



## AAC Publications

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### **Historical Notes on Palung Ri and the North-Northwest Ridge of Cho Oyu**

China, Tibet, Mahalangur Himal

**Many sources (including the AAJ) have credited the first ascent of Palung Ri (7,012m) to Slovenians Andrej and Marija Štremfelj, who climbed the south-southeast ridge in 1995 as acclimatization for an ascent of Cho Oyu.** Palung Ri lies immediately north of the Palung La, a 6,500m pass at the foot of the north ridge of Cho Oyu. To be fair, the Slovenian couple never claimed the first ascent—it was bestowed upon them.

Correspondence with Martin Lutterjohann, a member of the Academic Alpine Club of Munich, who climbed the south-southeast ridge of Palung Ri from the Palung La in 1992 (and again never claimed nor assumed it was a first ascent) led to further research and the conclusion that the true first ascent of the peak was by Edmund Hillary and George Lowe from Eric Shipton's Cho Oyu expedition in 1952. On May 14, the two climbed the west-northwest ridge from a 6,390m col, which they approached via the Gyabrag Glacier to the south.

The peak, which was not referred to as Palung Ri at the time, was climbed again on May 16, 1955, by Erwin Schneider and Ernst Senn, during the early days of Norman Dyhrenfurth's extended expedition to attempt Lhotse. These two took the same route and climbed to over 6,800m on skis.

Palung Ri appears have been climbed again in May 1987 by Bart Vos (Netherlands), solo, with a night out at 6,700m, but his route is unclear. If Vos ascended the original route, then the first known ascent of the south-southeast ridge—the one credited to the Štremfelj pair—appears to have been by Michael Kinne and Martin Lutterjohann on May 2, 1992. A third member of that party, Uwe Koblitz, retreated at 6,900m.

Members of this same German expedition also made a strong attempt on the first ascent of the north-northwest ridge of Cho Oyu (8,188m). This ridge had been attempted by Italians in 1988 and Australians in 1990, both stopping at around 6,800m.

On May 8, 1992, Koblitz and Christoph Zuleger left their tent on the Palung La and climbed to a bivouac at 7,000m. Next day they outflanked rocky Peak 7,570m on the right. (Peak 7,570m originally was called Juge Peak after its first ascensionist, Jean Juge, who reached it from Cho Oyu's normal route on the west-northwest flank.) The Germans were heading for Camp 3 (7,400m) on the normal route when they were caught in a snowstorm and forced to bivouac in a crevasse. The following morning, bad weather and deep snow turned them around at 7,300m. They planned to rest in base camp, climb the normal route to Camp 3, and finish the north-northwest ridge, but weather conditions never allowed.

The north-northwest ridge was first climbed to Cho Oyu's summit in 1996 by Oscar Cadiach (Spain) and Sebastian Ruckensteiner (Austria), who also outflanked Peak 7,570m on the right, headed up the west-northwest flank to join the normal route, and followed it to the summit.

– Lindsay Griffin, from information supplied by Martin Lutterjohann, Germany

## Images



Cho Oyu from the west and the line of the 1992 German attempt on the north-northwest ridge to 7,300m.

## Article Details

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