



## AAC Publications

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### **Sharphu II, East Face, Samsara**

Nepal, Ohmi Kangri Himal

**In October, Aivaras Sajus and I made the first known ascent of Sharphu II (6,328m, 27°45'29.87"N, 87°55'7.92"E) via the east face—a route we named Samsāra (1,040m, ED2 AI5 M6).** The route height is measured from the first belayed pitch on the glacier, though the sustained technical climbing, above the bergshroud, was 730m.

Sharphu I and II are twin peaks that share a steep eastern aspect. In 1962 a Japanese expedition climbed nearby Nupchu Peak (currently mislabeled as Sharphu IV on the HMG-Finn map; see AAJs 2015 and 2018 for an explanation of the naming of peaks in the Sharphu Group), and in 1963 the Japanese climbed Sharphu I (6,433m), the highest of the group, from the south side. We are unaware of another team climbing or attempting Sharphu II. [It appears to have been the goal of an Austrian expedition in 2015, but it is not known if they even set foot on the mountain.]

We approached via the Kangchenjunga Base Camp trail using porters, donkeys, and yaks. We set up our base camp at 4,550m, west of the small village of Khambachen, in a yak pasture beside the Nupchu Khola. We observed many blue sheep, whistling snowcocks, and royal blue grandalas. Snow leopards and Tibetan wolves have preyed on grazing yak in this area. After acclimatizing and scouting the peak for a week, we established a high camp at 5,600m at the bergschrund below the east face, and acclimatized there for one more day. The approach to the bergschrund briefly crosses into the run-out zone of active seracs.

The east face has four prominent cliff bands in its lower half and several gully systems that extend to the summit ridge. The shaded aspects of these bands held good ice, but the rock was mediocre. We put together a line by climbing ice and mixed terrain through one gully, then traversing a snowfield below a dry cliff band into a second gully, which we followed to the summit ridge. We camped once on the face under a full moon and the next night on the summit ridge, with a steady 30 mph wind and a temperature of -25°C. Sharing one sleeping bag saved weight and encouraged shivering.

We summited on October 26 by a final short snow ridge, then descended the snowy north ridge. After several rappels past summit rime and cliff bands, interspersed with about 400m of steep downclimbing, we spent a final night on the glacier between Sharphu II and Sharphu VI (6,076m). We descended to base camp on our sixth day after departing.

The adjacent east face gullies hold similar terrain with sections of excellent ice. As a warning to future parties, although in six days on the mountain we observed only one rockfall incident, it was a significant event directly down the first 200m of our line (after we had passed). Future parties might also consider the steep western and northern aspects of the Sharphus and Nupchu from the Yangma Khola.

Samsāra is a Sanskrit word that means to wander and refers to cyclical existence in Buddhist and Hindu traditions. We thank the Sherpa family that owns the White House in Khambachen for their generosity and assistance.

– Spencer Gray, AAC

## Images



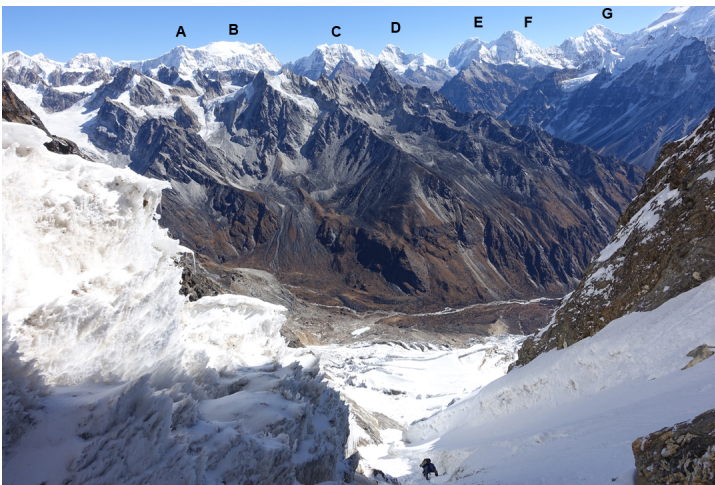
Aivaras Sajus on the summit of Sharphu II. Behind and to the northeast are (A) Jongsang (7,462m); (B) Drohmo (6,881m); (C) Pathibara Chuli (7,140m); (D) Kirat Chuli (7,362m); (E) Nepal Peak (7,177m); (G) Gimmigela Chuli (7,350m); (H) Kangchenjunga (8,586m), and (I) Jannu (7,711m).



Aivaras Sajus rappels to skier's left of the north ridge of Sharphu II. The glaciated saddle below separates Sharphu II from Sharphu VI.



Aivaras Sajus leads the second pitch of the longest stretch of solid ice on Samsāra, just above Camp 2 at about 5,900m.



Aivaras Sajus on the lower part of the east face of Sharphu II above the Nupchu Khola valley. In the background are (A) Janak (7,041m); (B) Jongsang (7,462m); (C) Drohmo (6,881m); (D) Pathibara Chuli (7,140m); (E) Kirat Chuli (7,362m); (F) Nepal Peak (7,177m); (G) Gimmigela Chuli (7,350m); and the north face of Kangchenjunga rising out of the picture.





The east faces of Sharphu I and II seen across the Nupchu Khola Valley. Samsāra (2018) is marked. The 1963 Japanese route to the higher Sharphu I is not visible.



Summit morning after a frigid night at 6,260m on the windward side of the summit ridge between Sharphu I, beyond the tent, and Sharphu II, behind the photographer.

## Article Details

Author	Spencer Gray
Publication	AAJ
Volume	61
Issue	93
Page	326
Copyright Date	2019
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions