



AAC Publications

Drolambau Glacier, Three All-Sherpa Ascents

Nepal, Rolwaling Himal

In the first week of October three Sherpas, who all originate from the Rolwaling Valley, made ascents of three peaks flanking the Drolambau Glacier as a self-contained party. Dawa Gyalje Sherpa, Nima Tenji Sherpa, and Tashi Sherpa are all experienced mountaineers. Nima Tenji has been climbing since 1998 and has summited Everest six times, reached 8,100m on the south face of Lhotse in winter, and has climbed the southwest ridge of Gyachung Kang. Dawa Gyalje has climbed Everest eight times and twice reached 8,300m on the south face of Lhotse. Tashi has summited Everest nine times, reached 8,300m on the south face of Lhotse, and climbed a possible new route on 6,576m Nupche Kang (Friendship Peak), east of the Nangpa La. In 2012, the Nepal National Mountain Guides Association (NNMGA, formed in 2004) was fully accepted into the IFMGA. Nima Tenji is now a full IFMGA guide, and Dawa Gyalje a practicing member of NNMGA.

The three Sherpas took the big step of organizing an expedition of solely Nepalese climbers with the aim of showing the world that, while Sherpas are well-known for their hard work on foreign expeditions, there is a growing band of young Nepalese climbers who are interested in mountaineering for themselves, and not just for business. The timing of their venture was also to prove to the outside world that trekking and climbing is practical and safe after the devastating earthquake earlier in the year.

In March 2014 the government of Nepal added 104 new peaks to the permitted list for climbers. Seventeen of these are in the Rolwaling; three have been given the names Langdak (6,220m), Raungiysar (6,224m), and Thakar Go East (6,152m). As these three peaks had never been on a permitted list before, from the perspective of the Nepali government they were unclimbed, though two of them undoubtedly have seen at least one previous ascent. These three were the goals of the Sherpa team.

The three arrived in the village of Na on September 29, took one rest day, and by October 3 had reached the Drolambau Glacier. On the 4th they established a high camp toward the northern end of the glacier, between the peaks of Langdak and Raungsiyar that lie on the eastern rim. That same day they headed up the west flank of Raungsiyar. Deep snow gave hard going, but once they reached a ridge, snow conditions improved. The summit crest proved quite long, but at 3:15 p.m., less than three hours after leaving the glacier, they were on top. The descent was uneventful, and they were back in camp at 6 p.m.

The following morning the three headed up the southwest flanks of Langdak, reached the west summit (6,177m), and, after descending 100m, continued east-southeast along the ridge to the main top, which they reached at 11:45 a.m. With six 8,000m peaks in clear view, from Xixabangma to Kangchenjunga, Nima Tenji felt this was the best viewpoint he'd climbed, an aspect that would make this peak even more attractive to organizers of commercial expeditions.

The team returned to camp and then moved it down the glacier to below Thakar Go East. On October 6, all three climbed this mountain via the northeast ridge. This gave a trickier ascent than the previous two peaks, at first on rock and then a continuous snow arête. They reached the summit at 11:30 a.m., and by the end of the following day had returned to Na, having made three ascents in three consecutive days.

Langdak is a more recent name for a peak originally called Trident, in 1952, by its first ascensionists: Charles Evans, Alf Gregory, and Erik Shipton. It was climbed again in 1955 by Gregory and Ted Courtenay, who ascended the southwest flank and finished via the west-northwest ridge, the same route followed by the three Sherpas. Gregory suggested calling the summit by its Sherpa name, Singkar, which was the name commonly used until recently. There are at least five known ascents and probably far more, as it is a convenient and straightforward target for unauthorized parties operating toward the head of the Drolambau. For example, in the mid-1980s a party climbed this as well as Peak ca 6,280m on the ridge north of Thakar Go. The latter peak is unnamed on the HMG-Finn map, but the ridge running east from its summit is designated "Rolwalin." Sinkorab, as marked on HMG-Finn, refers to the peak north of Singkar, originally called Dhankuru by the 1950s expeditions.

Peter Boulton and Dennis Davis from the same 1955 expedition climbed the peak to Langdak's south, now known as Raungsiyar, which they summited by a somewhat circuitous route, starting from the north and finishing from the south by "a very steep snow and ice arête." Their route may not be too different from the one used by the three Sherpas, who also climbed glacier slopes from the northwest to finish along the ridge from the south.

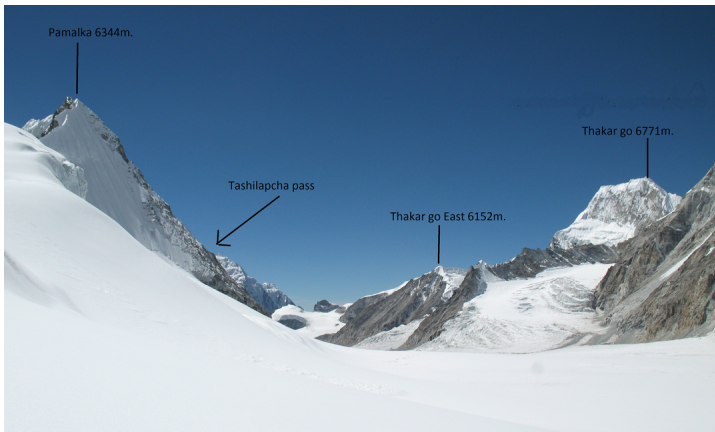
Thakar Go East, or Takargo East, is the low summit at the end of the long east ridge of Takargo (6,771m, first known ascent in 2010 by David Gottlieb and Joe Puryear). No previous ascents of this peak have been documented.

Lindsay Griffin, with information from Dawa Gyalje Sherpa and Mingma Gyalje Sherpa, Nepal

Images



Looking north up the Drolambau Glacier to the 2015 Sherpa ascent routes on Langdak and Raungsiyar.



Looking south down the Drolambau Glacier from below Raungsiyar. The three Sherpas climbed Thakar Go East via the ridge that falls toward the camera. Pamalka is the "new" name for the peak formerly known as Pimu, first climbed in 1955 by Peter Boulton and Dennis Davis.

Article Details

Author	Lindsay Griffin, with Information From Dawa Gyalje Sherpa, and Mingma Gyalje Sherpa, Nepal
Publication	AAJ
Volume	58
Issue	90
Page	340
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions