



AAC Publications

Nanga Parbat, Diamir Face, ascent to upper Mazeno Ridge

Pakistan, Western Himalaya

The original goal of our seven-member expedition, supported by the University of Ljubljana, was to climb Nanga Parbat by the Kinshofer Route. Although we planned to climb in classic siege style, we wanted to use no supplementary oxygen and no high-altitude porters and leave as little trace as possible.

We established base camp at 4,250m below the Diamir Face on July 24. By August 10 we had managed partial acclimatization by reaching 5,800m on the slopes of the Mazeno Ridge and Ganalo Peak. Due to black ice and falling rock on the Kinshofer, four members abandoned the expedition and headed home. The remaining three, Viki Groselj, Mojca Svajger, and I, felt that attempting the peak in siege style was too dangerous, but an alpine-style ascent appeared reasonable, as well as more challenging. We decided to attempt the line alongside the Mummery Rib descended in 1978 by Reinhold Messner, after his solo ascent of the right side of the Diamir Face.

On August 17 we got a weather window. Viki remained in base to coordinate logistics, while Mojca and I ascended to 4,750m, bivouacking at much the same spot as Messner. By midday on the 18th we had reached 5,800m in the couloir alongside the Mummery Rib. Here a sudden weather change forced us to find a sheltered bivouac site, where we waited for clearing. Only on the 20th were we able to continue.

Climbing over the Mummery Rib looked too dangerous, so we worked a little right of the stone-swept gully descended by Messner and reached the top of the so-called Messner Serac. We then headed right, crossing Messner's ascent route, keeping near the seracs in order to find safe bivouac sites. We spent our fourth night at 6,700m and our fifth at 7,200m, close to the point where the Schell Route traverses the face from the right. The climbing had been quite icy, but there were sections of knee-deep snow with a hard breakable crust, which made for slow going and the risk of avalanche. From 6,900m to 7,200m we tried to work left across the rock barrier giving access to the summit slopes (and the upper part of Messner's descent), but climbing thin layers of loose powder over equally loose rock was too risky, and we returned to our previous bivouac site at 7,200m.

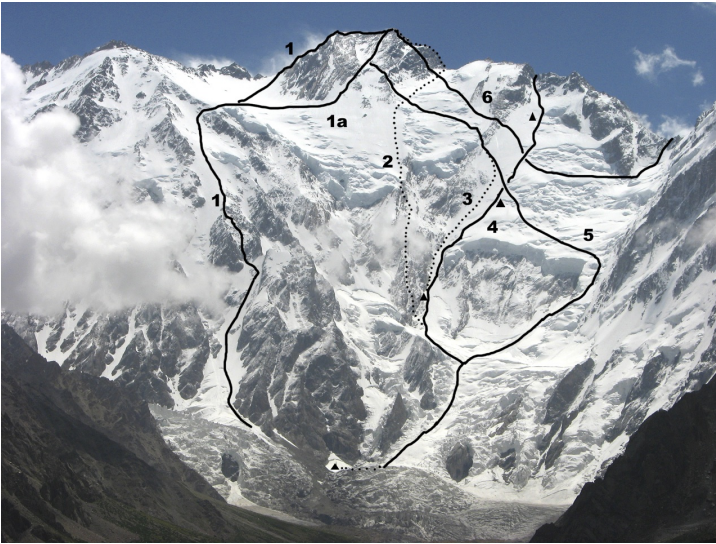
On the 23rd we decided to complete an ascent of the Diamir Face by continuing directly to the upper Mazeno Ridge, where we would have a fine view down the Rupal Flank. The summit was no longer an option, so we traveled light, taking little protection and a 30m rope. At 1:30 p.m. we reached the crest at 7,590m. We noted that the unclimbed ridge above is very loose.

We spent the next three days descending the line, not uneventfully. While downclimbing the black-ice couloir below the Messner Serac, trying to dodge falling stones, we fell 150m. We were uninjured, though, and arrived in base camp on the 25th. Our female team had made 3,100m of ascent over slopes of 45-60°, with a section of 70°. The most dangerous part is from 4,700m to 5,800m, where the route is continually exposed to serac fall. Reinhold Messner, commenting on this ascent, said, "The summit isn't that important. The adventure counts. Eight bivouacs on such a dangerous face is worth more than a few summits by all the prepared Normal routes on 8,000m peaks."

Irena Mrak, Slovenia

Editor's Note: The Mummery Rib was the line chosen by Alfred Mummery and his Gurkha companion Rajobir for their attempt on the mountain in 1895. They retreated at 6,100m when Rajobir fell ill, after which Mummery decided to look at the northern side of the peak and set off for a fateful attempt to cross the Diamir Pass. While Messner descended the rib in 1970 (and alongside it in 1978), there appears to have been no serious attempt to climb this part of the face until 1999. In that year (previously unreported) Hungarian Zsolt Eross and three companions acclimatized by climbing Ganalo Peak (6,608m), then Eross set off alone for the Diamir Face. He followed the Messner 1978 descent route, bivouacking three times on the ascent: on the plateau below the Messner couloir (5,400m); where the route crosses left through the slanting rock barrier; and below the final headwall. Deep snow hampered progress on the upper section, but he successfully reached the summit and descended to his top bivouac. Next day he downclimbed to the valley.

Images



Diamir Face of Nanga Parbat. (1) Kinshofer Route (1962, original line). (1a) Line generally followed today. (2) Messner brothers 1970 descent route via Mummery Rib. (3) Messner 1978 descent route. (4) Slovenian 2011 ascent to upper southwest ridge. Bivouac sites marked. (5) Messner 1978 ascent route. (6) Upper section of 1976 Schell route (climbs Rupal Flank to Mazeno Col). There have been several variants to Schell route, e.g. in 1981 by Ronald Naar, who followed a higher traverse line to reach snowy section of ridge up and left from Slovenian high point.



Irena Mrak in Messner Couloir during poor weather. Left is Mummery Rib; up and right Messner Serac threatens ascent.



Irena Mrak at 7,500m in final gully leading to upper southwest (Mazeno) ridge. Below, flowing northwest, is rubble-covered Diamir Glacier.



Irena Mrak in final gully leading to upper southwest ridge, with lower Mazeno Ridge behind.



Mojca Svajger in Messner Couloir just before second bivouac. Left is Mummery Rib; up and right Messner Serac threatens ascent.



Mojca Svajger in lower seracs, before reaching 5,400m plateau below Messner Couloir.

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