



The Himalayan News

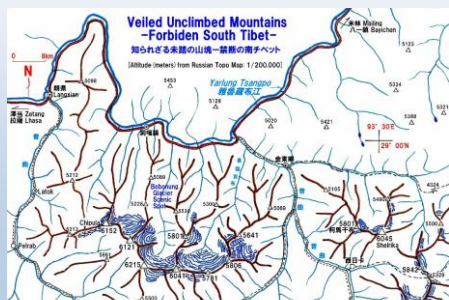
A NEWSLETTER OF THE HIMALAYAN



JUNE 2017 ISSUE 1

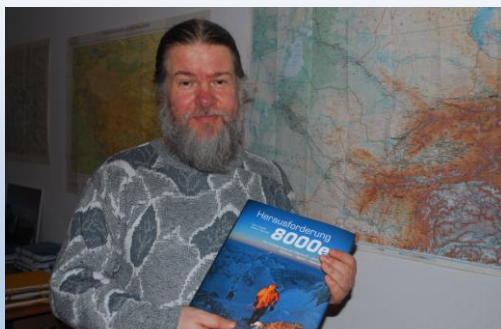
JOURNEY TO FORBIDDEN SOUTHERN TIBET

Tamotsu Nakamura



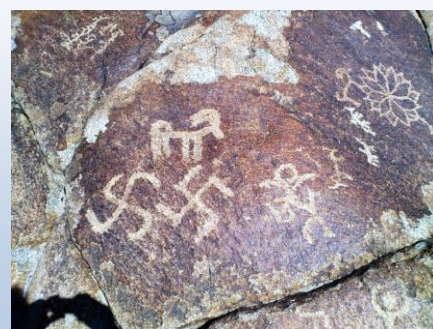
THE CHRONICLER OF THE MOUNTAINS – Eberhard Jurgalski

Priyadarshi Gupta



PETROGYLPHS OF LADAKH

Viraf Mehta



REMINISCENCES WITH EDMUND & PETER HILLARY

Bhanu Banerjee



THE MAKING OF A MOUNTAINEER

Debraj Dutta



MUSSOORIE MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL MAY 2017

Sujoy Das



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Beyond the mundane...

'The Himalayan', as a Trust, was formed on a hot and sultry day in Kolkata on May 3rd, 2017. The primary inspiration for this 'Non-Profit' Trust has been the vision of its mentor Meher H. Mehta FRGS and a handful of likeminded mountain lovers - a vision that encompasses ventures outdoors and indoors, along with the incorporation of a balanced and incisive dissemination platform for the reporting of Himalayan Activity— Of Climbing, Science, Literature and the yonder, in a manner befit to stimulate the intellectual yearning of the erudite mountain lover, as well as to kindle the fertile mind of the incorrigibly romantic young mountaineer who is perhaps inspired by the words of [George Leigh Mallory](#)- '*Half the charm of climbing mountains is born in visions preceding this experience - visions of what is mysterious, remote, inaccessible*'.

Man has been climbing mountains for aeons, or as Mallory has famously put it – '[We will stomp to the top with the wind in our teeth](#).' Man has been struggling up ragged ridges and crevasse ridden ice fields in this quest, whilst the committed chronicler would religiously record these events in tablets of success, and the poet would scribe paeans in praise of summit ascents, near and afar. But does being on top of an apparently indomitable mountain change us in any way, of thought and introspection? The most poignant reply to this question was given to me once by the late legendary Indian mountaineer Col. Balwant Sandhu, who had retorted philosophically on his ascent of the mountain of the thousand Demons - '*Have I left something behind on the summit? Just a slight depression in the snow. Have I taken something from the summit? The blue mountain haze all around that I saw with crinkled eyes of joy, and touched with the silent companionship of my snow-crusted, bearded friend Nandu. A tumble of emotions sweep over me... strength, seeing, bonding and beauty. For once, here on a mountain top, only time is rationed and scaled. Neither are we conquerors, nor the vanquished; someone once called us, rather aptly, conquistadors of the useless! Despite being on top of a mountain and having looked beyond, we are not changed. The mountain is not changed, nor will we change the world. Yet, we shall not be the same. We are older, wiser, perhaps a shade worse for the wear. But between rock and flesh, cold and warmth, mountain and man, a loop of invisible nylon still remains attached to the mountain top, that time can never snap...*' (Mamostong Kangri, The Himalayan Club Kolkata Section Souvenir). Balwant Sandhu was a true mountaineering Samurai, with a penchant for original thinking and climbing out of the ordinary, and remains a great inspiration for Indian climbers.

We invite you, as the recipient of 'The Himalayan News' to enjoin us in our movement, by associating and collaborating with us in our activities. We further plan to organise novel lectures by experienced speakers, hold seminars and exhibitions on Himalayan and allied matters, arrange expeditions into the high altitudes, and much more.

We, in return, would take great pleasure in providing to you novel features and reports on the latest happenings, viewpoints and insights by our Editorial team as well as renowned contributors, in an unfettered and unbiased metre and form. Let us break the shackles of the ordinary and cross the abyss of mundanity and tread fearlessly into the world of incisive and thought provoking reportage, the seeds for which have been just sown, on a hot and sultry day in Kolkata.

Priyadarshi Gupta
President, The Himalayan

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

With great pleasure I welcome you to the inaugural issue of *The Himalayan News*, a Newsletter of *The Himalayan* which we intend to bring out quarterly. We welcome contributions from mountaineers, trekkers, environmentalists, wildlife conservationists, photographers, artists in the future issues of *The Himalayan News* to make this a newsletter both of interest and value.

My co-editor Rupamanjari Biswas has this to say about the launch of The Himalayan News:

"For a retired person, as I am, whiling away life in any which way, and being given the opportunity to while away time concentrating on creative pursuits, is like a surprise gift. The Himalayan News is my surprise gift. Together with Sujoy let me enjoy unwrapping my gift and spread the joy of unravelling the legends, the mythical and the traditional of the mountains to all of you."

The Everest season has just concluded and for the first time in many years we have not had any climbing Sherpa casualties on the mountain. Indian mountaineer Anshu Jamsenpa, mother of two, created a new record by completing her second double ascent of Everest (2011 and 2017). The sad news which has affected the mountaineering community deeply is the tragic death of ace alpinist Ueli Steck. I learnt from his satellite phone conversations with his partner Tenji Sherpa that he had decided on the spur of the moment to climb Nuptse solo and he slipped and fell off the Nuptse wall and into the Western Cwm. The Sherpas also performed several high altitude rescues on Everest this year including retrieving the bodies of our Kolkata friends Goutam Ghosh and Paresh Nath who died last year on Everest and were lying near the South Col.

In this our inaugural issue, the respected Japanese alpinist Tamotsu Nakamura presents a photo essay on unexplored peaks around 6000 metres in height in Southern Tibet which has been forbidden to most climbers. Eberhard Jurgalski is one of the most respected chroniclers of 8000 metre peaks and their history. Priyadarshi Gupta presents a fascinating account of his dialogues with Eberhard. Viraf Mehta has been researching rock art in Ladakh for many years now and presents an interesting essay on the petroglyphs of Ladakh. Bhanu Banerjee is the last surviving member of Sir Edmund Hillary's expedition to Nepal in 1960-61 in search of the Yeti and other physiological experiments and exploration. He presents a very personal account of his interaction with Sir Edmund and Peter Hillary over the years. And in a rare and honest account, Debraj Dutta discusses candidly his journey as a mountaineer culminating last year in the ascent of Everest. On a personal note, I attended the Mussoorie Mountain Festival in May 2017 amidst the sylvan surroundings of the Landour hills and present through photographs a brief account of the festival, the only one of its kind in India.

And with the summer season here and the snow melting on the high mountain passes and meadows full of flowers, we wish all our readers happy trekking and climbing for the coming season.

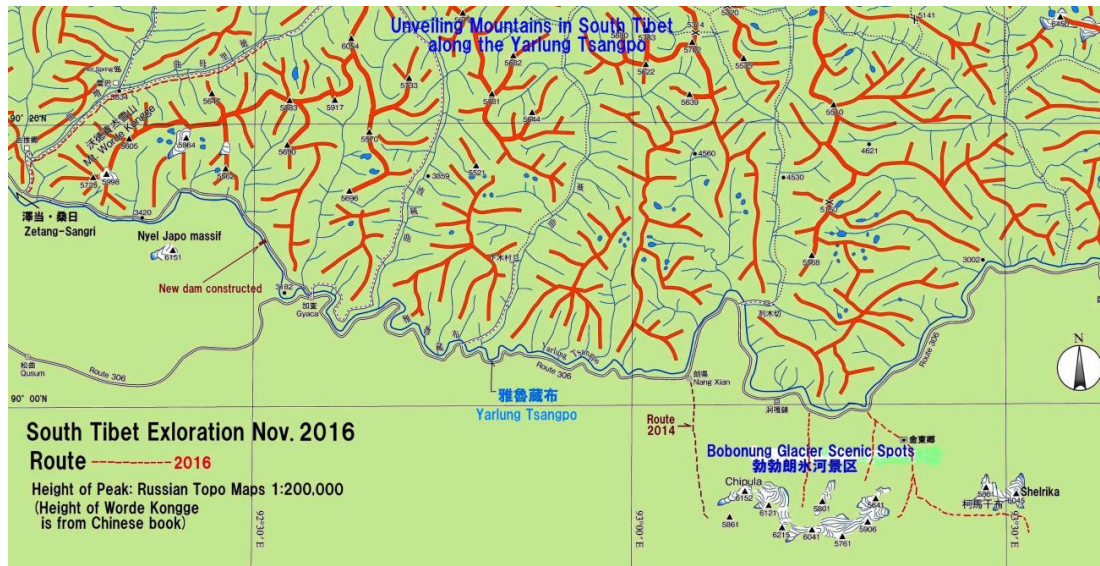
Sujoy Das

Editor

21st June 2017

JOURNEY TO FORBIDDEN SOUTHERN TIBET

Tamotsu Nakamura



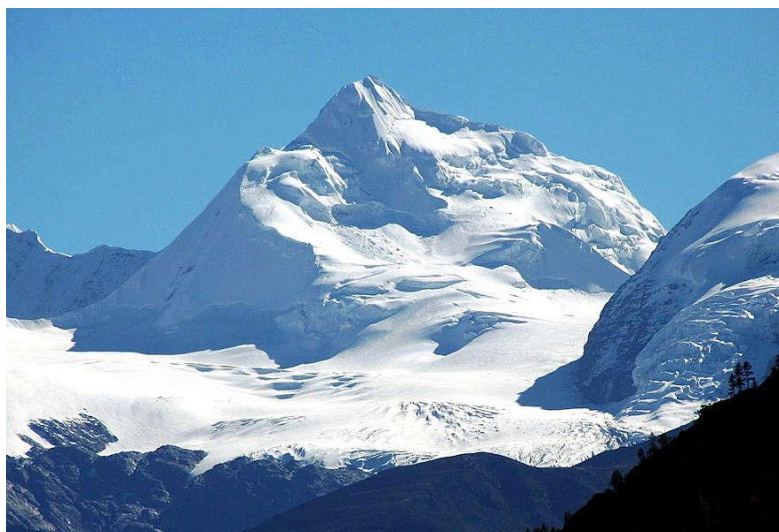
Unveiling Hidden Mountains along the Yarlung Tsangpo

An elderly team of T. Nakamura and T. Nagai entered the forbidden south Tibet for exploring and identifying hidden/unknown 6,000m peaks along the Yarlung Tsangpo. The region is very sensitive and now strictly restricted and controlled because of being close to China (Tibet)-India border. No foreigners are allowed to travel unless they obtain a special permit from the Public Security Bureau and Chinese Liberation Army in charge of Tibet Autonomous Region.

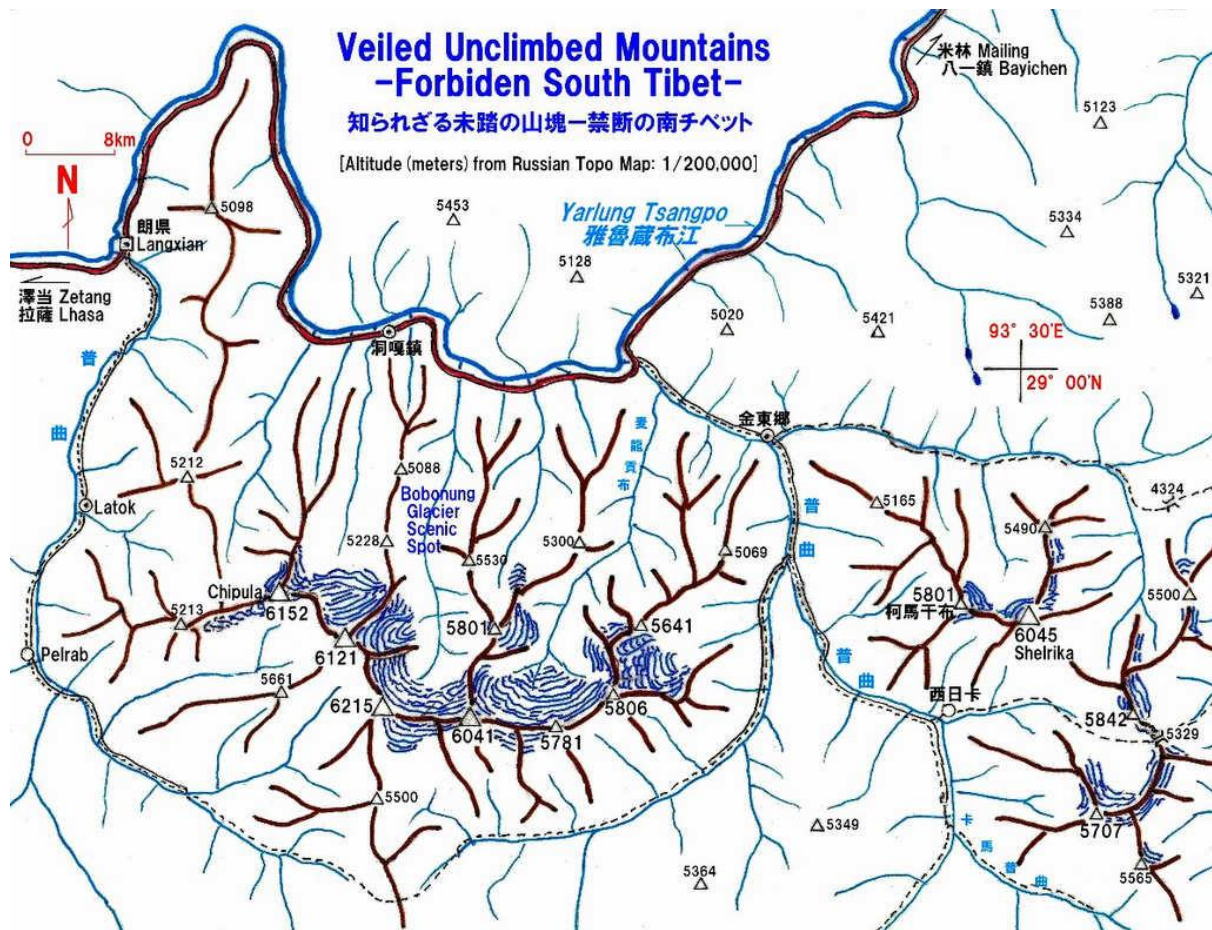
Objectives of the explorations are as follows (see the map next page) -

Main objective: Peaks surrounding Bobonung Glacier Scenic Spots

Other objective: Outstanding rock peaks of Nyel Japo massif and Holy mountain Worde Kongge north of Yarlung Tsangpo



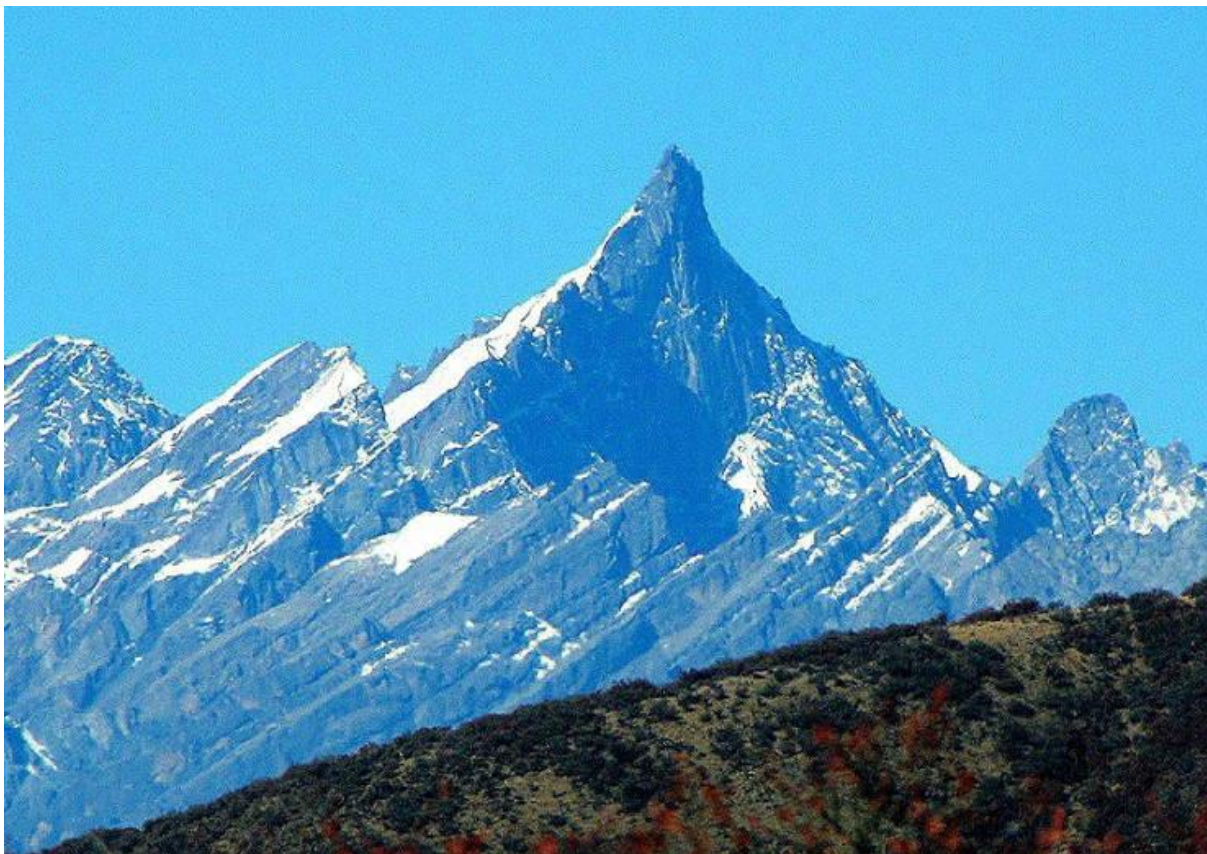
Stunning 6000 metre peak north west face of Bobonung massif



6000 metre peaks surrounding Bobonung Glacier valley north face



Chipula 6152 metres north east face of west end of Bobonung massif



Nyel Japo 6150 metres east face, a massif of rock peaks

OF MOUNTAINS, MOUNTAINEERS AND THEIR CHRONICLERS

(In correspondence with Eberhard Jurgalski)

Priyadarshi Gupta



Every avid mountaineer follows religiously the exploits of intrepid climbers on high and difficult Peaks. Yet few of them really appreciate the fact that there is a small band of enthusiasts who tirelessly work, day in and out, building detailed 'databases' of successful climbs on different peaks, route after route, with an objective of generating useful and meaningful analyses from the statistics of these climbs. They remain mostly in the backgrounds, yet are busy diligently checking – cross checking & verifying ascents or new routes claims on near or distant mountains. The limited access to financial means for their research /work makes it difficult for them to sustain their activities. Yet, their indomitable spirits pushes them on, investigating climb after climb, season after

season, and year by year, preparing newer tables /reports for analysis.

One such remarkable chronicler is **Eberhard Jurgalski** (born November 8th, 1952), from Germany. As per Eberhard, the early twentieth century chronicling history can perhaps be traced back to Günter Dyhrenfurth, who along with his climbing partner Marcel Kurz began collecting data after their famous Jongsong Peak (Sikkim) expedition in 1930. In his wonderful website (8000ers .com), he refers to in detail to some of the other famous chroniclers like Józef Nyka and Zbigniew Kowalewski from Poland, Franci Savenc from Slovenia, Tsunemichi Ikeda of the Japanese magazine IWA TO YUKI, H. Adams Carter, Louis Baume's *Sivalaya* (1978), Jill Neate's *High Asia* book, The UK magazine *High* (later *Climb*), and Lindsay Griffin, amongst others.

On the Indian Himalaya, The Himalayan Club was born in 1928 and has been till date assiduously printing the renowned Himalayan Journal (HJ). Reputed researchers /Editors like Kenneth Mason, H.W Tobin, Trevor Braham, and Soli Mehta and in the latter years Harish Kapadia have left their valuable imprints on these journals. Kamal Guha from Kolkata, vide his publication 'Himavanta', recorded climbs on Indian Himalaya for many years.

The Alpine Journal (AJ) and the American Alpine Journal (AAJ) have been strong sources of information on global mountaineering. Most of these publications have however recorded essentially the details of expeditions. In contrast, the Nepal Himalayan databases of Elizabeth Hawley & Richard Salisbury form the basis of the computation of interesting Analyses in the form of Tables, Charts and vivid graphical representation that aid in the synthesis of useful reports on

mountaineering activity in the Nepal Himalaya. *The Himalaya by numbers—A Statistical Analysis of mountaineering in the Nepal Himalaya* by Elizabeth Hawley & Richard Salisbury, ushers in a newer dimension to Mountaineering analysis.



Eberhard Jurgalski, started his research work with a typewriter, and began compiling data from 1981, to eventually migrate to a PC in 1988. He wrote to me saying – ‘I remembered my childhood: when I was 8 years old, my grandpa gave me a small booklet named “Gipfelstürmer, Buch der Erstbesteigungen” from 1955. Soon afterwards I read most of the Sven Hedin books and I loved them. Later in 1981 I wanted to know how many 7000ers there are. I found different altitudes on maps and in reports and wanted to know the truth. In 1981 I began to collect everything I found in libraries and antiquarian book shops.’ Today, he stores his researched data and analyses in hard discs in his house. What a wonderful treasure trove! One of the foremost chroniclers in history had been Xavier Eguskita, the renowned Basque chronicler, with whom Eberhard began collaborating in the period 1997 to about 2002, till Xavier Eguskita became severely afflicted with Parkinson’s disease. Very tragic indeed since

Jurgalski feels that he was probably one of the best chroniclers ever!

Eberhard became deeply influenced by the work of the Swedish explorer and chronicler Anders Bolinder, and his work in the *Berge der Welt* (Mountain World) year-books, published by the Swiss Foundation of Alpine Research. Eberhard writes – ‘On April 4th, 1982 I wrote a letter to Anders Bolinder and he invited me to his home in Ticino and after seeing my tables he said that I should continue. After five years of collaboration he sadly died and that’s why I leased a computer and began to create computer tables with ascents and geographical facts.’ He further clarifies – ‘I created mountain tables from all over the world including coastal hills. I listed most peaks in High Asia with first ascent dates and info. Detailed tables for Nepal (down to 5795m), “Alps of Tibet”, Hunza-System (Batura), a new “Karakorum Nomenclature” and more. Examples outside Asia: Andes to 5700 m, Alps over 500 m P, special prominence tables for Jura, Iberia, Mallorca, Germany and much more’. My “Elevation Equality” systematics is very detailed and gives me possibilities for many various analytics, but I also watch and recheck other lists with “impressiveness” or similar.’

Eberhard is a strong supporter of ‘Prominence and Dominance’ principles driven systematic classification of peaks. On being asked – ‘You are strong supporter of a new systematic classification of mountains based on Prominence and Dominance theory. What are the advantages of this system over the traditional classification methodology and how can mountaineers and mountain analysts take advantage of this new System?’ , he replied – ‘At first it separates systematically mountains from relative independent Main-Peaks and subsidiary peaks. Also it clears

illogical separations especially on political borders. And finally it creates new challenge series for mountaineers and in lower areas for hill walkers'. In his website, as well as in the 'Mamostong Kangri Silver Jubilee Commemorative Expedition 2010' souvenir of The Himalayan Club's Kolkata Section, he expounds in detail his view point.

On being asked –'There are still so many unclimbed /unnamed 7000 m peaks e.g. in the Karakoram /Nepal or the Himalaya, that would afford enough work for another generation to come'. Hence, have you thought of developing someone as keenly passionate about your work as yourself, who would continue your wonderful work in the times to come? He reverted -'My writing possibilities are unfortunately limited since my serious arthritis attack in January 2013, but I still compile as many tables as possible. I would need sponsors to pay several collaborators to finish all my plans. There is one young man in France named Rodolphe Popier, who is keen on mountaineering facts and already helps the Himalayan Database and also me in several cases, but I fear I know no younger person who would continue my geographical ambitions so far'

On the question –'Who are the other collaborators of similar data, with whom you undertake collaboration for getting your information? Are they usually helpful?'- Eberhard responds -

'Yes, there are some helpful people around, for example Josef Hála of the Czech Republic, who is 89 already. He collected many facts on High Asian mountains over the years and found helpful rare Chinese maps during his tours with his music trio. Also Bob Schelfhout from the Netherlands, Lindsay Griffin from the UK and Damien Gildea from Australia are

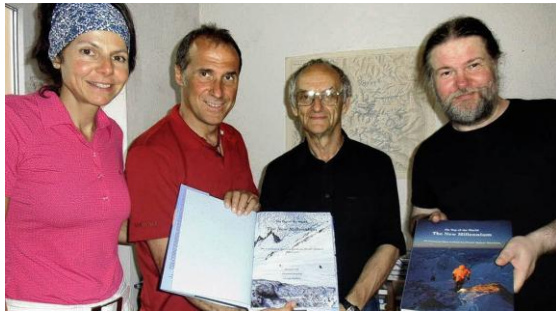
most helpful. Earlier Józef Nyka from Poland always gave me courage to continue. He is 92 now. My website creator, my girlfriend and Jonathan de Ferranti help me just to survive. Again: I'm looking for sponsors, who realize the amount of all my work...



On being quizzed that someone like Jonathan de Ferranti works on SRTM data and creates beautiful maps and hence have you ever wondered if it would be possible (given the modern day of the internet and also Google mapping) if all the leading collaborators could get together and build a common platform /website, all multi-dimensional data /information /maps can be shared for the ready use of mountaineers and mountain analysts?, he responds saying -'This is the goal of Rodolphe and me since several years now.

We want to build a mountaineering information network (MIN), also to clear disputed cases, but so far no sponsors were found for this ambitious wish. Rodolphe created a detailed overview about the

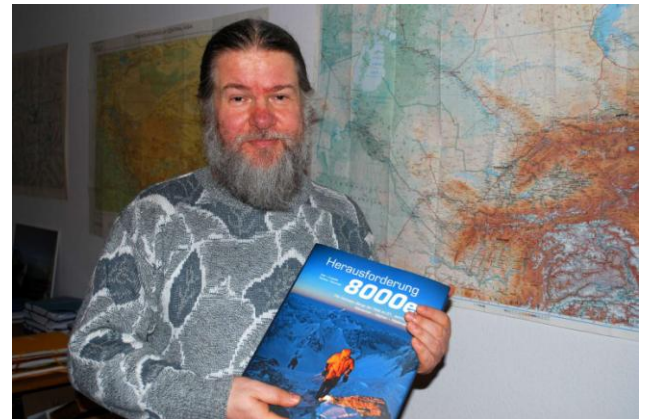
necessary mountaineering and geographical reasons, but so far nothing happened. There has been a chance after Rodolphe's analysis of Steck's wrong claims on Shisha Pangma and Annapurna I, but after Steck's death now everything is more difficult again'



On his hobbies and interests – ‘Oh, I could easily fill ten more lives with other hobbies like astronomy, paleontology, sports, music etc. I'm interested in nearly everything, but spent most of my time with mountain and mountaineering facts. I loved many of the Beat groups in the 1960s and later all kinds of Rock, but also the best from nearly all other music styles. My all-time favourite singer is Steve Marriott from the Small Faces and later Humble Pie, nowadays I like many songs from the Pretty Reckless with female singer Taylor Momsen, but I also still love the voice of Janis Joplin.’

To conclude –‘Do chroniclers record expedition data merely for posterity and mapping of the history of Mountaineering? Or, the subsequently derived detailed analysis of the modern day chronicler brings in a newer dimension into the study of mountaineering activity. Perhaps, this could help climbers have a wider technical perspective of his future climbs as well give Orologists and Geographers a more meaningful classification of peaks and passes.

And, the ultimate utopia perhaps would be when all leading chroniclers collaborate in the global level on a common platform /website and all their collective research and Analyses becomes available to the modern mountaineer. But, funds are needed by these exceptional mountain lovers to further their wares, as for most of them; it is still a labour of love and perhaps a full time activity. As Eberhard shared with us –‘My website creator, my girlfriend and Jonathan de Ferranti help me just to survive. Again: I'm looking for sponsors, who realize the amount of all my work...’



Perhaps mountaineering Trusts and Corporate sponsors would show the way so that the tireless efforts of the modern day chronicler does not go down in vain!

Photographs: Eberhard Jurgalski

LADAKH - A CENTURY OF ROCK ART EXPLORATION AND RESEARCH

Viraf Mehta



Handprints

For those of us who share a special passion for Ladakh, it is encouraging to note that Vol 1, No1 (1929) of The Himalayan Journal, after the inaugural article describing the history of the founding of The Himalayan Club, brings our attention to Ladakh, and in this instance to the recent floods of the Indus and Shayok rivers. Despite this early pre-Independence coverage, and being open for tourists since 1974, it remains a little-known fact that Ladakh possesses a rich heritage of rock art, details of which were first recorded and made known to the public by Moravian missionary scholars posted in Ladakh in the late 1800's – early 1900's. It is even less known that today, due to the efforts of local and foreign researchers over the past two decades, rock art has been recorded from all major regions of Ladakh including Changthang, Leh, Kargil, Nubra and Zaskar. In totality there are over 300 recorded rock art sites- with many more awaiting discovery-primarily located along the Indus River system, ancient trade and religious missionary routes, camping sites and at places propitious for hunting animals.

My encounter with the rock art of Ladakh was a magical opportunity to satisfy the deepest instinct of a young student of anthropology: to spend an entire lifetime dedicated to the discovery of human origins and its earliest cultural expressions, especially if this meant long stretches of solitary work in wild and desolate landscapes, with only basic needs provided for. And so, on a luminous afternoon in 2009 - my 15th visit to Ladakh - I stumbled across an ancient looking rock carving depicting animals. I can recall clearly that in the hour it took to drive to Leh, I had determined that I must explore this remnant of an ancient cultural heritage more fully. I scoured the few bookshops of Leh, and fortuitously came across a few books written by past and present day foreign researchers, almost a century apart, and made it my business to try to visit the over one hundred sites scattered all over Ladakh. There was very little precise guidance about the location of these listed rock art sites, and so I set about locating them and new ones across all seasons and corners of the high altitude vastness of Ladakh.



Human figure with bow and arrow hunting wild sheep

Endless months of learning in the field slowly started reaping rich dividend, and I became more adept at recognising potential rock art sites. It would take more space than presently

available to do justice to the 'art of exploration', of oneself, in the ultimate, in the trusted companionship of a passion and a yearning, or to narrate anecdotes and tales of risk and adventure, the blessings of new friendships, or the mysteries encountered along these journeys. Follow your heart- you will surely encounter hardship, but you will never feel lost or alone, seems a fitting motto. Forty-one visits to Ladakh, I am as excited as ever about my next visit!



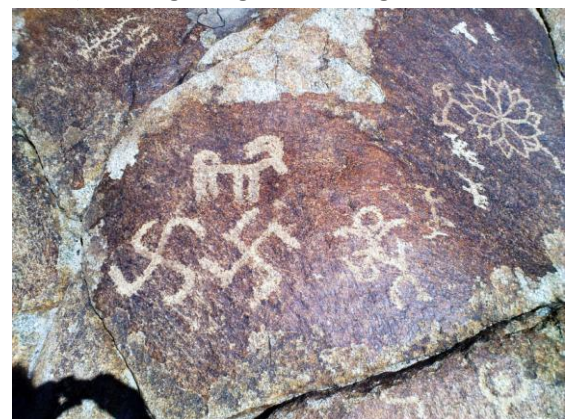
A maned horse with young

Returning to rock art: as per our present knowledge, the rock art of Ladakh spans several millennia, from prehistoric to modern times. The rock art of Ladakh is predominantly in the form of petroglyphs - images etched, carved, pecked or incised on the rock surface using stone or metal tools in a variety of techniques. These images were rendered upon the shiny patina or 'desert varnish' that forms over millennia upon the surfaces of boulders and rocky outcrops. Unsurprisingly, given its geographic location and crossroads of travel routes, the rock art of Ladakh reflects varying cultural influences- from Central Asia and Western Tibet, in the north and east, and the Kashmir and Gilgit-Skardu regions downstream along the Indus River, to its west and south. Within Ladakh, if one takes the approximately 350 km long section Indus

River flowing from Nyoma to Batalik as a main southwest to northwest axis, we note a prolific number of rock art sites alongside almost every major village along the river, and more so along the lower Indus. The major tributaries of the Indus, the Zaskar and the Shayok, also showcase important rock art sites, as do other rivers in the Nubra, Markha and Suru Valleys, and in Zaskar.

For the convenience of visitors to Ladakh, a list of some of the best-known and more easily accessible rock art sites are mentioned below:

- 1) Nubra: Diskit, Murgi, Sasoma
- 2) Upper Indus Leh (East of Leh): Saboo, Stakna, Stagmo, Kharu, Upshi, Shara.
- 3) Lower Indus (West of Leh): from Chilling to Zaskar-Indus confluence, Alchi, Nurla, Khaltse, Domkhar, Dargo, Sanjak, Baima-Dah.
- 4) Kargil and Purig: Baroo, Bypass to Hamboting La and Batalik, Mulbek.
- 5) Zaskar: Stongde, Char/Zamthang.
- 6) Changthang: Kere, Tangtse, Durbuk.



Various symbols swastika, lotus, inscriptions alongside deer and wild sheep

The rock art of Ladakh displays a variety of themes and motifs, and predominant amongst these are representations of a wide variety of animals including the yak, ibex, deer, sheep and goat, horse, dog, camel, snow

leopard, wolf and others. In addition, we also find representations of birds, fish, lizard and snakes. Human beings are predominantly depicted as participants in hunting scenes, alone or in a group, and armed with bow and arrow, on foot or on horseback. There are also scenes that could be interpreted as either propitiation ceremonies for, or a celebration of a successful hunt.

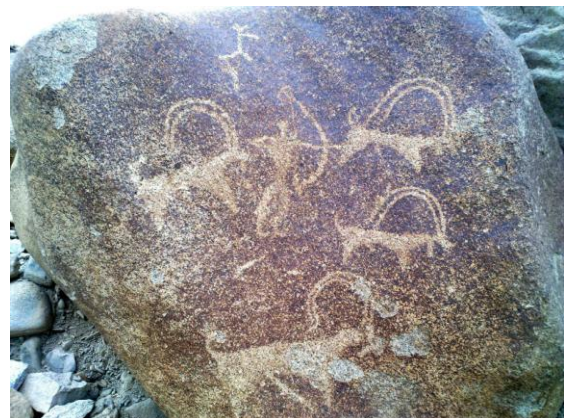


A deer in animal style with Chinese inscription on left

Additionally, we note the relatively uncommon depictions of human hands (and more rarely, feet), frequently depicted in a relatively elongated or enlarged manner. It would be misleading to imply that all visual depictions of animals are to do with hunting: for instance, representations of the Ibex could be more closely related to its significance as an animal revered in fertility cults. The rock art of Ladakh, as it proceeds to the historic period reveals many treasures. Quite apart from the Buddhist and religious iconography in the form of chortens (stupas) and swastikas, we encounter, notably at Khaltse, Alchi and Tangtse a number of inscriptions in various languages including, Karoshthi, Brahmi, Sogdian, Arabic, Chinese and archaic Tibetan, which provide us with unique

information and clues about little-known periods of Ladakh's history. Very recent discoveries of human activity in the Nubra Valley have been dated to about 10,000 years BP, far beyond in time than previously imagined, and it is upon this immense canvas of time that rock art can provide a few pieces of the jigsaw puzzle towards a picture of times long gone.

In conclusion, it is necessary to note that the rock art of Ladakh faces a severe threat of damage and destruction due to a host of circumstances including apathy and lack of awareness of local communities, and 'development' projects (roads, dams, construction activity), that do not take into sufficient account their impact on cultural heritage. There is however, a growing awareness amongst Ladakhi's of this priceless cultural heritage, and we have a few encouraging examples of their protection and conservation.



Solitary bowman and ibex

THE MAKING OF AN INDIAN MOUNTAINEER

Debraj Dutta



Summit of Saser Kangri IV

In September 2012, I lay shivering in the superficial warmth of my sleeping bag at 5500m. This was in the extremely desolate base camp of The Himalayan Club (HC) Kolkata Section's Jongsong peak (7462m) Expedition, in the northern fringes of Sikkim. I was encountering repeated bouts of chills and convulsions – all indicating a virulent attack of dengue. The cold seemed to be biting into my bones and I was able to barely crawl, let alone plan a descent to the warmth of semi civilization – Muguthang village. I spent those frustrating moments ratiocinating with myself – *was high altitude mountaineering worth all the risks and pains – of body, mind and soul?* I however took solace thinking about how Pradeep Sahoo, our current Expedition's leader, on having carried loads in excess of 30kg throughout the successful Kamet (7516m) HC Kolkata Section's commemorative expedition (2006), ended up spending close to nine months recuperating from a serious spinal cord injury – yet he

bounced back to serious climbing thereafter. And now, he was leading this climb into territory where very few had even attempted to foray into!

Jongsong's eastern summit –Domo (7447m) and Dome Khang (7262m) were climbed in the end after some brilliant path breaking climbing, thus enabling a new route on the mountain - and I too survived the wretched curse of the dengue.

Being from a middle class Kolkata family, I had spent the early days of my youth – dreaming of football and the Mohun Bagan club. Aspirations of travelling in the high Himalaya were furthest from my mind, then. But in 1999, following a very enjoyable NIM Basic mountaineering course, life was not the same for me anymore. I joined the Parvat Abhiyatri Sangha, to begin with, and thereafter, for the last seventeen years, the Himalaya has been my second home. In between I also completed my Advance Mountaineering course from NIM in 2006. Parvat Abhiyatri in my formative years enabled me to hone my basic climbing skills on several expeditions on Lamser Kangri(6666m), Chamser Kangri(6622m), Lopgo(6405m), Chowkhamba - I (7138m), Kangla Tarbo -I(6315m), Kangla Tarbo -II(6120m), Nandakot (6861m) and Kedardome (6831m), amongst others. I soon became obsessed with the wilderness of the Himalaya and decided to pursue the mountains on a full time basis, and decided to forsake a 'risk free secure job' career option in Kolkata.

The turning point of my career as a mountaineer was the close interaction with AVM (Retd) Apurba Bhattacharyya, when I

joined The Himalayan Club and its Kolkata Section. He encouraged me to learn to discern the mercurial moods of mountains. I learnt in detail from this ex- Principal of the NIM – on how to efficiently plan an expedition to a high peak. The mountain gods favored me in 2007- it was on The Himalayan Club, Kolkata Section's Nilkanth (6596m) expedition-the first Indian civilian ascent along its sheer and dangerous west ridge leading onto a crevasse filled summit ridge- that I was first put to a real test! We even had to benight in the open on the high mountain during the ascent, thus giving me further confidence and conviction in my technical climbing and survival ability. This was followed by the first ever Indian ascent of Mt Indrasen (6221m) through the West Face (IMF expedition–September 2007). In the year 2008, I ascended my first seven thousander mountain, Mt. Trisuli West (7035m) on an IMF sponsored expedition ---another first time ascent in Indian civilian climbing history. In the course of the year, I climbed an un-named peak near Singola pass and Sinkun East with my HC Kolkata Section colleagues.



Plateau Peak West Ridge

Inspired by my close mountaineering friend Late Pradeep Sahoo, under the banner of the HC Kolkata Section, we began climbing on less attempted and technically difficult Peaks like Mamostong Kangri (7516m) and Saser Kangri-IV (7416m) in Eastern Karakoram region, the

Jongsong peak in NW Sikkim, and we finally made mountaineering history by achieving the first ever ascent of Mt Plateau (7287m) on the 31st of July 2013 (Eastern Karakoram).

Pradeep and his climber wife Chetna Sahoo soon started dreaming of attempting the 8000m mountains. They impressed upon me the need to have a go on these peaks for our ultimate development and experience. But, the costs were a serious deterrent! However, I kept foraging for the necessary funds and eventually started my first Everest journey in 2014. But the wrath of the Sagarmatha did not allow climbers to move beyond the base camp on the Nepal route for two successive years.

My second attempt in 2015 would not have been made unless Coal India Limited had extended their generous financial support. However in 2015, after the Everest climbing embargo, I became frustrated and also in a serious dilemma on being able further sustaining my fund collection for a third go on Everest. None the less, with some commitment flowing in eventually, I set out for the expedition (2016) with Pradeep and Chetna once again, merely because the climbing permit that had been extended twice by the Nepal government would otherwise expire in 2016.

The eight days approach journey through Sagarmatha National Park, under the supervision of Satori Expedition, ended in Everest base camp (5300m) on 11th April. Actually it was just the beginning of a month long battle. At the same time it was the test on my training and experience in preparing me as a conditioned mountaineer. It was a book, "Porajito Everest", [Everest Conquered] narrating the story of the first ascent of Mt. Everest by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing

Norgay that sustained my dream on being able to summit Mt. Everest. In a clear weather day, a person normally takes around twelve hours to summit Everest from the South Col side. I started the final march to the summit at 9:30 in the night on 18th May. My fellow climbers were tracing strange patterns with their head torches in the eerie darkness. I realized that this was my last chance - and I had to make it happen! Two days were left for the full moon. I crossed Everest's Balcony, its south summit, the Hillary steps, and the infamous rock barrier which had subsequently either collapsed probably during the earthquake of 2015 / or had become hidden under heavy swathes of ice and snow. The well-known landmarks were coming live and were creating strange kaleidoscopic patterns on my oxygen starved brain – I could just about feel that I was steadily approaching the top. The new dawn set in – the horizon appeared lower on the ridge – I reached the top of the world at 10:40am.



Summit of Everest

Snatches of the words of the famous poet Eunice Tietjens (The Most -Sacred Mountain) swept through my mind:

*Space, and the twelve clean winds are here;
And with them broods eternity—a swift, white
peace, a presence manifest.
The rhythm ceases here. Time has no place.
This is the end that has no end.*

Almost thirty minutes was I there- I had a brief walk towards the Tibetan side and was slowly absorbing the fact that I had finally made it. – As an Indian Mountaineer! God being in a benevolent mood had allowed me to succeed. May 19th would remain the biggest day in my life! The descent was tiring and fatiguing, but I didn't care anymore.



On Plateau Peak

Today, I am a member of the IMF and have also been selected as a member "UIAA Mountaineering Commission". Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme (UIAA), The International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation, representing approximately three million people from six continents with 92 member associations in 68 countries, engaged in promoting the growth and protection of mountaineering and climbing worldwide, and working under the leadership of the concerned commissions. I am also a proud recipient of 'Radhanath Sikdar – Tenzing Norgay Adventure Award' given by Govt of West Bengal.

I still have a long climbing journey ahead—in the quest for my inner peace. Monetary contribution and wishes from sponsors and friends have helped me give shape to my dreams till date. I hope they would be with me in my future endeavors too, for I have more peaks to climb till I sleep.

A UNIQUE COMMUNION BETWEEN A SON AND HIS DEPARTED FATHER AND SOME PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

Bhanu Banerjee



Bhanu Banerjee (middle), the only Indian member of a 21 men team of the World Book Encyclopedia's Yeti Hunting and Scientific Expedition to the Himalayas - 1960-61. With him are Expedition Leader Sir Edmund Hillary (far right) and Sherpa Sirdar Dawa Tenzing (far left). Dawa was with Sir John Hunt led successful Everest Expedition in 1953. This photograph was taken in June, 1961. Nepal.

To repay the Sherpa community's contribution towards the Mountaineering world, Sir Edmund built 40 schools and a Hospital in as many years in Sherpa land under the shadow of Mount Everest. I was his companion on several of these occasions.

After taking part in seven expeditions and losing two toes in frostbite my climbing days were over. Thereafter, I joined M/s Williamson Magor & Co. – a tea giant with many gardens in Assam, Darjeeling and Africa.

"We will be with you soon. May be before Peter and Simon leave. Ed has already taken some advance from his publisher Hodder and Stoughton and they are in great hurry to receive the manuscript and have written to Ed

many times" wrote Louise to me on March 15, 1975. This followed by two more letters which reached me the following month. But by then she was no more.

Peter Hillary and Simon McLaren had come to spend a couple of weeks with us when I was posted at Moabund Tea Estate in Jorhat, Assam. Sir Edmund and Lady Louise Hillary were to reach later and stay for six weeks at the plantation where Ed proposed to finish writing his next book.

But luck had it otherwise. Louise and their 16-year old daughter, Belinda, were killed instantly in a plane crash at Kathmandu on March 31, 1975. They were on their way to Phaplu from Kathmandu where Ed was

building a hospital. On April 3, the following day an express telegram from Hillary reached to say, " Louise and Belinda died in a plane crash en route to Phaplu Stop Please arrange Peter and Simon's return to Kathmandu Soonest Stop Love ED."



Hillary family 1962

I did not know how to break the news to Peter. After telling Simon what had happened to Peter's mother and sister, we broke the news to Peter, who sobbed for hours. Early next morning, I sent Peter and Simon to Calcutta by the first available flight and then to Kathmandu.

On April 5, 1975, Hillary wrote to me from Kathmandu:

It isn't possible to write to you at this particular moment. Peter and Simon tell me of the wonderful time they had at your tea plantation in Assam. On Monday we go back to Phaplu for a while to start work again on the hospital. Whatever else happens, I feel the task must be finished. Love to all of you. Your friendship has meant everything to Louise and me.

Following a massive heart attack Edmund Hillary died on the 11th of January, 2008 at 9 A.M. New Zealand time at Auckland City

Hospital at age 88. His death was announced by the then New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clarke at 11 A.M. Flags were lowered half mast in all Government and private buildings and at Scott Base in Antarctica. A state funeral was held on 22nd January, 2008 after which his body was cremated.

In acknowledging my letter of condolence, Peter Hillary sent me the following reply:

Hello Bhanu,

Very good to hear from you. Dad's passing certainly brings many great memories rushing back and I am sure your expeditions with him will be much on your mind. I must admit I have often thought about you and the time Simon and I spent with you in Assam. They were wonderful days, very innocent, given the terrible event that was about to descend on us. I wrote about the loss of my mother and sister in my book 'In the Ghost Country' and how it still haunts me and the memories were veritable travelling companion while I skied across Antarctica to South Pole.

Only three weeks ago I climbed Mt. McKinley in Alaska as a personal tribute to my father.

With best regards

Peter



The Queen of England invited Peter Hillary and wife Yvonne and their three children to travel to London. Queen Elizabeth held a special service at St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle for Sir Edmund – thanksgiving

for his life and energy in the centuries old centre of British regal power. This was an incredible journey in many ways, for Peter and his family to experience. For a humble beekeeper from the far flung Antipodes to be celebrated there at the end of his life, and that too by today's royalty, Sir Edmund had come a long way.

Peter Hillary climbed Mt. McKinley in Alaska, thus completing seven summits, climbing each of the highest mountains on all seven Continents. It was Peter's way to pay tribute to his father, a unique communion between son and his departed father.



Ed Hillary lived one of the most extraordinary lives of the 20th Century. It wasn't really all good. It had its ups and downs. The ups included some of the seminal challenges and adventures of the post war era. What he and his accomplishments represented was something that struck a chord with people. They were great events – the climbing of Everest; the much publicized race for the South Pole; the search for the mythical Yeti; the schoolhouses in the Himalayas.

Amazing things happened when you were in the company of Ed. The Ocean to Sky expedition in jet boats up the Ganges river and onto the Himalayas in 1974; flying into

North Pole with Neil Armstrong in 1986 (Hillary was the New Zealand High Commissioner to India then); and building 42 schools and hospitals around the foot of Mt. Everest over a 40 year span.

And amazing things happened when he died too. Down in New Zealand there was a state funeral for him on the 22nd of January 2008, which was televised around the world. On 29th February, the family scattered his ashes upon Waitemata Harbour, free at last from the great responsibilities he felt for so many people. The family stood on the deck of 'Spirit of Adventure' watching flowers and ashes intermingle in the green tidal waves.

In 2008, explorer-adventurer, Peter set off on skies with two ill-chosen companions to retrace the South Pole route that killed Robert Falcon Scott in 1922. Like Scott, Hillary and company hit horrendous barriers. The cold chewed up equipment and ravaged fingers and toes. Storms pinned the team in their tiny, fetid tents. They slowly starved as the brutal march burned more calories than their bodies could absorb, and Peter Hillary nearly ruptured himself dragging his 400 pound sled of supplies. But the worst torture was mental. The unending white landscape gave everyone a bad case of expeditionary madness and Hillary bore the brunt of it. His team mates began blaming him for their setbacks, and soon excluded him the smallest social interaction. Alone in a frigid sensory-deprivation tank, Hillary began to hallucinate. Dead friends and relatives tramped with him through imagined landscapes and with him, revisited the adventures and tragedies of the past. Peter vividly evokes that monochrome of misery.....Strong winds, drifting snows, a fog of spindrift, intensely cold conditions, no sky, no horizon, white on white on violent white. When in extremes which was much of

the time, Peter was troubled by voices and the ghosts of his deceased mother and climbing companions.” The late afternoons were always popular with the dead friends”, he says. The shattering K2 climb where Peter was the only one of the eight climbers (including Alison Hargreaves) to survive.

When Hillary climbed Everest in 1990, thirty seven years after his father’s historic ascent in 1953, they became the first father and son duo to reach the top of the world.

The last time I met Peter was during October 2010 when he invited me to be his guest during the Commonwealth Games in New Delhi. I watched some events with him and his family. Old memories poured in and I well remember the days when being pulled up by a manila rope up the Makalu wall at a height a little above 23,000 ft by his father and also passing aluminum sheets for the very first school Hillary built in Khumjung, Nepal, in 1961 as if it happened only yesterday.

The legacy of Sir Edmund Hillary has scaled new heights, with his personal letters, photographs and diaries added to a list of the world’s most treasured documents.

The Hillary Archive, safely stored in the basement of the Auckland museum, has been inscribed on to the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register – a list identifying “documentary heritage of universal value”.

Sir Ed’s documents – amassed during his 88 years as a mountaineer, explorer, environmentalist, beekeeper and humanitarian – are in fine company.

Before his death in 2008, Sir Ed bequeathed his personal archive of 25,000 papers,

photographs and documents to the museum, among them the diary he wrote in each day on his way to successfully conquering Mt. Everest in 1953.

His daughter, Sarah, said “To think that this collection has been considered so important is a tremendous honour. It means it will always be looked after properly and more people in the world will be able to see it and use it. I think Dad would be astounded by it all”.

Sarah Hillary’s favorite items in the collection are personal photos of her family’s adventure together, and letters sent between her father and her mother, Lady Louise, who died in a plane crash in 1975. “There was a lot of humour in their letters; my parents were very funny.” The historic paperwork has been dutifully sorted, labelled and stored since being handed over to the museum by Sarah Hillary and her brother, Peter.

The public can request to see much of the archived material in the museum’s library, and museum director Roy Clare says it will eventually be digitized and available online, starting with the photographs.

“The inscription in the Memory of the World is an affirmation of Sir Ed as a statesman of national repute,” said Mr. Clare. “All New Zealanders acknowledge Sir Ed as a national hero and we in the museum are honoured to have the responsibility for caring for his archive in perpetuity.” **(Hillary Archives Source: NZ Herald)**

MUSSOORIE MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL MAY 2017

Sujoy Das



Martin Moran speaking with Nanda Devi on the screen

The Mussoorie Mountain Festival was held from May 18th to 20th 2017 at Woodstock School and was organised by the Hanifl Centre. The festival hosted a galaxy of speakers from across the globe and the action packed three days were enjoyed by all the speakers as well as the students, staff of Woodstock School and the other visitors to the festival.

The festival opened with a 90 minute screening of outstanding films from the Banff Mountain Film Festival which left the audience spellbound. Amongst the notable presentations were mountaineer Martin Moran on Exploring New Peaks in the Garhwal and Kumaon, South African Deshun Deyssel on how climbing Everest saved her life, conservationist Daniel Taylor on the myth of the Yeti and Michael Benanav on the migratory Van Gujjar tribe.

The festival also hosted two exhibitions: Nepal Himalaya – A Journey Through Time by Sujoy Das and Himalaya Bound – A Journey with the Nomads of North India by Michael Benanav.



Veteran mountaineer Chandra Prabha Aitwal, who named Nanda Devi as her most memorable summit, was felicitated by Deshun Deyssel and Rita Gombu Marwah (seen in the photo on the left) along with Hanifl Director Krishnan Kutty. The excellent organisation and sumptuous meals left both the speakers and the audience looking forward to the next Festival.



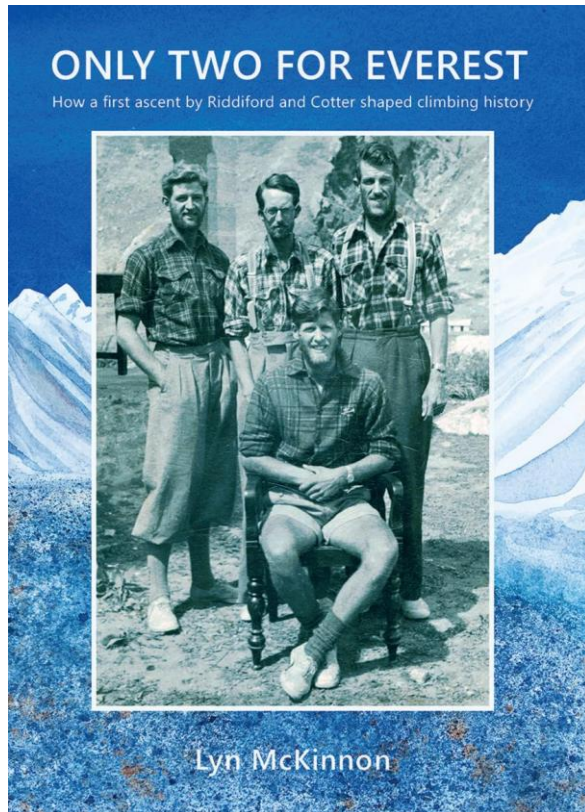
Some of the speakers and organisers at the conclusion of the festival



Photography Exhibition Nepal Himalaya A Journey Through Time

NEW BOOK RELEASE

HOW A FIRST ASCENT BY RIDDIFORD AND COTTER SHAPED CLIMBING HISTORY



The First New Zealand Himalayan Expedition, in 1951, was initiated by Earle Riddiford, who with Ed Cotter and Pasang Dawa Lama made the first ascent of Mukut Parbat, their target peak in the Garhwal Himalaya. Accompanying them on that expedition, though not to that summit, were two other New Zealand climbers, Edmund Hillary and George Lowe.

Hearing of the success on Mukut Parbat, the New Zealand Alpine Club suggested to the Alpine Club in London that acclimatised New Zealanders would be a valuable asset on the forthcoming 1951 British Reconnaissance of Mt Everest, to be led by Eric Shipton. This resulted in an invitation for two New Zealanders to join the party: thrilling news the four climbers received while they were ensconced in the hill-country village of Ranikhet. A day and a half of bitter dispute rent the party asunder. Which two should go to Everest?

In this enthralling narrative, journalist Lyn McKinnon tells the stories of Earle Riddiford and Ed Cotter, two extraordinary New Zealanders whose climbing achievements were forever eclipsed by the exploits of others. She draws on private papers as well as published work, and extensively interviews Cotter himself, and the families of both men, as well as many other contemporary climbers, to set the record straight.

During a dual career in education and journalism, LYN **McKINNON** taught English and communications at secondary and tertiary level. She was awarded a Woolf Fisher fellowship for teaching, has worked for a number of publications and also runs a bookshop. After retiring from teaching, she wrote a Centennial history of Amuri Area School, then served as an editor for the New Zealand Rural Press and contributing editor for *The Deer Farmer*, receiving several national journalism awards in the process. After retiring (again) she worked as a freelancer. Following her husband's death in the Nurse Maude Hospice, Christchurch, she retired (for the last time!) and became a volunteer writer with the Nurse Maude Biography Service.





The first meeting of the Core Committee of *The Himalayan* was held at Calcutta Club in Kolkata on June 3rd 2017.

Back Row (left to right): Rahul Guha, Meher H Mehta FRGS, Priyadarshi Gupta, and Viraf Mehta.

Front Row (left to right): Pratap Chattopadhyay, Debraj Dutta, Rupamanjari Biswas, AVM (Retd) Apurba Bhattacharyya, and Sujoy Das.

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