



Tongshyong and South Simvu Glaciers, Exploration, First Ascents

India, Sikkim, Kangchenjunga Himal

From April 12 to May 31, Francesco Canale, Enrico Ferri, Davide Ferro, and Andrea Tonin (Italy), Cesar Rosales Chinchay (Peru), Anindya Mukherjee (India), and I as leader operated on the Zemu side of Kangchenjunga, one of the most fascinating and little explored areas of the Himalaya. Political and administrative difficulties, together with an impracticable forest, have thwarted exploratory ambitions for more than a century. Our main purpose was to study access routes to the Zemu Ridge and Zemu Peak (7,780m, one of the highest unclimbed summits in the Himalaya) from the Tongshyong Glacier, close to Zemu Gap (5,861m).

Our first challenge was finding a route through the labyrinthine Talung Gorge. Our porters gradually gave up and went home. On the third day they were frightened by the discovery of the body of a clergyman, seated on a bed of voluntary death, and on the fifth day, shocked and tired, they abandoned us. After six days in the forest we established base camp at 3,700m.

Mukherjee's team left to explore the South Simvu Glacier, as described in a separate report. The rest of us made an advanced base at 5,050m, then tried to approach the Zemu Ridge and were the first to cross an amazing snow/ice plateau leading to the immense south face of Kangchenjunga. We reached a col we named Colle Sella (5,440m) and from there climbed two summits, Alpine Guides Peak (5,550m) and Sella Col Peak (5,470m).

We then extended our exploration to the entire Tongshyong Glacier, ca 12km in length. We reached three cols, one of which gave direct access to the Talung Glacier to the west. We named it Porta Maraini (5,220m), after the great Italian mountaineer Fosco Maraini. From here we climbed three peaks: both summits of Cime della Fratellanza (5,360m and 5,380m, PD) and Rinpoche's Temple Peak (5,684 m, 700m, TD 65°).

On May 10 we embarked on the second phase of the expedition in the 8km-long South Simvu Glacier, where Mukherjee's team had just been (see following report). This glacier rises in three levels. After reaching the col giving access to the first level, we negotiated 1,000m of complex route-finding through crevasses and ice walls to reach a gap at the head of the glacier that we named Porta della Rivelazione Perenne (6,036m). We were just above the Zemu Gap, and the whole Zemu Ridge lay in front of us. After descending to Advanced Simvu Camp at 5,100m, we spent the final days climbing the most attractive mountain of this glacier, the north summit (5,750m) of what we called the Three Peaks of South Simvu. This required a high level of technical climbing (650m, TD+ 75°) on a sharp, exposed ridge. Much more information on this expedition is available at www.k2014.it.

-Alberto Peruffo, Italian Alpine Club

Images



Kangchenjunga South summit and the unclimbed Zemu Peak (on the ridge to the right), seen from Rinpoche's Temple Peak.



Macabre remains in the forest approach.



Unclimbed peak above Porta Maraini from the Colle Sella. To the right is Pandim.



Rinpoche's Temple Peak and route of ascent.



The three South Simvu Peaks, with route of ascent to the north summit.



Exploring the Zemu Ridge.

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