

JANAK HIMAL

Janak, first ascent. After their ascent of the 7,090m northeast summit of Pyramid Peak, north of Kangchenjunga, Slovenians Andrej Stremfeli and Rok Zalokar made the coveted first ascent of Janak (7,041m) via the southwest pillar. The 1,150m route, climbed alpine style and almost as a single push, was mostly on hard glassy ice of poor quality (often quite brittle and covered by powder), with only six pitches over mixed terrain or pure rock. Apart from these six pitches, plus a committing two-pitch traverse beneath the headwall (sustained 70° ice), the pair moved together with two or three ice screws as running belays. They were surprised by the sustained nature of the route and by the difficulties on the top part of the wall. They made one bivouac at 6,800m, using a small tent but no sleeping bags or mats. Apart from having to climb back across the traverse, descent was made via 19 rappels, mostly from Abalakov anchors. Stremfeli felt the climb was more difficult than his first ascents on Menlungtse and Gyachung Kang, and only very slightly easier than a winter ascent of the Croz Spur. A full account of this expedition appears earlier in this *Journal*.

Dome Kang, east-southeast ridge, attempt. From September 7 to October 14 a six-member Spanish expedition (Elena Goded, Emilio Lagunilla, Guillermo Mañana, Daniel Salas, Carlos Soria, and I) attempted the unclimbed Dome Kang (7,264m) in the northeast corner of Nepal. The approach to the mountain was done in classic style: three days by bus from Kathmandu to Taplejung, and then a seven-day trek from Taplejung via Ghunsa to base camp. We sited our base camp (5,330m) above Pangpema at Dyrhrenfurth's 1930 Corner Camp, one of the most impressive locations in the Himalaya (a trek to Corner Camp is highly recommended). We had nine days of very poor weather to start.

Camp 1 (5,950m) to Camp II (6,100m) is a nice three-hour walk on snow. We first went to the Jongsang La (6,145m) at the base of Dome Kang's east-southeast ridge but found the initial part of the ridge, and the slopes on the Sikkim side, to be impossible. Instead, from Camp

II we climbed a 400m gully up the south flank of the ridge to the crest (mixed terrain with UIAA IV+ rock and AI 4), fixing ca 500m of rope. Snow and ice conditions were treacherous, and the level of risk was high.

Once on the crest, conditions seemed dangerous, so we used the Sikkim side of the mountain to gain as much height as possible. We reached 6,700m, where even though we had enough strength, relatively good weather and four climbing Sherpas in good shape, we decided to abandon the attempt due to avalanche danger.



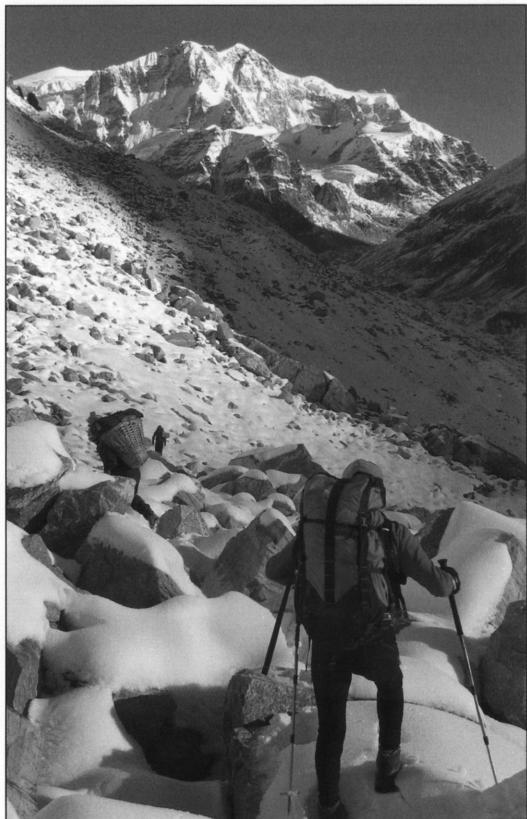
Looking south-southeast from Camp 2 (6,100m) below the east-southeast ridge of Dome Kang toward Pathibhara Chuli (a.k.a. Pyramid Peak, 7,140m). *Salvador García-Atance*

As a consolation prize we were able to climb a beautiful 6,500m summit, which rises from the Jongsang glacier northeast of Camp 1 (and northwest of Pyramid Peak).

It's our intention to return in Spring 2008 to finish the project. We have the advantage of knowing how to manage the logistics and we hope that the pre-monsoon season might provide better snow and ice conditions.

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Editor's note: In 1930 six climbers from Gunter Dyrenfurth's international expedition, including the leader, climbed Jongsang (7,462m) via the northwest ridge and north face. From the summit Dyrenfurth persuaded Lewa to walk with him across the plateau to the 7,442m south summit, named Dome Kang, for its first and only ascent. However, recent maps have assigned the name Dome Kang to the lower snow dome (7,264m) east of Pt. 7,442m. This remains unclimbed and was only brought onto the permitted list in 2002. Most of the members of the Spanish expedition had already made an attempt on the east-southeast ridge in the Spring of 2004, at that occasion climbing from the Jongsang La and reaching a height of 6,650m. Prior to that the east-southeast ridge had been inspected by Slovenians in 1983 and Irish in 1998, both teams noting it would not be straightforward.



Carlos Soria between base camp and Camp 1 with the Jongsang massif in the background. The two high points in the centre are South Peak II (left) and South Peak I (7,350m). South Peak I was first climbed in 2000 by a young Slovenian pair via the central couloir on the 1,200m mixed wall facing the camera. Dome Kang (7,264m) appears in this picture as the small rounded snow dome down the ridge to the right.
Salvador García-Atance