



AAC Publications

Tharke Kang, Northwest Ridge

Nepal, Mahalangur Himal, Khumbu Section

Tharke Kang (6,710m) is a newly opened summit that sits on the northwest ridge of Hungchi (7,029m). This ridge rises from the Nup La (5,844m) and forms the frontier between Nepal and Tibet. A guided expedition led by Garrett Madison (USA) made the first known attempt on Tharke Kang in the autumn.

The team trekked to a base camp at around 5,200m by the Gokyo Fifth Lake, above the west bank of the Ngojumba Glacier. They then completely avoided the icefall by helicoptering over it and onto the glacier plateau near the Nup La, where an advanced base was established at 5,820m on November 1. On this and the following day, members of the team climbed onto the crest of the northwest ridge and ascended about two-thirds of the way to the summit, fixing ropes on steeper sections.

On summit day, November 3, the team left advanced base at 2 a.m., crossed the glacier for 45 minutes, and climbed about 150m up to the crest. They continued up the ridge, negotiating various degrees of steepness (sometimes vertical for sustained sections). The team was split into two groups, with Aang Purba, Lakpa Dandi Sherpa, and Madison out in front, fixing any difficulties, while the second group followed steadily behind. (Aang Phurba and Madison have worked together many times in recent years; Aang Phurba's brother was working with Madison when he perished in the Khumbu Icefall avalanche in 2014.)

The first group reached the summit at 9:15 a.m. There was not a cloud in the sky, only a small breeze, and the view encompassed great peaks such as Everest, Lhotse, and Cho Oyu. Around one hour later, the second group—Kristin Bennett, Lisa Thompson, Pasang Dawa Sherpa, and Tashi Sherpa—also reached the top. All then descended to advanced base. The following day they experienced the culture shock of waking at 6 a.m., flying by helicopter to base camp, and then onwards to Kathmandu for a celebratory dinner.

Editor's note: During a 2003 attempt on Hungchi from Tibet, a Japanese expedition climbed directly to a 6,600m col on the upper northwest ridge, between Tharke Kang and Hungchi. From there they continued up the crest above before retreating 200m below the summit of Hungchi. That same year, a separate Japanese team made the first ascent of Hungchi via the southwest ridge. In 2006, another Japanese team completed the route up Hungchi from Tibet, most likely via the same route as the 2003 party.

– Lindsay Griffin, with information supplied by Garrett Madison

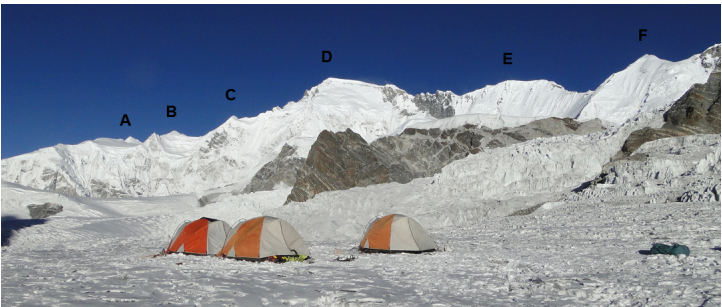
Images



Hungchi from the Ngojumba Glacier to the southwest. The northwest ridge is the left skyline, and Tharke Kang is the obvious flat-topped summit. Hungchi was first climbed in 2003 by the southwest ridge, the upper part of which is visible on the right side of the image.



Seen from the upper Nup La Glacier, the north face of Everest towers over (A) Changtse (7,583m) and (B) Lingtren (6,749m). The foreground slopes on the right form part of the lower section of the east-northeast ridge of Burke Khang.



Looking northwest from advanced base on the upper Nup La Glacier. (A) Nangpai Gosum I (7,321m). (B) Nangpai Gosum II (7,286m). (C) Point 7,488m. (D) Cho Oyu (8,188m). (E) Ngojumba Kang (7,919m). (F) Ngojumba Kang II (7,742m).



The upper section of the northwest ridge of Tharke Kang as seen from the vicinity of advanced base on the Nup La Glacier.



Climbing the northwest ridge of Tharke Kang during the first ascent.



The lower section of the northwest ridge of Tharke Kang seen from the Nup La Glacier. The expedition gained the ridge via the smooth snow and ice slope above and a little left of the climbers.



Garrett Madison on the summit of Tharke Kang with the northwest ridge of Hungchi behind.



During the descent of the northwest ridge of Tharke Kang, with the Nup La Glacier below.

Article Details

Author	Lindsay Griffin
Publication	AAJ
Volume	60
Issue	92
Page	0
Copyright Date	2018
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions