



## AAC Publications

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### **Dorje Lhakpa, South Face, and Other Routes**

Nepal, Jugal Himal

**An expedition to the Greater Ranges marks the end of the three-year cycle of the Spanish National Mountaineering Team.** Here they gain experience with altitude and learn how to operate carefully and safely in remote ranges. Choosing the south side of Dorje Lhakpa for the 2021 expedition of the men's team was not down to chance. I was looking for somewhere little-visited but relatively accessible, with solitude and potential for opening new routes. In 1992 I had tried the north face of Dorje Lhakpa (6,955m, 28°10'25.58"N, 85°46'42.77"E), approaching from the Langtang Valley to the northwest. The valley to the south seemed to meet all my requirements. [This valley appears unnamed on the HMG-Finn map but flows into the Lagan Khola.] Only a minor shepherds' path went into the valley.

In early October, after a five-day trek from Botang (1,850m) via Panch Pokhari, Javier Guzmán, Mikel Inoriza, Iker Madoz, Rubén San Martín, Ander Zabazla, and I established our base camp at an idyllic site around 4,200m. The weather was perfect, the conditions on the south face of Dorje Lhakpa excellent, and the cold of autumn had yet to arrive. We made an advanced base at 4,900m and then, to acclimatize, climbed the northeast ridge of Lingsing Himal (a.k.a. Linsin Himal, the 6,074m summit on the watershed ridge between Dorje Lhakpa and 6,143m Urkinmang) to a small point at approximately 5,900m (28°10'17.89"N, 85°44'38.75"E). We bivouacked at 5,300m on the way up and again at 5,600m on the way down. It was a beautiful ridge: snow with a few rock steps of grade V. [It is not clear if this ridge has ever been climbed in its entirety.]

Once we were down, five consecutive days of bad weather left 1.5m of fresh snow on the glacier. We then received a weather report that promised a short window with a sharp drop in temperature. Afterward, the wind at altitude would become very strong. Inoriza, Madoz, and I would try the south face of Dorje Lhakpa, while Ander, Javi, and Rubén would try the southwest wall. To 5,800m, our routes would coincide.

Making a trail up the glacier proved painful. My team bivouacked at 5,700m, the others 100m higher at the foot of the face. We set out at 4 a.m. on the 25th in biting cold. A little later we saw the other team back on the glacier: The cold had been too intense and the conditions too poor. We three continued upward, opening a deep track. When I checked the satellite phone, I saw a message that next day the wind on the summit would be 80km/h and would not decrease in the coming days. We quickly decided to go for the summit that day.

Leaving a tent pitched at 6,100m, we set ourselves a turnaround time of 4 p.m. (It was getting dark around 5:40 p.m.) We stood on the summit at 5 o'clock: It was cold and windy but magnificent.

We carefully descended the upper 500m of snow and ice (55–65°), rappelling the lower section in the dark. The following day we stumbled into base camp, with just a couple of days remaining before the arrival of our porters. However, there was enough time for our companions, despite frostnip in the feet, to open a fine rock route on a peak close to camp that they named Point Sofia (5,300m): Diedro Ziripot (350m, 6c).

We left with smiles on our faces. The experience gained will be used by these guys on further expeditions, which they are sure to make.

— Mikel Zabala, Spain

## Images



The new Spanish route on the south face of Dorje Lhakpa. The west ridge is the standard route of ascent.



Dorje Lhakpa (far left) and Dorje Lhakpa II visible from the valley to the south.





The east ridge of Urkingmang and the Spanish route to Point 5,900m.



A party of three Spanish climbers high on the east ridge of Urkingmang.



Seen from base camp, the new Spanish rock route (350m, 6c) on Point Sofia.



The bivouac at 5,600m on the east ridge of Urkinmang with the flat-topped Gurkarpo Ri (6,889m, left) and Leonpo Gang (Big White Peak, 6,979m) rising above the Langshisha Glacier.





The last few meters to the summit of Dorje Lhakpa. On the ridge behind are the unclimbed summits of Dorje Lhakpa II (6,550m, distant left) and to the right unnamed Peak 6,563m.



Attempting the north face of Dorje Lhakpa in 1992.



Negotiating a rock step on the east ridge of Urkinmang.

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