



AAC Publications

Phuletate, Reconnaissance and Rock Tower on West Ridge

Nepal, Mahalangur Himal, Khumbu Section

In 2017 I located an area of the Khumuche Himal that I felt worth exploring. This chain of peaks lies on the east side of the Thesebu Khola, around 10km north of Namche. Summits there are approximately 5,400–5,750m, and one stood out: Phuletate (sometimes called Lhabarmatse, 5,597m). Expeditions to peaks below 5,800m require no permit and are hence easier to organize.

The Thesebu (a.k.a. Kyajo) Valley was visited by a Czech-Slovak team in 2008. They climbed Kyajo Ri (6,186m) via the normal route (southwest ridge) and made the first recorded ascent of Teningbo (5,839m) via its north face (AAJ 2010). No recorded attempts appear to have been made on other peaks in this valley, and the Czech-Slovak team reported Kapsale, Chhedan, and Phuletate to be worthwhile objectives.

Frank Nugent, Paddy O'Brian, Alan Tees, and I established base camp partway up the valley at around 4,600m. Here we met a three-man Russian team, led by the well-known Yuri Koshelenko, that was attempting the southwest ridge of Kyajo Ri but eventually was defeated by poor snow conditions. They had fixed three rope lengths on the headwall above base camp that needs to be overcome to reach the upper valley. With the help of porters and these ropes, we established an advanced base west of Phuletate at around 5,000m.

On April 24, Alan and I left this camp to reconnoiter a possible line starting west of Phuletate. However, the conditions were as the Russians had described: a thin crust covering loose, unconsolidated snow. One possible line would ascend a ramp to the northwest face, followed by a traverse to a col beneath the north ridge—a long, meandering route. There was no direct access to the north col. We felt that if the col were reached, climbing up the north ridge might be feasible, at least to a shoulder below the twin-summit crown.

We pressed on toward the ramp until both of us agreed conditions were too bad, then turned our attention to a prominent rock tower on the west ridge. We pushed across the lower reaches of the ridge to gain a minor col between the ridge and the tower (PD+), then climbed up the northeast side of the tower on easy ground to gain the top (approximately 5,150m, 27°52'18.23"N, 86°41'25.59"E).

Though the weather was generally good during our stay in the valley, conditions remained poor. On April 30 we trekked back to Namche, and while the others went off to inspect the work of the Irish Nepalese Education Trust and celebrate its achievements in "good style," I decided to make a three-day reconnaissance of Phuletate from the east. The view of our peak from the settlements of Dole and Lopharma was impressive. Although there was far less snow on that eastern aspect, and an approach to the north col looked easier, the mountain appeared to show little in the way of a straightforward route.

– Gerry Galligan, Ireland

Images



Base camp in the valley of the Thesebu Khola. Directly to the north is the prominent rock tower climbed by the 2018 Irish expedition from the far side. The summit of Phuletate is up to the right.



Phuletate from the southeast.



Looking south-southeast down the valley of Thesebu Khola. (A) Thamserku (6,618m), (B) Phuletate (the rock tower climbed in 2018 is not visible). (C) Kusum Kanguru (6,370m). (D) Teningbo (5,839m, climbed in 2008 via the north face).



Gerry Galligan on top of the rock tower on the west ridge of Phuletate, looking east toward the summit.

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