



## AAC Publications

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### **Punchen Himal North, Northwest Face and Northwest Ridge**

Nepal, Ganesh Himal

**Punchen Himal (6,049m, 28°39'40N, 85°08'48E) lies on the Nepal-Tibet border, 30km north of Ganesh I (7,422m). It had seen two known previous attempts.** In 2007, a Japanese party led by Tamotsu Ohnishi followed the northwest ridge from its base, with an excursion onto the face to the right, to reach Punchen Himal North (5,962m), but the climbers were unable to cross the connecting knife-edge ridge to the main summit (AAJ 2008). In 2009, a second Japanese expedition, led by Koichi Kato, opted to attempt the south-southwest ridge direct to the main top. Two separate attempts reached 5,888m, where the way ahead was barred by "difficult bare rock."

In mid-April, we approached via the Manaslu Circuit up the Buri Gandaki Valley, until branching eastward into the Tsum Valley at Lokpa (2,240m). We then followed the Shyar Khola for three days to Mu Gompa (3,700m), and from there continued north, first camping at Bhajyo (4,030m) and then setting up our base camp at 4,700m (28°37'38.37"N, 85°07'35.19"E) at Yamdro, on the west side of Yangdol Khola, 3km southwest of Punchen Himal.

We acclimatized on an unnamed and insignificant peak of 5,324m west of Yamdro, and from there could see a place for high camp and a possible route to Punchen Himal North. The following day we placed high camp at 5,161m (28°40'28.3"N, 85°07'28.61"E), which was higher than, and farther east of, the 2007 Japanese high camp.

On April 28 we summited Punchen Himal North with Dende Sherpa and Karma Sherpa. We left high camp at 4 a.m. and ascended the snowy slopes of the northwest face. This was a straightforward climb apart from a 50m band of loose rock. Once on the northwest ridge (the Nepal-Tibet border), we followed the ridge over steep snow slopes to the top. The route was mainly unconsolidated snow, and there were no technical difficulties (PD+). We believe this route to be substantially different than that followed by the Japanese, and our ascent to be the second of this summit. [The Japanese climbed the northwest ridge more directly from its toe, while the 2016 team used the northwest flank to gain the ridge higher up.]

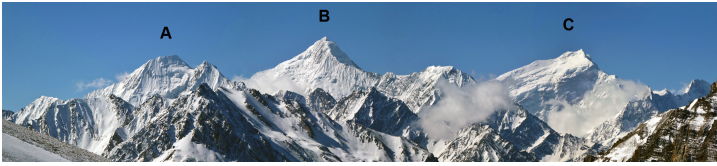
We then followed the connecting ridge southeast toward the main summit, crossing deep deposits of unconsolidated snow. There were also hidden crevasses. As we got closer to steeper terrain leading toward the main summit, it was clear that the only possible route would involve climbing snow slopes with an excessively high avalanche risk; the summit ridge consisted of large and unconsolidated cornices on both sides. All four of us agreed the risk was too high and returned to high camp by our ascent route, reaching it around 3 p.m.

The deep and unconsolidated snow, and associated high avalanche risk, were due to higher than normal amounts of spring snowfall. For most of the seven days prior to our summit attempt there had been snowfall above ca 4,500m and very cloudy conditions in the afternoons. With better consolidation, our proposed route would have been a viable option and likely AD+ or D. We are not certain, but there is a possibility that the highest point is a steep rock pinnacle, which would be harder.

We thank the BMC for providing a grant toward this expedition.

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## Images



Looking south toward the Ganesh Group during the ascent of Puchen Himal North. (A) Pashubo (6,177m). (B) Langpo (6,648m). (C) Ganesh I (7,422m).



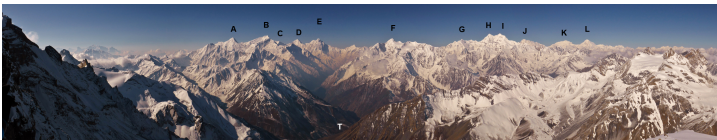
Looking along the summit ridge of Puchen Himal to the main top. The highest point may be the sharp rock pinnacle.



High camp and initial route of ascent up the northwest slopes of Puchen Himal North.



Moving along the ridge connecting Puchen Himal North to the main summit, which is off picture to the right.



Panorama looking to the south and southwest during the ascent of Puchen Himal North. (A) Pashubo (6,177m). (A) Langpo (6,648m). (B) Ganesh I (7,422m). (C) Ganesh III (7,043m). (D) Ganesh IV (7,104m). (E) Ganesh II (7,118m). (F) Langu Himal (6,426m). (G) Peak 6,810m. (H) Shringi Himal (7,161m). (I) Chamar (7,165m). (J) Himalchuli (7,893m). (K) Nagdi Chuli (Peak 28, 7,871m), (L) Manaslu (8,163m). (T) Tsum Gorge.

## Article Details

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