



AAC Publications

Yalung Ri North, possible new line; Chugimago North, northwest face to north top; Chugimago, west face, Mixed Emotions

Nepal, Rolwaling Himal

With the help of a friend who had visited the Rolwaling two years earlier, Nik Mirhashemi and I contacted Mingma Gyalje of Dreamers Destination. Mingma grew up in the Rolwaling and has become one of the most accomplished and bold Nepali mountaineers of his generation. Mingma was, in a word, fantastic, and the level of service he provided was remarkable, to say the least.

We established base camp in the village of Na (4,150m), pitching our tents outside the house belonging to Mingma's mother. We ate all our meals in the house but slept in tents. We acclimatized by trekking around the valley, bouldering, and doing a little sport climbing just outside the village. It's quite easy to get to 5,000m in 2.5 hours by taking the trail to Yalung base camp, where there is really good bouldering.

On October 23 we climbed possible new ground on Yalung Ri North (5,634m, a rocky summit first climbed by a 1952 Scottish expedition). Our route mostly ascended the north side of the peak to its very small summit: Wrong Way Bud (500m, 5.6 M4). We descended to base camp the same day, leaving a cache of gear at Yalung base camp.

Our next climb was Chugimago North (5,945m), a subpeak of Chugimago. This was significantly more difficult to access. Long talus fields and steep vegetated slopes put us at the rocky base of the glacier below the northwest face, where there was a flat, sandy spot to camp and a perfect access couloir to the glacier. Early on the morning of October 28 we climbed the 120m couloir onto the glacier and went up to the bottom of the left-hand side of the face. Our 500m route initially consisted of moderately angled ice and snow couloirs, then, higher up, large flutings and sugar snow over rock. The technical difficulties were M4 AI4 75°.

Our route ended at the north top; the ridge leading to the higher south top was spectacular but blocked by a massive overhanging cornice. This true summit of Chugimago North is probably 100m higher than the top of our route. We followed old tracks down the north-northeast ridge to a notch at the base and then rappelled a 250m wall in the dark to reach the glacier, and eventually our camp. **Next day we descended to Na.** [Editor's note: A little prior to this ascent, Spanish climbers Miguel Anta, Javier Palorames, Alberto Urtusun, and Lluís Vernich climbed a very similar line on the northwest face to the summit ridge, which they named Bums Dalbhat (500m, M4+ 90°). They didn't go to the north top but immediately descended the north-northeast ridge, regaining their camp after a round trip of 26 hours. The last four pitches to the summit ridge, on which they found very bad snow, took several hours and were almost impossible to protect. Later, two of the team climbed new ground (V+ 80°) to 5,800m on the southeast face of 6,257m Chekigo before retreating.]

Our last objective was the west face of Chugimago (6,259m). The peak had been climbed twice previously, both ascents via the impressive west face. We spied a line starting to the right of the 2015 Mucic-Strazar Route. Similarly long and difficult travel over talus and scree put us on the Yalung Glacier, where we camped, and at 3:30 a.m. on November 1 we began walking toward the face.

Our route turned out to have the best climbing of the trip, with fun mixed pitches down low, snow flutings in the middle, and a final headwall. The latter proved to be difficult but also had really fun

mixed pitches, up to M6, with great névé in between. The snow became more rotten the closer we got to the ridge, but after six pitches on the headwall we reached the crest as the sun set. We bivouacked below a prominent pyramid-shaped rock on the ridge. Having chosen to go light and bring only a small tent, stove, pads, and puffy pants and jackets, but no sleeping bags, this bivy sucked. I guess you live and learn. However, we made it through the night and next morning climbed the four remaining pitches along the crest to the summit. We called our route Mixed Emotions (900m, M6 AI5 80°). [Editors' note: This route climbs more or less along the crest of the buttress right of the Mucic-Strazar Route, joins it in the middle section, and then climbs to the left of it through the headwall.] In descent we took one of the prominent snow couloirs to the lookers' right of our route and were able to rappel and downclimb to the glacier, reaching Na at 8 p.m. the same day.

The Rolwaling is an incredible place and still a bit off the beaten track for Nepal. It holds lots of potential for new alpine mixed climbs on 6,500–7,000m peaks. Highly recommended!

Mark Pugliese, AAC

Images



The north side of Yalung Ri North and the line of the possible new route Wrong Way Bud.



Chugimago North and Chugimago (far right—top of west face visible) seen from the bouldering area near Yalung Ri base camp. (1) Mirhashemi-Pugliese route to the north top of Chugimago North. The Spanish route, Bums Dalbhat, climbed earlier the same month, appears to cover very similar ground except for the lower section, where it climbs right of the initial rock rib. It also does not finish on the north top. (2) Bajde-Kramer-Mucic-Strazar route (2015) on northwest face, finishing on the south top. (3) Infleti (Alegre-Baro, 2014).



The west face of Chugimago with existing routes reaching the summit. (1) Hennessey-Kastelic, 2014. (2) Mucic-Strazar, 2015. (3) Mixed Emotions (Mirhashemi-Pugliese, 2016).



Mark Pugliese leading into one of the crux sections on Mixed Emotions, west face of Chugimago.



Mark Pugliese following the crux pitch of Mixed Emotions, west face of Chugimago.



Nik Mirhashemi at the bottom of the west face of Chugimago after descending from the summit.

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