

EDITORIAL 2: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.

The present editorial comes as a second step to specify the various topics which have been raised in the media so far.

1/ Warning

We are no hagiographers nor idols' breakers: we are volunteer chroniclers, whose job is to archive facts for mountaineering. In that perspective, the present research focuses on the ascents first - the latter which in our opinion aren't intrinsically devalued by our results.

The present research demarche doesn't intend to damage the reputation and honour of any of the mountaineers involved. On the opposite, we fundamentally believe them to be honest and to have been mistaken by the treacherous topography of the mountains involved.

Reading our reports is necessary prior to making any form of statement regarding all the ascents involved. Many climbers sincerely assured us in the past they had been to the top, when our analysis eventually led to show that it was not.

Aggressiveness ad hominem is sterile and doesn't bring any interest in the sense of the present collective research demarche. So, any kind of such statements towards us won't be answered by the team.

2/ Do we want to "rewrite" history?

Modern orographic/topographic data, availability of a good data set of high-resolution images, software tools for evidences comparison and all Internet based communication means were not available during the era of Hawley, Bolinder or Eguskitza... Making their knowledge to be mostly based on some key descriptive aspects of the summit zones.

On our side, we begun to specifically check 2012 Annapurna claims based on pictures evidence. Since we couldn't understand where climbers were standing on the long summit ridge, we logically went to dig into the past ascents' evidence, trying since then to document as many of them as possible helped by the aforementioned modern means. That's how we developed our specific knowledge of the key summit zones of Manaslu, Annapurna I and Dhaulagiri I, by "development by accumulation" – as for Thomas Kuhn ("Structure of Scientific Revolutions").

Even if modern means helped to pass the present new paradigm within the course of history, as for any historical progress our demarche doesn't change much intrinsically from what has been done so far in terms of historical corrections.

As you can see, as a purpose we do not want to "rewrite" history at all - nor ever wanted it. Moreover, climbers wrote the "new" history themselves by stopping below the highest point, knowingly or - as we fundamentally believe - not. All in all, we just keep going with the work of the aforementioned chroniclers.

Thus, we are opening the box here for some of the past claims (for the 14 8000ers collectors only) and intend to further know a maximum about all past ascents. The ultimate objective being to put historical lists as clear as possible, this to get a clear overview of what has been achieved so far and what the future can bring for climbers.

3/ Why we think the summit should predominate for the 14 8000ers' challenge.

An ascent is primarily the addition of a climb + a summit, perfection being reached when both are included in the equation. The list we focus on here is rather a one for peak-baggers, a proper challenge for which the summit especially counts.

Climbers can of course decide for themselves if they summited or not: they are 100% free from any form of assessment including ours. Now as independent chroniclers, we have a duty to care about the accuracy of the summit, otherwise what are we useful for? What if a marathoner stops a 100m prior to the end of the race, what if the climber is considered winning when not reaching the last hold during a climbing competition? Should we consider them to have made it anyway, along with a cultural common perspective? In any sport, there's a start, a development and an end, the latter marked by a dedicated line. For every-one.

Now we know the sentence: "The way is the target" and understand it. From a climbing perspective, there are several very impressive new routes where the main goal is finished when you enter the summit ridge, after doing new and/or difficult terrain. All these climbs will always be remembered as formidable in the future! But for a proper summit list made by chroniclers, the logic at stake is a different purely factual one.

4/ Why didn't we chose to keep "Tolerance Zone" (TZ) nor the amnesty principle eventually?

When we progressively discovered that so many ascents actually hadn't been to the top, we were both sad and trapped somewhat. What should we do with such new data? Such discovery was heavy and weighing on our shoulders...At some stage, we came to think about the TZ concept, which seemed like the best diplomatically-acceptable solution to "please everyone", at a first glance for the least. We also considered the possibility of amnesty for all the past ascents.

At some stage we contacted the UIAA for obtaining their advice on the situation, us considering it logical to consult the most international of the alpine institutions on that tricky subject. But eventually we didn't get any pragmatic answer to our situation. Same would occur with the few other alpine institutions informed about our research demarch: who wants to deal with the hot potato?

However, after a few times, it became obvious to us that the definition of TZ itself was ultimately a no-fairly-arbitrable one.

- What would be the logic for establishing a systematic geographical limit along with a principle of TZ? Based on which topographically-acceptable principle, considering all the subsidiary summits and ridge bumps at stake? On which distance limit? For Annapurna I: "C1" (85m from the top), but why not "C0" (190m from the top)? For Dhaulagiri I, why not "WRF" (60m from the top) or even the "Metal Pole" (140m from the top)? For Manaslu, why not any ridge point like "C2", "1" ...or even any of the lower foresummits?
- Is the amnesty's principle fair towards climbers? If choosing to apply our research's findings only to contemporary/future ascents and not past ascents (our knowledge coming from there by the way...), is it fair for those who had made (and will make) it for real to be put on the same level as those who hadn't?

All in all, we agreed (despite not a 100% agreement within the team) that TZ was a half-solution, not pertinent and fair for equitably treating ALL the past and future ascents. For whom convenience ultimately should we adapt (denature?) the facts? That's why we ultimately choose to present things factually *as they are*: summit is the summit.

In that sense, we keep thinking about what Miss Hawley or Xavier Eguskitza would have done in our situation, if they had known this all in every detail. There is an interesting example about how Miss Hawley could deal with similar cases. Back in 1997 an Indonesian climber named Misirin was forced to stop his ascent to help exhausted climbers down. He was just 30m distant from the top of Everest, only some meters in altitude difference, but was noted as no top. We think this was hard but correct.

5/ About our research's method and our conclusions

We based our research mainly on the study of photographic evidence, often in relation with the accounts and sometimes with personal interviews.

“No Summit” is the result for the ascents for which accounts, testimonies and/or summit pictures eventually led to a negative body of clues/proofs. In that case we considered that the evidence gathered, even without a personal interview, was enough.

However, the present results aren't set in stone either, so that a further examination of those results during future respectful concertation with the climbers involved could lead to some changes eventually.

6/ Could we contact every climber for every mountain mentioned in the list?

Even if studying as much historic ascents of 8000ers as possible for more than four decades, we didn't have time to contact each climber for each mountain in the list involved. We simply just don't have the resources for that.

Moreover, it's necessary to understand that repeated demands to a climber for his/her summit proofs is a diplomatic challenge, so that sometimes we would feel we needed not to “force” climbers too far.

7/ What is the meaning of the “no evidence” column?

It's the result of an ascent for which we haven't been able to access or demand the summit pictures (see previous point), whether the latter are impossible to analyse (for instance summit pictures shot by night time and/or in bad weather and/or with a useless frame...” We don't know” being the ultimate conclusion).

For these both however, “no evidence” doesn't mean “no summit”! So that any new positively documented summit could lead to erase any mountains from that column.

8/ Did we focus more on certain mountains?

Our study primarily focused on the 3 topographically delicate 8000ers: Manaslu, Annapurna I and Dhaulagiri I.

For the rest of the mountains involved we included all what we had gathered so far, including those particularly checked by Eberhard before 2012 (Broad Peak, Shisha and Makalu first; then Lhotse, Kangchenjunga, Cho Oyu and Gasherbrums).

Thus, there could still be some other wrong claims at stake for these other 8000ers mountains, with an exception for the 3 currently proven finishers.

9/ What about the evidence for each climb?

In the added piece is presented a “Sample” document which shows our evidence for a selection of cases covering most of the key locations at stake on the three problematic 8000ers involved.

Other cases' locations which aren't fully described in that document can be found in the "Enlarged table".

10/ What does the present demarch offer for present and future?

In the continuity to point 2/, the present research demarch aims to bring some positive progress to the climbers' arena, which could lead to change the rules and "map directing new research"?

In terms of new practices, we must mention that commercial-guided expeditions, informed backstage about the results of our research, already changed their summit habits on Annapurna I, Dhaulagiri I and Manaslu straight from 2016. So that nowadays these mountains can be properly climbed to their apex.

In the same vein, we can also mention that the publication of the various topographic reports on the "8000ers.com"'s website helped some climbers to better understand the summit areas and prepare their ascent.

The "8000ers.com" team:

Federico Bernardi, Damien Gildea, Thaneswar Guragai, Eberhard Jurgalski, Tobias Pantel, Rodolphe Popier, Bob Schelfhout.

Addendum

- **About Denis Urubko's Cho Oyu**

The information that led to the recording of "no summit" arose from misunderstanding a Piolets d'Or organization member, who had witnessed Denis Urubko's presentation of the ascent back to 2010. A few years later, the contact confirmed that in the presentation, and after completing the southeast ridge and reaching the summit plateau during a snow storm in the dark, Denis Urubko mentioned that he couldn't be totally sure that he went to the very top of Cho Oyu.

Evidence collected from the Internet (AAJ, JAC, Russianclimb) includes at least two summit pictures, which sadly aren't intrinsically of much use: shot at night, in snowfall, on something looking obviously like the summit plateau. In addition, the route description above the last bivouac, available from the same references, doesn't give enough information to provide details of the transition from the summit plateau (reached at which point?) to the high point on the summit ridge.

Given Denis Urubko's comment during the Piolets d'Or, and an ultimate lack of evidence (despite his effort to have produced pictures), we decided to switch this climb into the "no evidence" column. What this means is it is impossible to know whether they stood on the highest point and not that they didn't reach the highest point. This now positions Denis Urubko within a new category, which we label "possible finisher", since his Annapurna I and Cho Oyu ascents cannot fundamentally be proven to have reached the true summit. We will also ask him for his Dhaulagiri I summit picture(s).

- **About Mrs Nives Meroi's comment**

We first had chosen to not include the style into the table, the present study having focused on the sole summit question. Following Mrs Meroi's key observation, the latter also taken over on the social network, we included 4 new columns into the lower part of the "Enlarged table" to represent style throughout: new route, variant, winter ascent and oxygen ascent. For now, we chose to focus on the 3 climbers we are sure to have fulfilled the challenge, plus the 3 historical first finishers.