



AAC Publications

Bara Shigri Glacier, Khhang Shiling (6,360m), northeast ridge via west flank; Kulu Makalu (a.k.a. Lal Qila, 6,349m), northwest face, attempt India, Lahaul

From July 20–August 10, Vasile Dumitrica, Mihnea Prundeanu, and I took part in Climbathon 2013, an event organized by the Indian Mountaineering Foundation. There were several objectives: exchanges of information and experience between Indian and Western mountaineers, with a focus on alpine style, and ascents of several peaks in the region. With 10 instructors, of which three were foreign, and over 60 "student" participants (nearly all Indian), it was a large and complex event.

After several days of preparation and acclimatization around our base camp at Concordia, four teams, each with an instructor, attempted Shigri Parvat (6,536m). The idea was to climb four separate lines on the southeast face. Three teams, led by Mihnea, Paul Schweizer (U.K.), and me, planned to climb in alpine style, while the fourth, led by Kushang Sherpa, would fix ropes.

Once at the base of the mountain, Kushang Sherpa deemed his original line too dangerous and proceeded to fix ropes on the line envisaged by Paul and me. This, and the fact that we also decided our line was unsafe at the time, made us look for a different objective. Directly opposite was the west side of Khhang Shiling (we were wrongly informed at the time it was Khangsering). On August 4 we left advanced base at 2 a.m. and summited at 7:30 a.m. Summiters were Bharat Bhusan, Subrata Chakraborty, Prerna Dangi, Karn Kowshik, and Bhupesh Kumar (India), Vasile Dumitrica, Mihnea Prundeanu, and me (Romania), and Angel Robledo (Brazil). [Editor's note: The only previous ascent of this peak took place in 2004, when an Indian party, led by Divyesh Muni, climbed from the east to reach the col between Shigri Parvat and Khhang Shiling, and then up the northeast ridge of the latter to the summit.]

After the Climbathon had finished, Vasile, Mihnea, and I attempted Kulu Makalu by the unclimbed northwest face, approaching up its northern flank. On August 9, Vasile was in front, having just climbed over an ice bulge, and Mihnea was a couple of meters above me, when there was a large rockfall—a truck load, no exaggeration. Brick-sized chunks hit my shoulder, arm, and leg. Fortunately, there was no severe damage, and Vasile escaped unscathed. However, Mihnea's helmet was broken, and a table-top-sized block hit him in the back. His rucksack, full of down gear and a tent, softened the impact, but he was pushed downhill so much that one of his crampon points speared my left hand.

At first Mihnea was barely able to move his legs, and had bad lower back pain. The eventual diagnosis was a damaged sciatic nerve and hairline fracture of a lumbar vertebra. We managed to rappel to the bottom of the face, and taking advantage of the fact that Mihnea was still in shock, continued crawling back to base camp, which we reached at 3 a.m. Next day he was able to walk, and with the help of porters we made it safely to the road at Batal.

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Images



Advanced base camp below the western icefall between Shigri Parvat and Khhang Shiling, and the partial new route on the latter.



Attempted Romanian route on the northwest face of Kulu Makalu.



Mihnea Prundeanu climbing on the northwest face of Kulu Makalu before the rockfall incident.

Article Details

Author	Cosmin Andron, Romanian Alpine Club
Publication	AAJ
Volume	56
Issue	88
Page	342
Copyright Date	2014
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions