



## **Tatsienlu Massif, Baihaizishan (a.k.a. Tshungpingling, 5,924m PLA map), northwest ridge, attempt; Wupingfeng (5,672m), quasi-winter ascent via north ridge**

China, Sichuan, Daxue Shan

One of the advantages of living in China is that it gives access to a number of unclimbed, indeed unattempted, peaks. Perusal of Tom Nakamura's Sichuan's Most Outstanding Unclimbed Peaks led Simon Moore, Rimon Than, Alex Tomaczynski, and I to Baihaizishan in the Tatsienlu Massif near Kangding. The highest summit in the range, Lamo-she (6,070m), and three other peaks had previously been climbed (AAJ 2011), while Baihaizishan had received one attempt, in 2010 by the late Yan Dongdong. The rest appears to be completely unexplored. We found that even the local yak herders had not ventured beyond the highest alps.

After paying an exorbitant peak fee and hiring Lenny—the well-known local fixer—and a cook named Banjiu, the six of us, with the help of 12 horses, reached base camp at 3,900m in late November. The weather was great, yaks were numerous, juniper plentiful, and the mountains pristine. Unfortunately, we could now see that our original goal, the west face, was beset by hanging glaciers, blocking access to the summit slopes. It had not snowed since September. Bad ice and aerated sugar snow prevailed.

Instead we turned to the northwest ridge, a spiky crest of rock rising toward a subsidiary snow summit. It looked easy: up the rocks, traverse across the upper snowfield onto the summit ridge, and Bob's your uncle. We acclimatized with a bit of exploration, set up an advanced base on a small col at 4,400m, packed enough for a three-day trip, and set off up the ridge.

It proved amazing, like Skye in winter but without the rain. There were pinnacles, knife-edge crests, snowfields, and a series of seeming dead-ends that always provided a way onward. The wild, tangled summits of western Sichuan and Tibet, and the peaks of the fabled Minya Konka range, gradually came into view as we ascended. We dug out small snow platforms for tents just below the crest, at ca 5,300m, and next morning set out for the summit. At ca 5,500m we were brought to a halt by a gaping cleft in the ridge, unseen from below. Overhanging rock ahead and right, and sugar snow over steep slabs to the left, put an end to our hopes.

Back at base camp, where nighttime temperatures were now dropping to -22°C, we decided to attempt the peak to our north, Wupingfeng, which at the time we thought unclimbed. After a difficult traverse that involved a Scottish Ill gully, an overnight camp, a massive moraine, and a crevassed glacier, we made a high camp and set off next morning in a howling gale.

We gained the north ridge and followed it over hard névé, ice, and outcrops of solid granite to the summit ridge, where we were exposed to the full force of the wind. We reached the top on December 3. Sadly, little over two months later, Rimon died in an avalanche in the Cairngorms. [Editor's note: This was the fourth ascent of Wupingfeng. The north ridge was first climbed in October 1996 by Americans Mark Carter and Steve Must.]

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## Images



Baihaizishan from the west. The November 2012 attempt followed the left skyline ridge as far as an unseen cleft just below the first snow-dome top (Haopingling, 5,864m). The peak right of Baihaizishan is Tshienpingling (5,612m).



Duncan Francis on the summit of Wupingfeng with the impressive north-northwest face of Lamo-she in the background.



Simon Moore on the upper slopes of Wupingfeng at ca 5,400m.



Szepingfeng (a.k.a. Shehaizishan, 5,878m, left) and Wupingfeng from the moraine approach. The December 2012 ascent followed the left (north) skyline ridge.

Article Details

Author	Duncan Francis
Publication	AAJ
Volume	55
Issue	87
Page	346
Copyright Date	2013
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions