



AAC Publications

Amphu I (6,740m), first official ascent

Asia, Nepal, Mahalangur Himal, Khumbu Section

In early October, An Chi-young, Kim Young-mi, and I made the first known ascent of Amphu I, which lies between (and east of) the Amphu Lapcha (a.k.a. Amphu Labtse, a popular 5,780m trekkers' pass) and Baruntse North. While the official height (HMG Finn map) is 6,740m, the Schneider map has an altitude 100m higher.

The peak was opened in 2002 and since then it appears only two permits have been issued. In spring 2008 a German expedition, despite having a permit for Amphu I, climbed Point 6,146m, the highest and most northerly of three unnamed summits between the Chhukung and Amphu glaciers. [No doubt to comply with the permit, the Germans later referred to their mountain by the name Amphu Middle.] In autumn of the same year Jordi Tozas, while acclimatizing for an attempt on the south face of Lhotse, climbed the middle and south peaks of this group, Point 6,205m and Point 6,146m (AAJ 2009). We feel it is rather confusing to refer to these peaks as "Amphu," as they are far away and in a different group from Amphu I.

A permitted Japanese team in 2012 approached a mountain they called Amphu I via the Chhukung Glacier and tried the north face but retreated due to avalanche danger. We are not sure they attempted the same mountain we climbed.

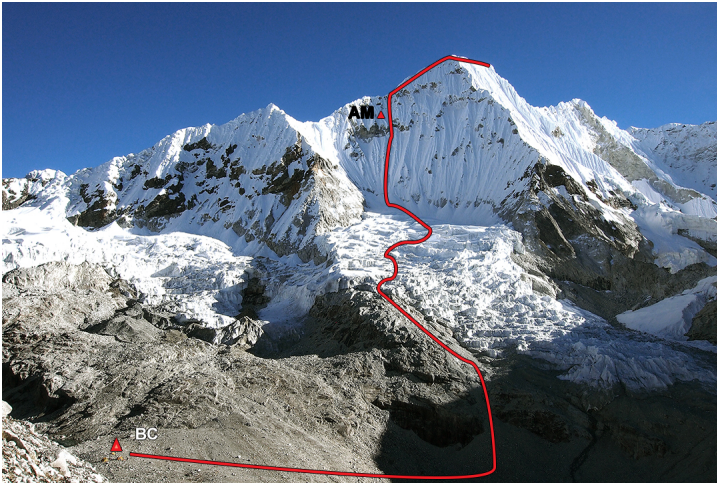
After acclimatizing on Mera, we established base camp at 5,250m by the Panch Pokhari (the collection of lakes south of Amphu Lapcha), arriving on September 27. After two reconnaissance trips up to the glacier terrace below the face, which proved complex but not serious, we started our attempt on October 8. We planned to climb the southwest face via a deep couloir to the west ridge.

We crossed the bergschrund at 5,970m. Throughout the climb the wind was strong and we were troubled by snow showers and falling icicles. I led the first nine pitches, which were relatively easy, but the face got steeper as we progressed, and both An and Kim were hit by large falling icicles. Kim took over the lead on the 10th pitch. At 8:30 p.m. we found a small but ideal ice cave at ca 6,450m, in which to spend the night. Due to icicles in the roof, we dubbed it the Alligator's Mouth.

Starting next day at 8:30 a.m., Kim led, and then An, the face becoming almost vertical soft snow. The ridge, too, had soft snow and was quite sharp. Snow stakes sometimes gave no security. Higher, the angle eased, and we eventually reached the summit at 3 p.m. We had to belay down the dreadful ridge, as we could place no rappel anchors. We regained the Alligator's Mouth at sunset, and next day three hours of rappelling brought us to the glacier. We named the route Windy Couloir (1,300m, plus 500m glacier approach, TD AI5).

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Images



Southwest face of Amphu I showing route of ascent. (BC) Base camp. (AM) Alligator's Mouth



Leaving the yellow tent in the Alligator's Mouth on summit day. Base camp by the Panch Pokhari is circled. The fine panorama includes (A) Kusum Kanguru (6,370m), (B) Melanpulan (6,573m), (C) Kantega (6,783m), (D) Thamserku (6,618m), (E) Karyolung (6,530m), and (F) Numbur (6,958m).



In the southwest face couloir



Climbing the upper west ridge on summit day. Panch Pokhari top left and Imja Glacier to the right

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