

the shoulder left of the main summit but actually it was a dead end. The only possible escape looked to be up the fragile rock wall on the left side of the couloir. This wall led to the summit ridge, but reaching the main summit would involve a descent and subsequent re-ascent along the crest: exhausting work at that height. That day we climbed 50m of the route up the left wall and then returned to camp.

On the 27th Yamaguchi made a bold lead up the rotten rock wall. We finished up an extremely difficult, quasi-vertical snow face and arrived on the summit ridge at 8,475m. Everest, complete with snow streams, was clearly visible ahead. The time was 3:35 p.m. I was deeply touched: my dream of climbing the south face had come true. There still remained a horizontal distance of ca 200m and a vertical gain of 41m to the summit but we had no energy left to make the necessary descent and re-ascent. At 4:17 p.m. we turned back without hesitation, finally reaching Camp 3 at 9:15 p.m. after 15 hours of demanding climbing.

OSAMU TANABE, *adapted from a translation by TAMOTSU NAKAMURA, Japanese Alpine News*

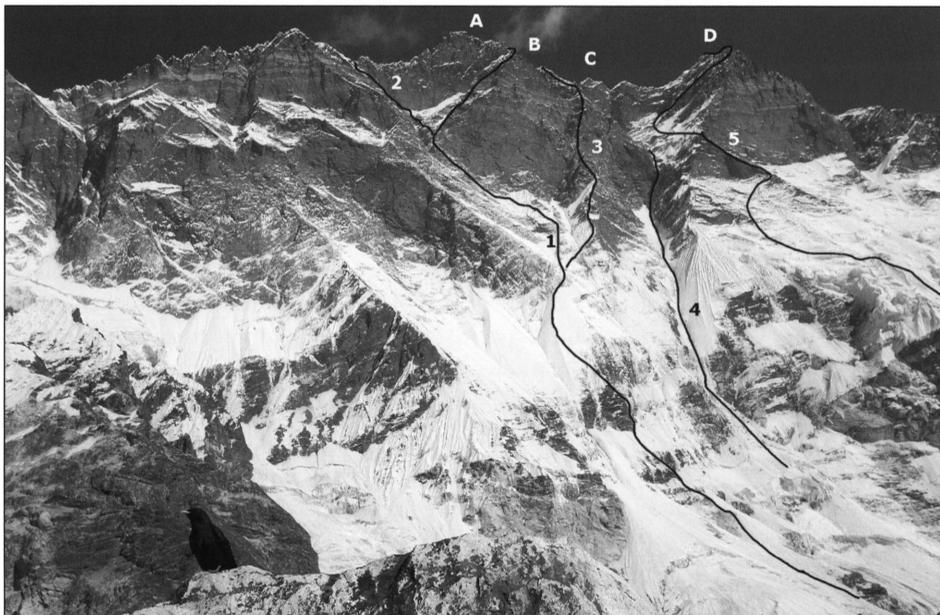
*Editor's note: up to Camp 3 the Japanese followed the Slovenian line of 1981, when Pavel Podogornik, Andrej Stremfelj, and Nejc Zaplotnik, in a very spirited effort and after one previous attempt, reached a height of ca 8,250m (just above the last rock step and onto the final snow arête) on the final prow. There, they were forced down by very high winds and drifting snow. In 2003 Tanabe found the start of the final ridge highly problematical and instead opted to descend 200m to the right in order to gain a prominent couloir, which leads to the summit ridge east of the highest point. This couloir did not prove easy and it took the climbers five days to fix rope from their high camp to a point 250m from the top, where they retreated. To date, the only line generally recognized to have been completed (to the summit) on Lhotse's south face is the 1990 Soviet Direttissima up the long rock rib to the right of the Japanese attempt. The main summit has only been reached by one man during the calendar winter season: a magnificent solo effort by Polish winter specialist Krzysztof Wielicki on December 31, 1988 via the Normal Route on the west face.*

*Lhotse south face, winter attempt.* The 2006 Korean Lhotse South Face team, comprising Lee Choong-jik (leader), Kim Hyung-il, Choi Jun-yeol, Seong Nak-jong, Kang Ki-seok, and I arrived at base camp on November 14. We joined forces with the Japanese Alpine Club expedition, alternating leads and fixing rope as we opened the route. The Korean contingent was eventually forced to retreat ca 300m shy of the summit due to injuries, weather, and lack of provisions. I reached the Korean highpoint of 8,200m on Christmas Eve and the following is the story of my summit push.

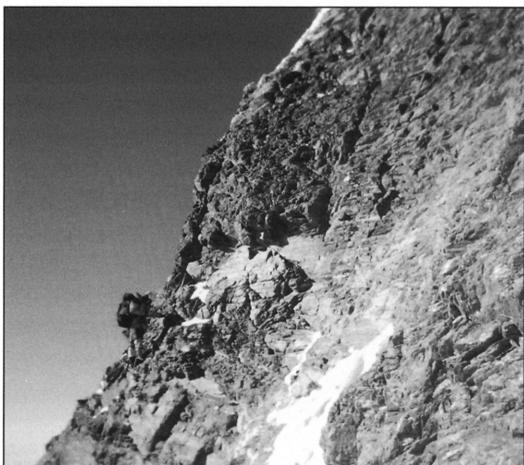
Early in the morning of December 21, a group of Japanese Sherpas reached Pasang Poti, Kang Ki-seok, and me at Camp 2 (7,100m). They had to carry



Camp 2 dug precariously into the south face of Lhotse at 7,100m. One more camp was established at 8,000m before Japanese climbers made the first winter ascent to the top of the face. Unfortunately, they were unable to continue up the final ridge to the summit. *Lee Young-jun Collection*



The south face of Lhotse at the time of the Japanese-Korean winter attempt. (A) Pt. 8,426m. (B) Lhotse Main (8,516m). (C) Lhotse Middle (8,414m). (D) Lhotse Shar (8,400m). (1) The line attempted by many expeditions, leading to Pt 8,426m. In 1981 Slovenians were beaten back from a height of ca 8,250m, just short of the end of the technical difficulties. This was the line used by the Japanese-Korean winter expedition, though the final traverse and couloir are invisible. (2) Slovenians Knez and Matijevac made a last ditch attempt on the summit via this line in 1981. They reached the west ridge at 8,100m. (3) Soviet Direttissima (summit reached by Bershov and Karatayev after the pair had spent six days above 8,000m). (4) French attempt in alpine style to 7,600m (Beghin-Profit, 1989). (5) South face of Lhotse Shar Czechoslovak Route (summit first reached by Demjan, 1984).  
*Ahn Chi-young/Lee Young-jun Collection*



Lhotse south face in winter. A Japanese climber on the delicate traverse from Camp 3 at 8,000m toward the final couloir.  
*Ahn Chi-young/Lee Young-jun Collection*

gear to Camp 3 (8,000m) and get down the mountain, so we let them go ahead. The headwall above Camp 2 was particularly hard and I remembered how difficult it had been a few days earlier to hammer pitons solidly while leading through this section of continually steep mixed climbing and hard ice. To add to the difficulties, temperatures in the morning hours, when the face was in shade, would be extremely low, while afternoon sunshine would warm the face and cause showers of rock fall and spindrift. In fact, constant rock fall made this section something of a climbing hell.

At several points on this section

we jugged past Slovenian wire ladders. There were three sets of these between 7,300m and 7,500m, where the ground was very steep. Despite many areas of damage, we'd opted to use them while opening the route.

By 3 p.m. Pasang Poti and I had arrived at Camp 3 (8,000m) near the top of a steep snow face. Ki-seok's oxygen had become depleted at ca 7,860m and an hour after our arrival at camp, Pasang rappelled to help him. The Japanese found a good spot for their camp and cut a slot out of the ridge for a four-man tent. A large, mushroom-shaped lump of snow was frozen to the vertical wall and Pasang and I realized that by chopping away at it we could make enough space for a two-man tent. Unfortunately, our tent was three-man, but the ledge would have to do. That night was the first we spent tied into our harnesses.

The following morning, December 22, there was a fierce wind. Ki-seok, suffering badly from altitude, retreated to advanced base, while Noriyuki Kenmochi, Atsushi Senda, Pema Tsering Sherpa, Pasang, and I began on the route above. Unfortunately, the altitude now began to take its toll on Pasang and at 1:10 p.m. he decided to return to base camp. This left only myself from the Korean team. I'd worked very hard to get as far as this and it was great to be able to continue upward in the good company of the Japanese.

Our total for that day was five pitches. Tanabe's team had previously traversed right for 200m, fixing rope to a point where we could rappel into a couloir. From here, we alternated leads on a second traverse further to the right, which led in 300m to a second, narrower couloir rising toward the summit. The final traverse pitches were a terrifying business. On lead, the obstruction caused by my oxygen mask and thick gloves made it really difficult to maintain critical balance whilst grabbing gear off my rack and hammering pitons. At 3 p.m., Pema Tsering began having difficulty with the altitude and retreated to Camp 3. Senda and I fixed the lead rope and also started our return to camp. Next day I rested for what I hoped would be our summit bid on the 24th, while in the meantime the Japanese continued to push out the route.

The 24th proved to be the only Korean summit attempt. The weather was perfect except for the continually harsh wind, something with which we were never able to come to terms. Kenmochi, Senda, and I made up the summit team, with Senda and me setting off at 8 a.m. Kenmochi was not feeling so good and followed a little later. I deposited a bottle of oxygen between the first and second couloirs, then continued to our previous day's high point: from here, protection would primarily rely on pitons. Our line lay up the couloir between two ridges, the one on the left marking the line of the Slovenian attempt and that on the right, the Russian route. Surrounded by massive walls on both sides, we were extremely exposed to rock fall and a huge gust of wind could release loose rock at any time. We had to move quickly.

Halfway up we were hit by a small shower of rocks. Senda's goggles were shattered, Kenmochi's face was grazed and bloody, whereas I took one on the left hand. We paused and stared at each other, but knew we would have to go on. Senda led through a second ice section and gave me the signal to climb. A few meters up, a huge rock smashed into my left forearm. I screamed out in pain. Senda lowered me. I couldn't move my fingers, and when I peaked under my sleeve, I could see a huge mess of blood. Ten minutes later I was able to move my fingers again: luckily I hadn't broken any bones and felt good enough to continue.

I led the next 50m pitch and Senda led through for a second rope length. However, at 8,200m the pain in my forearm became too much to bear. I radioed base camp and told them there was nothing more I could do. The two Japanese and I agreed to rappel to Camp 3 together. That would be all for our team.

So that's the way it happened. Lhotse did not grant our wish of completing the south face to the summit in winter. I was hit and still have the scar, but am grateful to have returned alive and equally grateful to all those who helped make our efforts possible.

AHN CHI-YOUNG, Korea (translated by Peter Jensen-choi)

## KUMBHAKARNA HIMAL

*Merra, first known ascent.* The name Anidesh Himal refers to the mountain range separating the Ramtang Glacier to the north and the Kumbhakarna (Jannu) Glacier to the south. The ca 10km-long massif is characterized by a striking, narrow ridge running east-west and dominated by the unclimbed mountains of Anidesh Chuli (a.k.a 6,808m) and Merra (6,334m). The Anidesh Himal is rarely visited, and the attention of most trekkers in this region is captured by the stunning north face of Jannu (7,711m), which rises above the south side of the Kumbhakarna Glacier.

In October, Thejs Ortmann and I from Denmark ventured into the remote eastern sector of the Kumbhakarna Glacier, in order to attempt Merra from the south. The mountain, which was first added to the permitted list in 2002, is a complex, four-summited peak that lies between two side glaciers: Merra southeast and Merra southwest. The limited number of groups that had attempted the peak before us had all approached from the Kumbhakarna



Camp 1 at 5,450m below Merra Peak in the Kumbhakarna Himal. The view is looking south over the Kumbhakarna Glacier directly toward the true north face of Jannu (7,711m), climbed by the Russians in 2004. To the left the northwest face catches the sun. The rounded top on the ridge left of Jannu, before it drops steeply to a col, is the unclimbed Jannu East (7,468m). *Claus Ostergaard*