

Examination of the summit evidence of the 16/10/2021 Kangchenjunga normal route's ascent.

This report raises questions about the claimed ascent of Kangchenjunga on 16/10/2021 by the Sherpas Gelje, Dawa Kipa, Nima Gyalzen, Pasang Rinji and their client Grace Tseng. It has been compiled in the name of maintaining the accuracy of the climbing records for the Nepal Himalaya and in the name of fairness and integrity within the international climbing community. It is not intended as a personal attack on any of the people involved.

Summary or research

The examination of the gathered evidence first shows that the highest climbing pictures are mostly taken at the western edge of the Pinnacles area (part 1/), then within the Pinnacles area itself (part 21/). This first leads to conclude to an exit of the group from the normal route classic traverse (towards the intermediate ridge holding Upper and Lower Blocks) to the Pinnacles area instead, the latter roughly traversed from west to east. The further examination of two summit pictures (parts 23/, 3/), the "selfie summit video" (41/) and other official summit material (42/) shows all-in-all two identifiable places which aren't to be found at all at the southwest edge of the summit dome (22/), presently where the normal route (and its variants) normally exits. These two main findings led 8000ers.com to state that the group didn't summit on that day but reached a point atop of the Pinnacles instead.

Key topographic locations

- In the Pinnacles area :

"N ridge/face exit" : col between the Pinnacles and the west ridge to the Summit.

"1" to "9" : various blocks constituting the Pinnacles area, including the outstanding "9".

"B1" to "B3" : 3 blocks at the base of the Pinnacles.

"Upper Block" & "Lower Block" : two characteristic blocks at the intermediate ridge of the normal route end.

- In the Summit area :

"A" to "D" : specific rocks marking the top of the south subridge to the Summit.

"E" to "J" : set of rocks marking the southwest edge of the Summit dome.

- On the southwest ridge of Kangchenjunga South :

"1" to "9" : various specific locations of the southwest ridge .

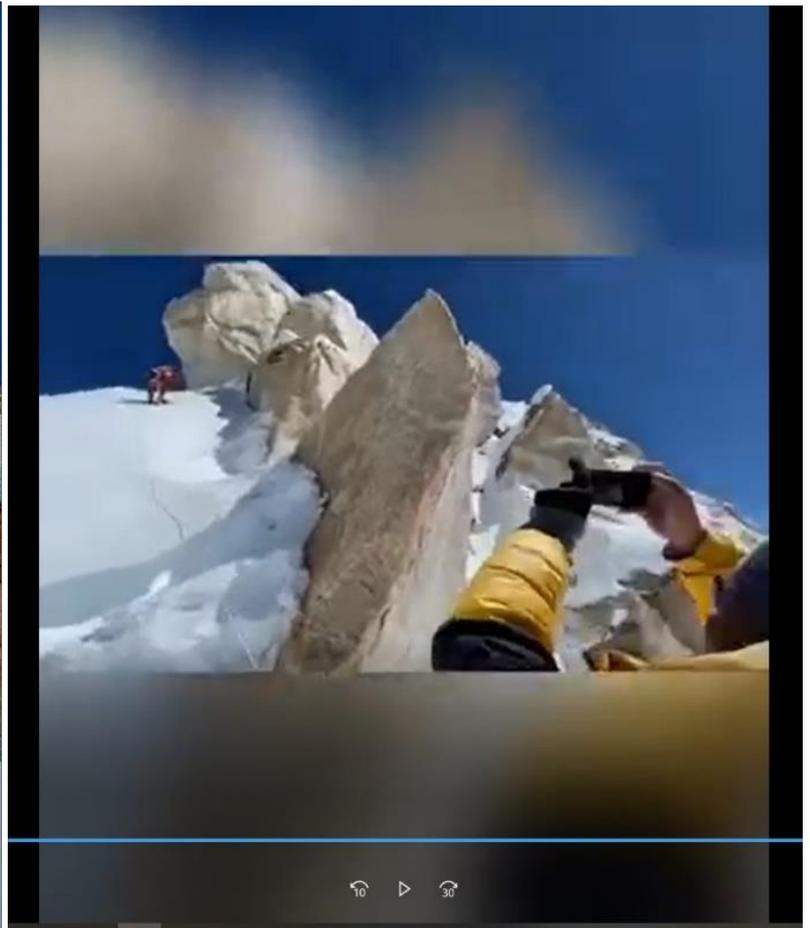
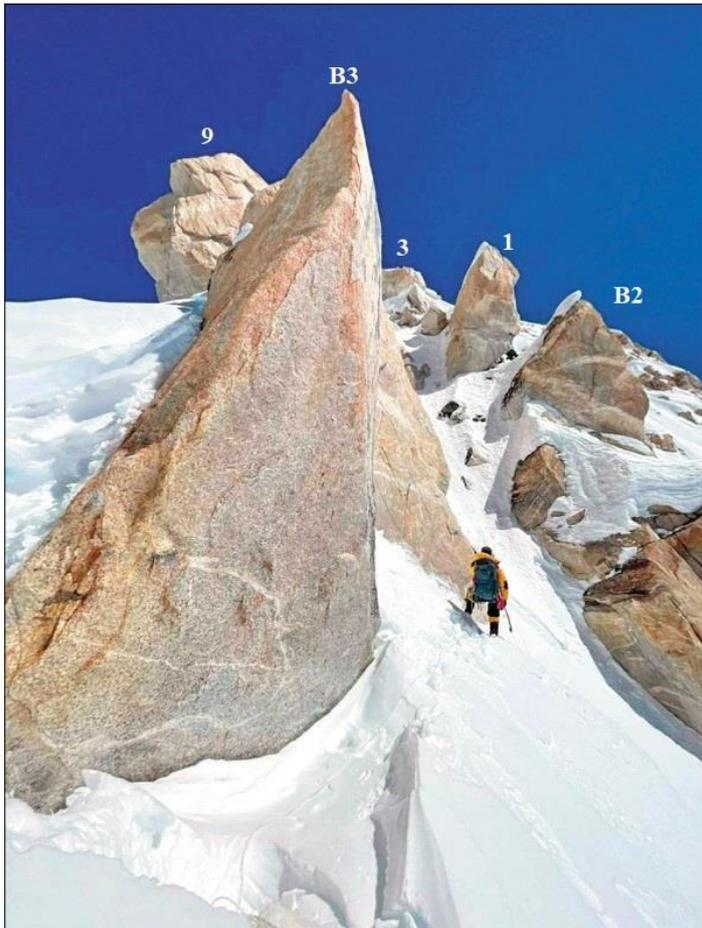
Summit evidence in presence:

The main summit evidence gathered here comes from the following video's link (7'34''), plus a few additional pictures gathered through the Facebook page of Miss Grace Tseng and in various online media.

<https://hi-in.facebook.com/%E6%9B%BE%E6%A0%BC%E7%88%BE-Grace-Tseng-103040145440770/videos/frist-female-climbing-the-worlds-third-tallest-mountain-in-the-autumn/1202885100122790/>

1/ A climb up through the Pinnacles area:

That picture (down left) has been shown a lot in the media to illustrate the climb: it shows a climber getting up the couloir right to the pointy gendarme in the middle foreground ("B3").

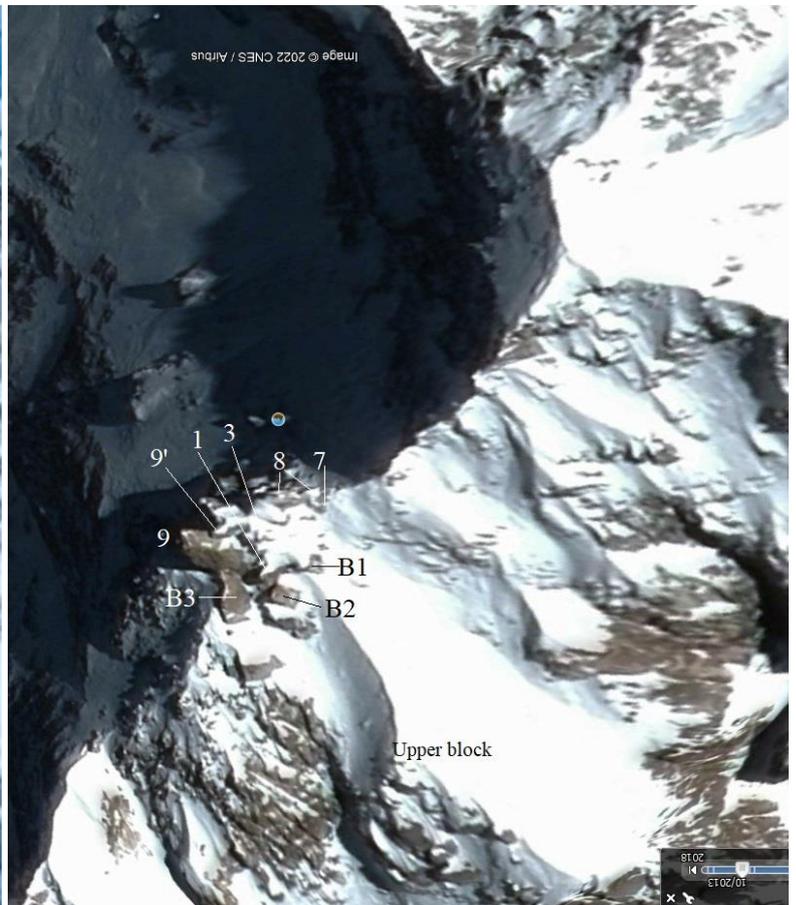
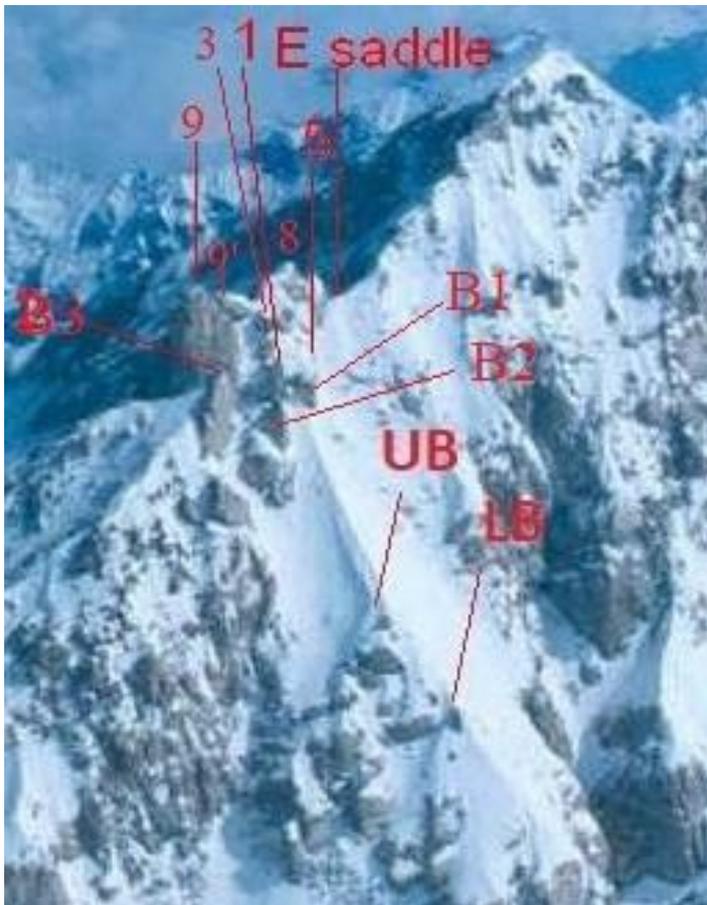


Further 3 images are excerpts from the aforementioned video.



These last two pictures (and the first one, to the right at the previous page) show a Sherpa, then the group, climbing up to the base of that big gendarme/pinnacle (“9”) and beginning the ascent of the narrow couloir beside it.

This characteristic gendarme “9” and the ones down/around it can be located on various zoomed view, aerial and satellite pictures (Credit left, Simone Moro. Credit right, Google Earth) :



Kangchen (8586 m)



The normal route is marked by the red dotted line. It goes well to the right of the Pinnacles area. It seems according to their images, Tseng's Sherpas went the wrong way, into the Pinnacles instead of traversing right of them. Credit : Ferrán Latorre.

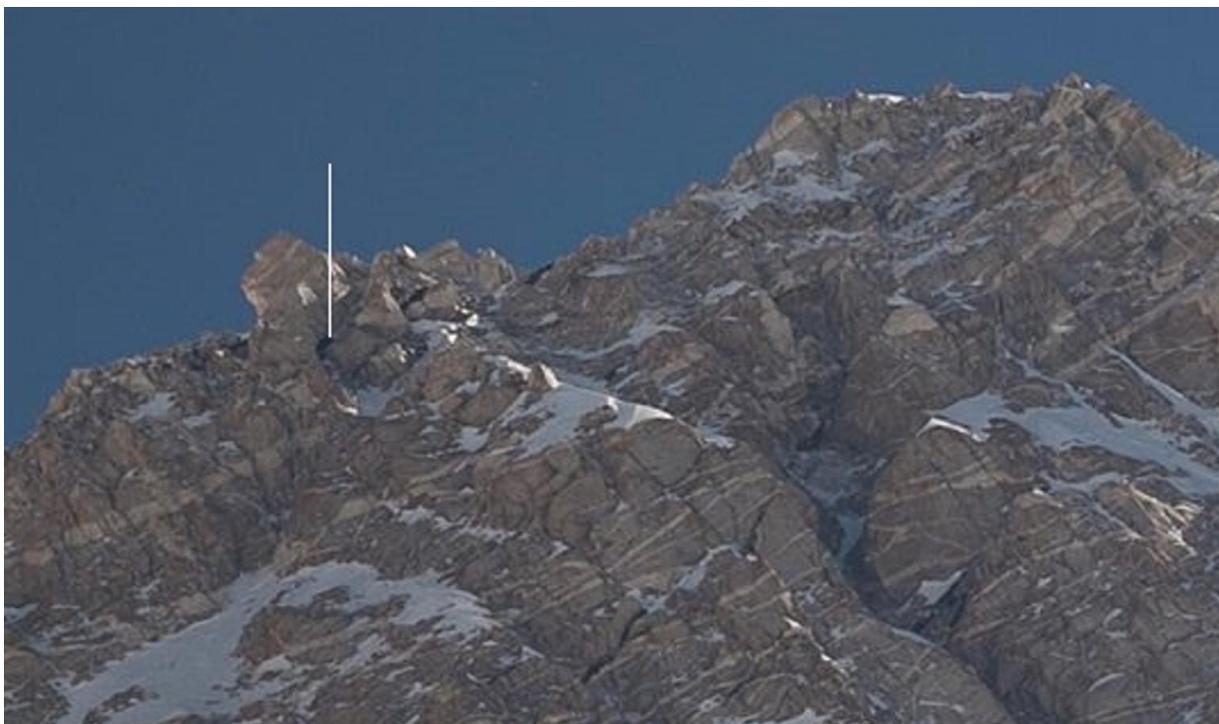


Here is a classic view from the normal route, shot above the "Upper Block", showing the Pinnacles on the left. Only the western end of the true summit is visible here, in the upper right-hand corner of this image. Credit : Samuli Mansikka.



However, with that last excerpt of Miss Tseng's video ("1" visible on the upper right), and in connection with the very first image annotated, it's not clear yet if that picture has been shot in the couloir going up to the right or to the left of the pointy aforementioned pinnacle/gendarme ("B3").

But it's located around there for sure, as that black rock's recurrence further confirms (Credit : Carlos Soria):



→ **The present group of pictures' excerpts from the video is all taken in the Pinnacles area, not in the summit area.** This is explained by the fact that the route taken on that day was not the normal route's one: obviously, the team missed the traverse towards the intermediate ridge (with "Upper" and "Lower" blocks, see picture up at the previous page) to reach directly in harder ground the Pinnacles area... Such itinerary mistake had been first revealed in private to the checkers' network by a climber whose group had followed Grace Tseng team's fixed ropes afterwards.

2/ Two pictures shot in the Pinnacles area :

The Facebook page of Miss Grace Tseng provides with these two additional pictures, **which clearly have been taken in the Pinnacles' area, the second one from the top of the latter.**

21/ Downwards view towards "Upper" and "Lower" blocks from the southern slope of Pinnacles:



One can assess this by crosschecking with other climbers' pictures in the same area (see the next 4 images), in particular with the Kangchenjunga South's southwest ridge details (numbers in red), plus the fact to stand straight above "Lower" and "Upper" blocks (which is strictly impossible from the top, as one can already figure on the overview picture shown at page 4 up). To be mentioned that one can see seemingly some footprints in the snow below. That place might be located at the snowy slope "5".



Late Rodrigo Vivanco standing straight above "Upper Block", at a lower position than Grace Tseng's.

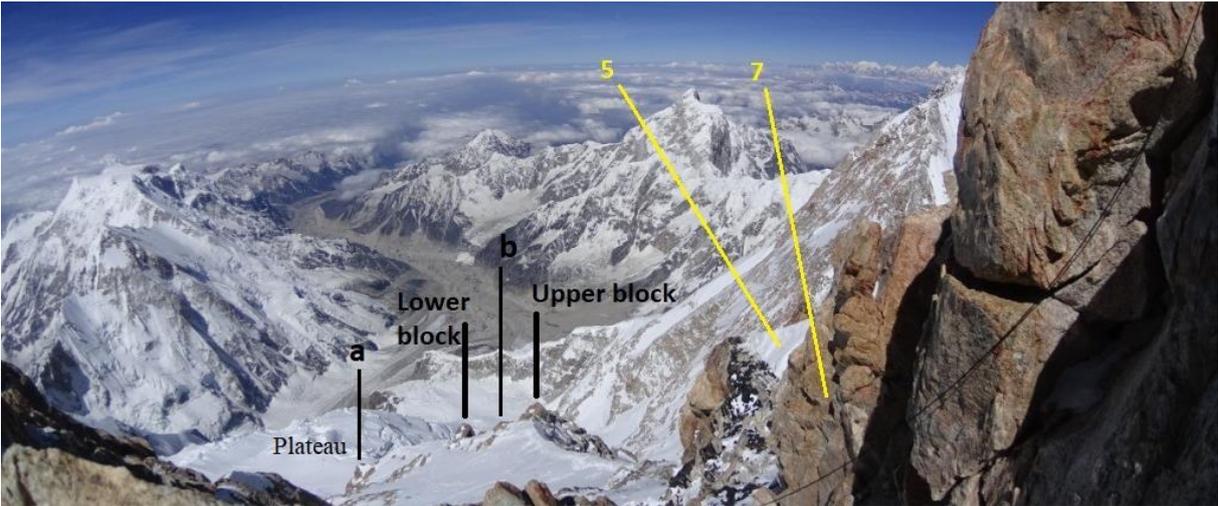


Credit above and below : Anselm Murphy.



Miss Oh standing in 2009 somewhere within the Pinnacles area, above Vivanco's own location, with "Upper Block" well visible in the low left background.

One can further estimate the position of Grace Tseng's group above the Pinnacles when comparing it with Denis Urubko's picture shot at the exit of the North face (at the col between Pinnacles and the summit bastion, which can be seen page 4 down) :



The angle from the observer towards "Upper" and "Lower" blocks clearly shows **Grace Tseng's picture to have been shot further west than Urubko's**. Fully matching with a position in the Pinnacles' area.

22/ A detailed overview of the rocks visible in the summit area

A further comparison with pictures shot from the actual summit in south and southwest directions allow to take a glimpse of the various relief details which are expected to be seen.



A view of the classic exit to the top. Note the different alignment of points "2", "2'" and "3" on the southwest ridge, plus the different rocks at stake lower down ("A" to "D") and at the beginning of the summit area ("E"). Credit : Ferrán Latorre.



Just above the previous view, when reaching the summit "dome". Credit : João Garcia.



An overview from the summit towards the summit rock “E” at the classic exit of the normal route, the latter where many teams correctly accredit their summit. Credit : Nam Soo.



From “E””, an overview of the rocks lying roughly further to the west, with the “Central exit” marked by an arrow and the rocks further (“F” to “J”). Credit : Boyan Petrov.



A downwards view of the “Central exit”, which shows the same lack of Upper and Lower blocks downwards but the roughly south subridge to rocks “A” to “D” instead. Credit : Ralf Dujmovits.



None of the rocks visible on Grace Tseng’s pictures are to be visible here. Credit : Ralf Dujmovits.

23/ Close view of a Sherpa exiting to the day's summit



On this second picture, one can recognize the same southwest ridge background (see points "1","2","3","4") than on the first picture. **Such background and perspective aren't to be seen from the summit at all** (check summit pictures at pages 9-11 for comparison).

A further analysis through sun glasses' reflection sent by the journalist László Pintér (excerpt from the "selfie summit video" section analysed at part 41/ Please be noticed that the picture doesn't need to be reversed horizontally here because the video already is) **shows that this picture was in fact shot from the day's summit.**



These two rocks standing opposite to each other might be rocks "3"? Those 2 are expected to be located between "9" and "8" in any way, atop of the Pinnacles area.

3/ Another “summit picture”

The “selfie summit video” (analysed at 41/), shot by Miss Grace Tseng, shows herself stating: "At Taiwan time 1:10 pm, on 16 Oct., I finally summited the world's 3rd mountain Kangchenjunga and spent a complete 18 hrs. And here I brought the national flag up" (Translation via Miss Feng). **Thus, the present video is clearly meant to be shot on the top of Kangchenjunga.**

That “selfie video” was first considered into its present video’s orientation. However, crosschecked with the present picture from Grace Tseng’s Facebook (see below), one can deduce the real orientation of the selfie video excerpt with Jannu and Yalung Kang’s proper orientations in the background (which can be further confirmed with shadows/lights orientation) :



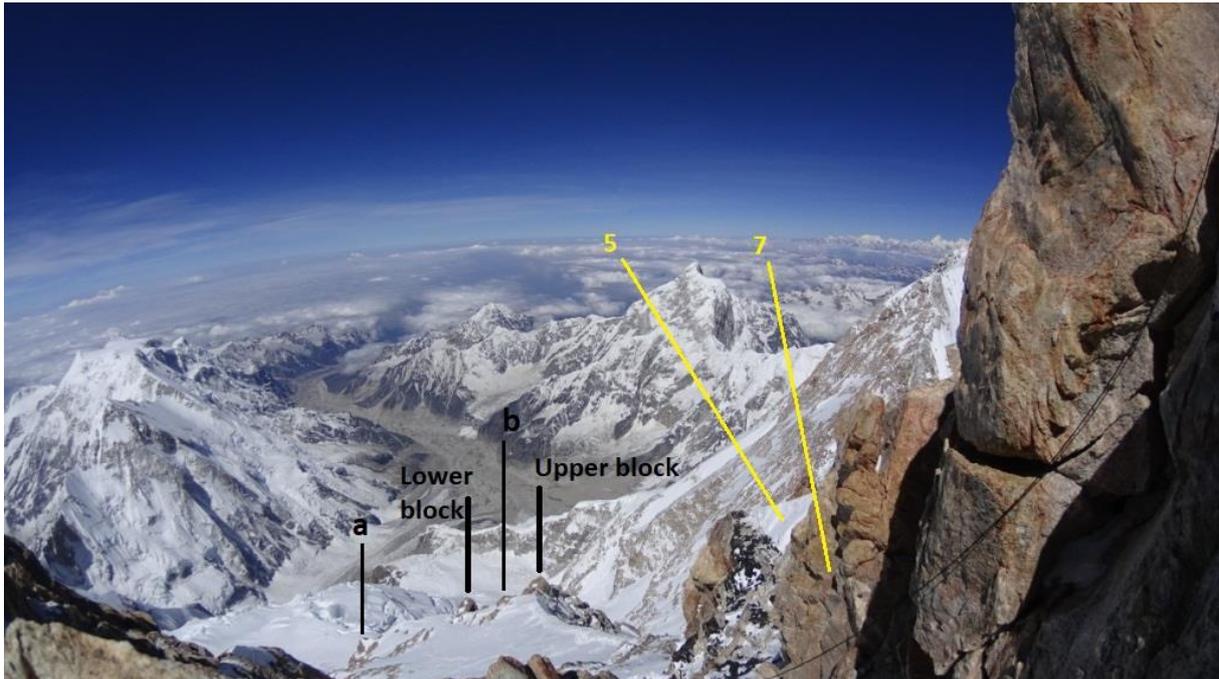
31/ Visible rocks in foreground

This blackish gendarme in the foreground PLUS the right-handed rock nearby (on which the following group’s selfie and pictures analysed at part 4/ have been obviously shot), aren’t in any way rocks which are to be usually seen on summit’s arrival vicinity, whatever via the classic exit, southwest exit or Brown crack’s exit to the summit plateau (check summit pictures from page 9 to 11).

These are likely to be rocks between “9” and “3”, **in any way being rocks visible atop of the Pinnacles area, to its western end.**

32/ Visual alignments comparisons

Based on the same picture shot by Denis Urubko (2014) from the exit of the North ridge, one can deduce:

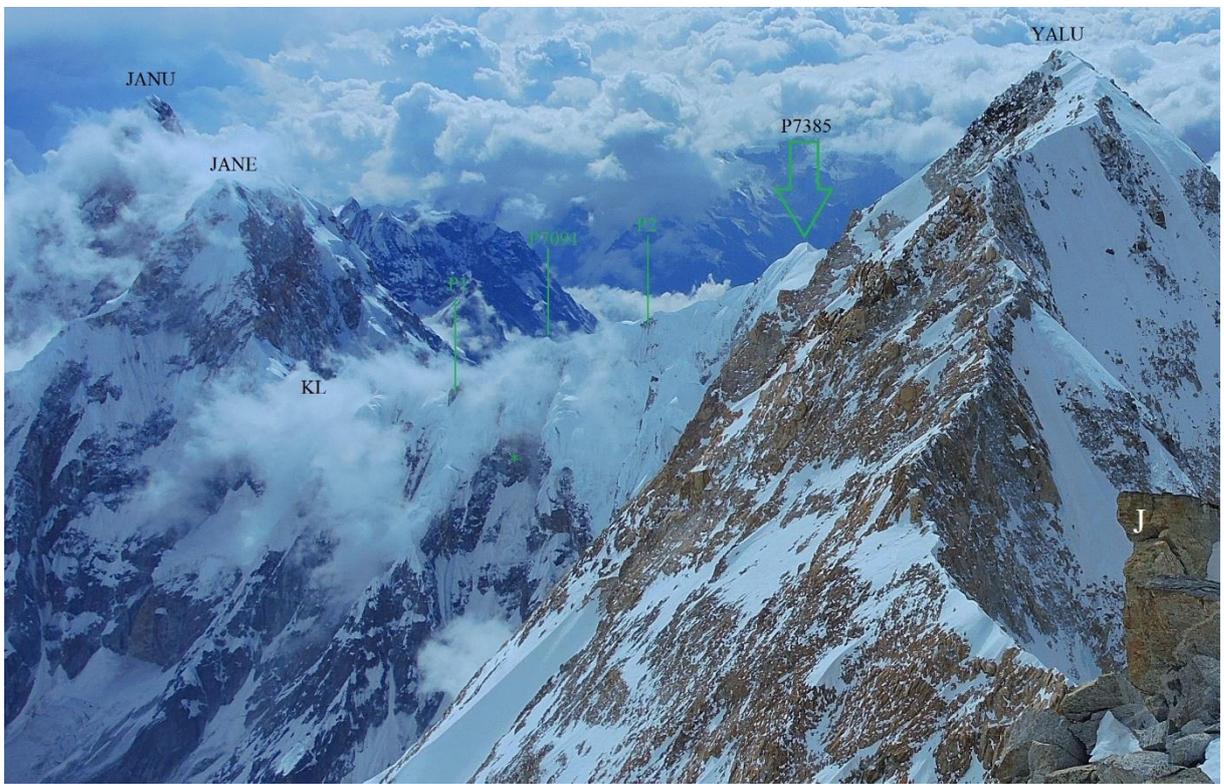


- The ridge portion between Jannu East and Yalung Kang doesn't fit with the usual one seen from the top.

In comparison with next 2 views shot from the top, one can see a larger portion of ridge between Kumbhakarna La ("KL") and Yalung Peak (7535m), the P.7385m (ref. Jan Kielkowski) being clearly visible.

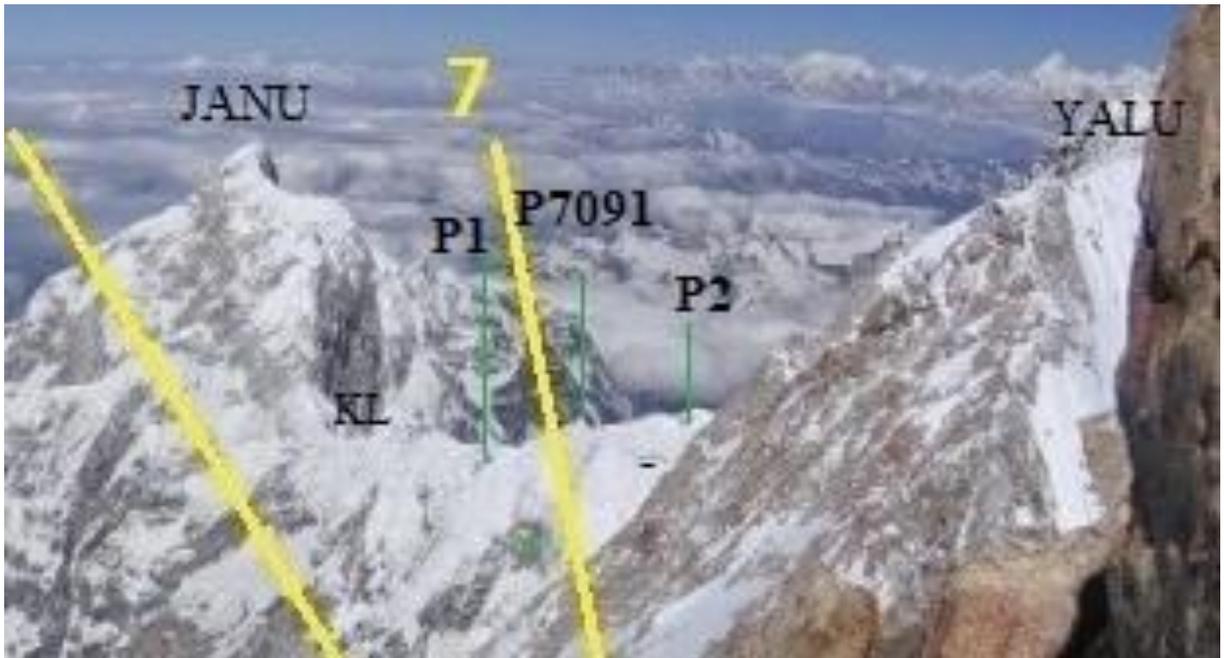


Credit : Ferrán Latorre.



Credit : Boyan Petrov.

This is what already misses on Urubko's view shot from the col between Pinnacles and summit bastion:



And obviously on that Grace Tseng's summit picture:



- Moreover, a closer comparison of the visible ridge section between P2 towards hidden P7385 (rightwards) tends to show that Grace Tseng picture has been shot further to the west than Urubko's, **in fact fully matching *again* with a position amongst Pinnacles area.**

A further examination of the alignment of Yalung Kang's summit ridge bumps with Makalu, Lhotse and Everest in the far background would further help to confirm the present statement.

→ For these reasons, that summit picture and related "selfie summit video" haven't been shot on the summit of Kangchenjunga but obviously atop of the Pinnacles area.

A further metadata's examination of the present material would help to compare it with picture analysed at part 23/ and likely show not much time difference.

4/ Official summit's videos and pictures

41/ Videos and pictures obviously shot right to the rock above Grace Tseng's "selfie summit video".



The "selfie summit video" is itself an excerpt of the main video used for the present report (one can watch that specific excerpt from 6'54" to 7'25"). Appropriately horizontally reversed excerpts above (based on picture analysed at part 3/) already show that **one of the Sherpas is preparing the Nepal flag**, when Grace Tseng already carries the Taiwanese one herself.

The same Sherpa posing with the Nepal flag:



Grace Tseng posing with the Taiwanese flag:



Now a group video's excerpt showing the very same place (see the same snow ridge structure).



➔ The video's excerpt of the group and various other "posing" last pictures with flags have been obviously taken from below, **straight above and to the right of Grace Tseng's "selfie summit video's" excerpts** (shown above to the previous page).

Their metadata's timing would very likely confirm it.



These two pictures, with the first one which widely circulated in the media, are very likely to have been shot not from below this time BUT from the same group's 41/ place, looking the subjects from the same height roughly westwards (light coming from behind the subjects, when it was coming in fact roughly from the left on pictures at 141/).

Metadata of these would very likely confirm a similar timing to 41/, 3/ and 23/ pictures and videos material.



In Conclusion, it can be seen in this report that the Sherpa team guiding Grace Tseng almost certainly went the wrong way into the Pinnacles and stopped at a point far below the main summit of Kangchenjunga. They are not the first team to find the peak's upper terrain confusing. Their published "summit" photos do not match any known images of the summit and do not include any of the views of surrounding peaks that would verify their location. Their images do, however, show views that are only experienced lower on the route, that are not visible from the summit.