



AAC Publications

Nyambo Konka, Northeast Face to South-southeast Ridge

China, Sichuan, Daxue Shan, Minya Konka Range

W.C. Fields once said: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Then quit. No use being a damn fool about it." Sound advice for most people, but mountaineers tend to be obsessive.

I first attempted then-unclimbed Nyambo Konka (6,114m), a domed, heavily glaciated peak directly south of Minya Konka, in 2005. We tried to climb the southeast face to the east-northeast ridge but failed at a little over 5,000m when my partner got altitude sickness. I went back in 2009 with a strong four-person team and reached the east-northeast ridge, but it was heavily corniced and too dangerous to traverse. We were forced down by heavy snowfall (four feet in two days) and avalanches. Alas, I returned in 2011, failing this time on the southwest face because of insurmountable rotten rock.

Nyambo Konka was finally climbed by a large Korean team in 2015, using thousands of feet of fixed line and leaving behind piles of garbage. I thought their ascent wouldn't bother me, and I could put this obsession to rest. I'd already made a damn fool of myself on this mountain, so good riddance. Right? Nope.

I returned to Nyambo Konka in the fall of 2017 with JJ Cieslewicz, a climbing and canyoneering guide from southern Utah. JJ was sending 5.13 in high school—putting up routes so bold he can't repeat them today. One of his climbing partners told me that JJ was something of a legend around Zion, adding, "He has the ability to make good decisions very quickly."

With no porters or beasts to hump our loads, we spent four days shuttling gear to the bottom (ca 3,960m) of the northeast face of the south-southeast ridge. We had intended to put two camps on the face, but after one sketchy bivouac on a chipped-out ledge in the middle of an avalanche-prone couloir, we pounded straight up mixed terrain to the ridge. We camped on the crest at 5,550m, a good 2km from the summit, which we reached the next day. We rapped our route in a storm and during the descent found our earlier bivouac ledge had been swept away by an avalanche.

The great British explorer Tim Severin, who has sailed a leather boat across the Atlantic and retraced Genghis Khan's route through Mongolia on horseback, once told me that any expedition worth starting is worth finishing. Fourth time's a charm.

– Mark Jenkins, AAC

Images



JJ Cieslewicz on the summit of Nyambo Konka (6,114m). Behind and facing the camera is the magnificent south pillar of Minya Konka (7,556m). In the fall of 2018 this pillar was the target of Nick Bullock and Paul Ramsden (U.K.), but appalling weather prevented any attempt.



JJ Cieslewicz on the south-southeast ridge of Nyambo Konka, heading for the 6,114m summit.



JJ Cieslewicz rappelling a couloir on the northeast face of Nyambo Konka after completing the second ascent of the mountain, by the northeast face and south-southeast ridge.



The northeast face of Nyambo Konka (6,114m). JJ Cieslewicz and Mark Jenkins climbed the dogleg couloir on the left side of the image to reach the crest of the south-southeast ridge, which they followed up right to the domed summit, just visible in cloud.



Camp at 5,550m on the south-southeast ridge of Nyambo Konka. The highest pointed peak in the far

distance, almost due south, is Ren Zhong Feng, climbed in 2009 by a Danish team (AAJ 2010). The 1979 Chinese Survey recorded a height of 6,079m for this peak, but in 2005 it was revised to 5,731m. The Danish GPS and altimeters recorded 5,820m, while Google Earth is 5,875m.



Nyambo Konka (6,114m) from the east-northeast. The Korean first ascent (2015) and several previous attempts slanted up the rocky face from the left to reach the east-northeast ridge (dropping almost toward the camera from the dome-shaped summit) at the low point (5,596m) between Nyambo Konka and the near peak on the far right. The Koreans then followed the snowy east-northeast ridge away from the camera to the summit. The upper south-southeast ridge, climbed in 2017, forms the left skyline, the crest reached via a couloir on the northeast face off picture to the left.

Article Details

Author	Mark Jenkins
Publication	AAJ
Volume	61
Issue	93
Page	331
Copyright Date	2019
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions