across to its right edge and then rappelled ice slopes. (2) Shaft of Justice. (3) Monypenny Hall of Fame.



James Monypenny on the headwall during the west face attempt.



James Monypenny on the west face attempt.



Monypenny on the Monypenny Hall of Fame, as the snow starts to fall.

## Article Details

Author	Cory Hall, Canada
Publication	AAJ
Volume	56
Issue	88
Page	332
Copyright Date	2014
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions