



AAC Publications

Luza Peak, Southeast Face and South-Southeast Ridge

Nepal, Mahalangur Himal—Khumbu Section

The east side of Luza (5,710m) showing (left) 2020 route up the southeast face/ridge to the summit and (right) attempted route up the middle of the northeast face. Photo by Pemba Sharwa Sherpa

Project Luza Winter was a joint expedition of some young, independent Sherpas from the village of Phortse, with the aim of uplifting our standards as professional climbers, even though we are not IFMGA-certified. Urken Lendu (a.k.a. Lendhup) Sherpa is a 27-year-old freelance mountain guide with plenty of experience: fixing ropes on K2, the north ridge of Ama Dablam, and multiple ascents of Everest, Lhotse, and Manaslu. Lhakpa Gyaljen Sherpa (26) is also a guide who has climbed Everest, Cho Oyu, Ama Dablam and Cholatse, as well as many smaller peaks. Like Urken, I'm a young freelance mountain guide who began my climbing career with an Everest expedition in spring 2012. I have climbed two other 8000ers, as well as Ama Dablam and Kyajo Ri, and every winter I instruct ice climbing courses at the Khumbu Climbing Center. In addition, I've climbed in the Alps, with ascents of many peaks.

Phortse, in the Khumbu, lies at an altitude of 3,840m and has the highest concentration of Everest summiters in the world [83 at the time of writing]. Each house has at least one summitter, and mountaineering has become our main occupation: All men aged 16 to 60 leave for months on big expeditions, and the village is looked after by women, kids, and the elderly.

Luza (5,710m) lies at 27°53'16.86"N, 86°41'40.15"E, on the long ridge that runs from Kyajo Ri to Khumbi Yul Lha (a.k.a. Khumbila). It used to be snow-capped, but with the impact of climate change it has become an exposed rocky peak. Our weeklong expedition was very productive. We established base camp in December at 4,900m, above Luza village (Luja, 4,338m) in the Gokyo Valley. After inspecting the peak, our initial goal was to climb a prominent depression/couloir on the northeast face, a wall that never sees the sun in winter.

We started early, traversing the snout of the Luza Glacier to the base of the wall. The initial climbing was fun, but as we progressed, we began to find looser and more unstable slabs, and eventually retreated by rappelling from rock bollards.

Our second option was the southeast face and south-southeast ridge. On December 17, a moderate one-hour climb over scree and moraine warmed us, as did the early sunlight. We arrived at a fine rock face approximately 150m high. This was the best part of the climb, and we were excited to climb new ground as a group of best friends. The ridge to the summit was tricky and loose, but we managed to take time to film, and arrived at the top at 11:30 a.m. The panorama spread across the whole of the Khumbu, part of Rolwaling, and into Tibet. Four 8,000ers and many 7,000ers were visible.

From left to right, Pemba Sharwa Sherpa, Urken Lendu Sherpa, and Lhakpa Gyaljen Sherpa. Photo by Pemba Sharwa Sherpa

The descent proved more exciting, as we followed the south ridge in part. We had to be careful not to trigger rockfall. But we managed to get back to base camp before dark. It had taken almost the same time to descend as to ascend, and our cook had been more anxious about us than we were.

We had hoped to establish a moderate climb for trekkers or rock climbers/scramblers, but we

concluded that this is not ideal route for beginners. Experienced climbers will have a good day out; we recommend taking plenty of cams and nuts.

Our objectives had been to promote eco-friendly expeditions and sustainable climbing (leave no trace), and to provide a positive message to the climbing community and the rest of the world that Sherpas don't just climb to earn a living. We climb for ourselves. We climb for fun. It is a passion, a hobby, and promotes self-growth. We want to raise awareness of climate change and its impacts, bearing in mind our experience on Luza Peak. We also want to promote the unexplored and unclimbed peaks of Nepal, as well as winter tourism following the necessary protocols. We hope to motivate a newer generation of Sherpa youths to explore new routes and new peaks.

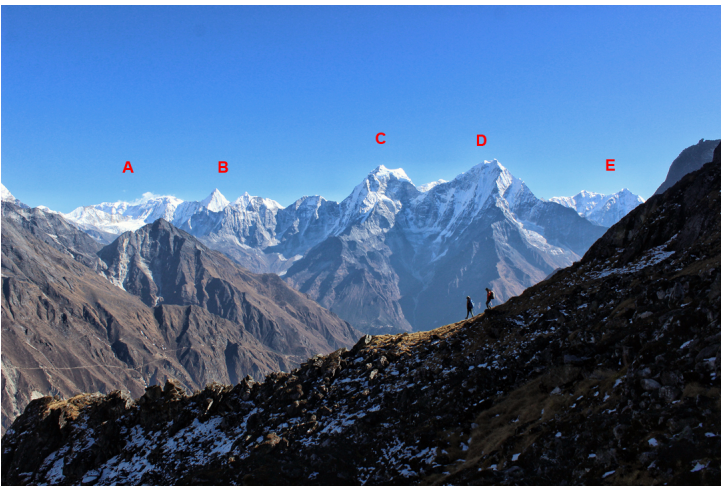
— Pemba Sharwa Sherpa, Nepal

Editor's Note: Sadly, Urken Lendu Sherpa fell to his death the following month while climbing near Phortse.

Images



The east side of Luza (5,710m) showing (left) 2020 route up the southeast face/ridge to the summit and (right) attempted route up the middle of the northeast face.



Above the Gokyo Valley, looking east-southeast at (A) Chamlang, (B) Melanphulan, (C) Kangtega, (D) Thamserku, and (E) Kusum Kanguru.



During the unsuccessful attempt on the northeast face of Luza Peak.



Looking south-southeast from the summit area of Luza Peak. The highest rock peak at the end of the ridge is Khumbi Yul Lha, above the village of Khumjung. The high peak in distant left is Kusum Kanguru.



Lhakpa Gyaljen Sherpa during the descent of Luza Peak, with the upper Kyajo Khola Valley below and Kyajo Ri at the head. The standard route to Kyajo Ri follows the left skyline.



View from the summit area of Luza Peak looking northeast at (A) Changtse, (B) Cholatse, (C) Everest, (D) Lhotse, (E) Tawoche North, (F) Tawoche, and (G) Makalu.



From left to right, Pemba Sharwa Sherpa, Urken Lendu Sherpa, and Lhakpa Gyaljen Sherpa.

Article Details

Author	Pemba Sharwa Sherpa
Publication	AAJ
Volume	63
Issue	95
Page	
Copyright Date	2021
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions