



AAC Publications

Cerro Kishtwar, Northwest Face Direct, Har-Har Mahadev

India, Jammu and Kashmir, Kishtwar Himal

In 2011 Denis Burdet, Robert Frost, David Lama, and Stephan Siegrist climbed Yoniverse on the northwest face and upper south ridge of Cerro Kishtwar (6,155m GPS) to make the second ascent of the mountain. During his time on the climb, Siegrist's eyes were drawn toward the great rocky expanse of the direct northwest face to the left, an image he was not able to get out of his head.

On September 13, 2017, Siegrist was back at the base camp below Cerro Kishtwar, this time with Thomas Huber (Germany) and fellow Swiss Julian Zanker. Ideal weather allowed no opportunity for rest, and by the 18th they had established an advanced base at 5,050m. The plan was to climb up the front face of the large rounded pillar that characterizes the middle of the wall.

Their planned route lay to the right of an attempt in October 1991 by Brendan Murphy and Andy Perkins, who climbed the left side of this pillar to the top of the face but not the summit. After a total of 17 days and 28 pitches (A3 and Scottish 6), the British climbers slanted left to reach the north ridge, crossed to the northeast flank, and were 100m below the top when, exhausted and without food, they were forced to descend.

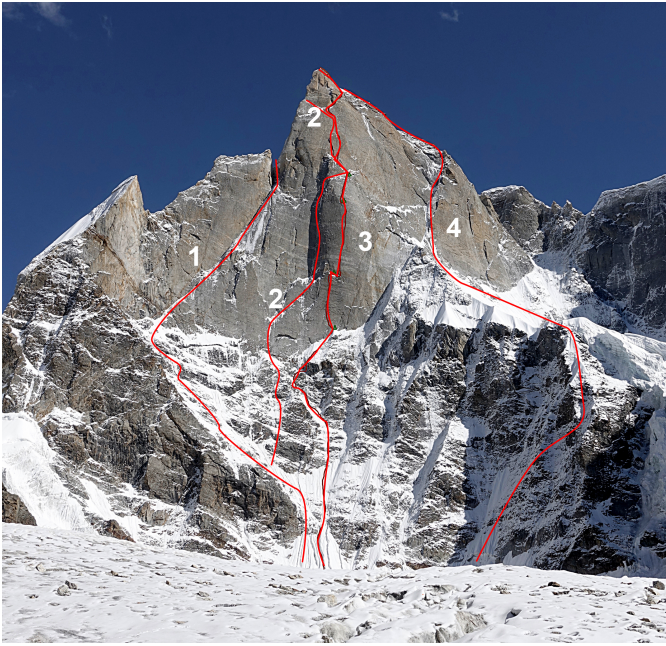
After fixing parts of the lower mixed section of the face and establishing a camp on a snow terrace at 5,450m, immediately below the granite pillar, the 2017 team set off with a portaledge on October 1 for what they hoped would be a five-day climb. In retrospect, they realized they had underestimated the difficulties; the route was sustained and very demanding due to the constant cold. After three days they had only reached the top of pitch seven, about one-third of the way up. Also, Siegrist was having problems with tendonitis in one hand. They chose to descend, resupply, and make a second attempt in a few days.

On October 8 they began again. The weather was typically clear and cold through the night and morning, with temperatures down to -20°C, then snowing in the afternoon. They made three portaledge camps on the wall, and it took seven days to reach the summit. Only on the last day did they climb in sunshine. All climbers came away with some degree of frostnip, especially Zanker. However, on the summit, they were treated to full sunshine and no wind. It was the fourth overall ascent of the mountain, and the second by Siegrist.

The route was named after an expression from Hindu mythology, Har-har Mahadev, which roughly translates as "raise moral values to overcome fear and dangerous situations"—or, as Huber put it, "Get a grip!" After the first 400m of ice/mixed (M6 80°), the 600m headwall involved 24 pitches up to A3+ and 6b; it only came close to the Murphy-Perkins line very high on the wall. Some bolts were placed on belays, while seven rivets and eight bathooks were drilled on lead. The team rappelled the route.

– Lindsay Griffin, with information from Stephan Siegrist, Switzerland

Images



Cerro Kishtwar (6,155m GPS) from the northwest. (1) Diagonal ice ramp followed by Mick Fowler and Steve Sustad on the peak's first ascent in 1993. (2) Brendan Murphy–Andy Perkins 1991 attempt to within 100m of the summit. (3) Har-har Madadev (2017). (4) Yoniverse (west face and south ridge, Burdet-Frost-Lama-Siegrist, 2011).



The Devil's Hole, the overhanging crux pitch of the lower mixed section of Har-har Mahadev on the northwest face of Cerro Kishtwar.



Stephan Siegrist leading the second A3 pitch high on the northwest face of Cerro Kishtwar in unaccustomed warmth and sunshine.



Stefan Siegrist climbing the 6a A2 pitch above Happy Ledge on the front face of the pillar, northwest face of Cerro Kishtwar.



Stephan Siegrist following skyhook moves on the first ascent of Har-har Mahadev, northwest pillar of

Cerro Kishtwar.

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