



Phurbi Txiki, First Ascent, Via West-Northwest Ridge; Phurbi Chhyachu, Southeast Ridge Attempt

Nepal, Jugal Himal

Iker Madoz, Juan Vallejo, and Mikel Zabalza from Spain planned to climb a new route on Phurbi Chhyachu (6,637m), a remote border peak that has only seen one ascent. In the spring of 1982, a 19-member joint Nepalese-Japanese team, led by Ichiro Yasuda, fixed around 2,000m of rope on the west-southwest ridge, the only line on the mountain they deemed feasible, and many climbers reached the summit.

On October 1, the three Spanish climbers reached base camp at 3,700m via the Nyanya Masal Khola. The last section needed the help of a local shepherd, who not only showed them the trail but also reopened it using a kukri knife. On most days there was mist and rain.

The team first climbed the 6,125m peak on the frontier ridge immediately southeast of Phurbi Chhyachu. On October 5, they reached a bivouac at 4,900m below the west flank of the mountain, and next day climbed to 5,400m on the west-southwest ridge. On the 7th, they climbed to the summit, which was so thin they couldn't all stand there at the same time. The same day they descended to base camp.

The three had climbed largely unroped, negotiating snow and ice up to 70°, with a few mixed sections. They mostly downclimbed the route, with four or five rappels, and named the peak Phurbi Txiki.

The trio's main goal was the central pillar on the southwest face of Phurbi Chhyachu, but access proved to be unpleasant, with objective risks. The route also favored a capsule-style approach, whereas the team wanted to climb in alpine style. They switched to the unclimbed southeast ridge, of which they'd had a good view from Phurbi Txiki.

Their first attempt took place from October 12–15. On day one, they reached the same 4,900m bivouac they had used before, and on day two they gained the southeast ridge at the 6,000m col, after having climbed the west flank, the last 300m sustained at 60°–70°. After a very windy night, they found the ridge harder than expected and turned around at 6,200m. They stayed a week at base camp waiting for a forecast that predicted less wind. When this occurred, they set off on the 23rd, although by this time the freezing level had dropped to 3,300m.

On the 25th they set off from their 6,000m bivouac, but by 11 a.m. clouds had appeared and after midday it began to snow. The lower part of the ridge involved rock towers that needed to be bypassed, while higher there was a three-hour section of almost vertical ice and mixed ground. By 3 p.m., in temperatures of around -25°C, they had climbed to the end of the apparent difficulties at 6,570m. To continue would have meant ascending snow slopes in poor visibility and descending from the summit in the dark, so they turned around and regained their previous bivouac at around 8 p.m. To where they had climbed, the 1,500m ascent was TD+.

— Lindsay Griffin, with information from Rodolphe Popier, Himalayan Database, and Mikel Zabalza, Spain

Images



Iker Madoz on the southeast ridge of Phurbi Chhyachu with Phurbi Txiki immediately behind. This latter peak was climbed by the steep, snow/ice ridge dropping to the right from the summit. In the background are Menlungtse, Gaurishankar, and the Rolwaling peaks, while further away to the left is Everest.



The west-northwest face of Phurbi Txiki (6,125 meters) with the route of ascent and bivouacs.

Article Details

Author	Lindsay Griffin
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	98
Page	314
Copyright Date	2024
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions