



AAC Publications

Xiao Gongga, Northwest Ridge; Tyrol Shan, West Face and South Ridge

China, Daxue Shan

When Simon Gietl was climbing with the DAV expedition squad in the Dolomites during the summer of 2013, he learned about their trip to the Minya Konka (Gongga Shan) range the previous year, during which they did the first ascents of two peaks (AAJ 2013). Simon enlisted two other Tyrolean climbers, Daniel Tavernini and me, and one year later, on October 6, we flew from Munich. The journey to Chengdu, onward to Kangding, and then a final trek with 14 mules, a cook, and liaison officer to a base camp at 4,000m went without a hitch.

On October 17 we established advanced base at 4,600m below the north flank of Xiao Gongga (5,928m, a.k.a. Little Konka, Ruiche Gongga, or Tshiburongi). We set off early next morning for the northwest ridge, climbing unroped for the first one and half hours. Three short pitches then led to a little plateau, above which the snow was quite deep. The slope above eventually steepened to 60°. A final mixed section on the crest deposited us on the summit at 1 p.m. The 1,300m route was graded 60° M5, and on it we passed three belay stations. [It is not clear from whom these might have originated—known ascents and attempts have chosen other lines. See AAJ 2012.]

We now turned to our main target, the steep, west-facing rock buttress leading to the summit of Stifler's Mom, first attempted by French climbers in 2009 (AAJ 2010). The 2012 DAV team had also considered this buttress but instead climbed the peak (and later named it) via a broad snow gully to the left and then the crest of the rocky north ridge (1989 Steps Toward Heaven, AAJ 2013).

We shifted high camp to the head of the Tshiburongi Valley, at 4,950m, after which there was an overnight snowfall of 20cm. We climbed four pitches up a line to the right of the French attempt, but freezing conditions, which were far too cold for rock shoes, forced us to abandon the attempt.

Instead, we turned to the unclimbed summit between Stifler's Mom and Melcyr Shan. We started up the line You Happy, We Happy (Gottler-Hones, 2012, WI5), a variant start to Nubiline, the first route up Melcyr Shan. The crux of this section was thin, hollow, and only mitigated by a couple of cams in the side wall. Above, we moved up 50–60° snow to gain the col between the unnamed peak and Melcyr Shan. The 40m rock climb to the summit was in the sun, with no wind, and on beautiful granite. Daniel took the lead and climbed to the top at UIAA VI-. We named the summit Tyrol Shan (ca 5,860m). We rappelled the 700m route and returned to base camp, where later we established a few rock routes on an east-facing crag 30 minutes' walk from the tents. The majority of these were one pitch and some only top-roped; Mortadella, by Simon, went at 7c.

Vittorio Messini, Italy

Images



On the south ridge of Tyrol Shan, with Melcyr Shan behind.

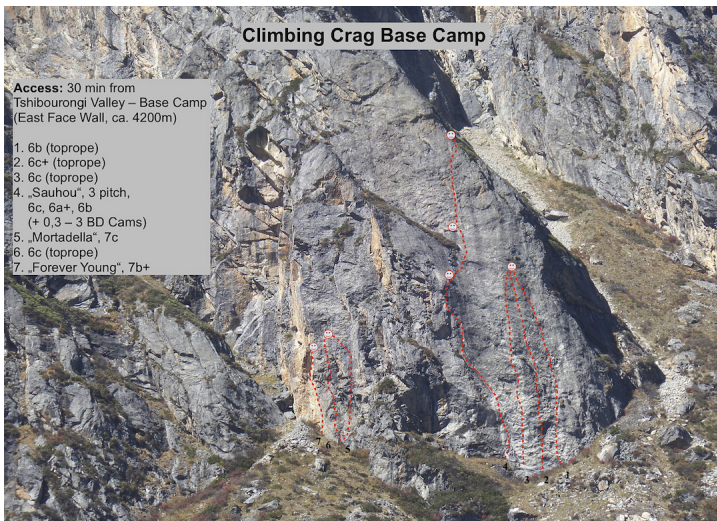


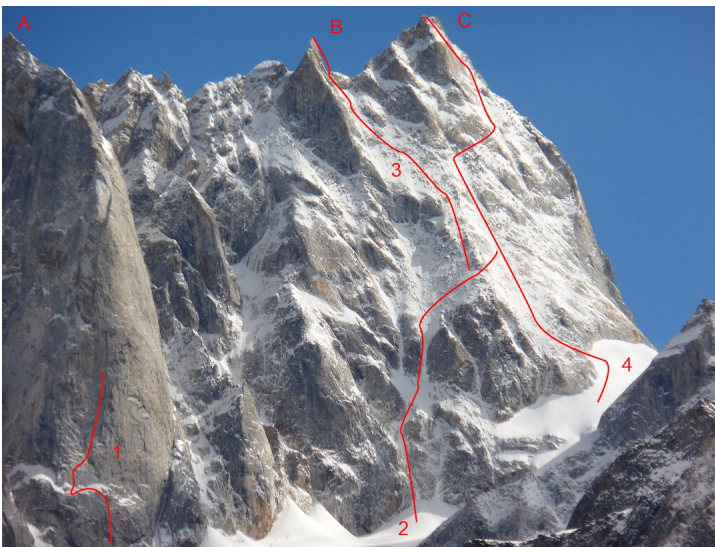
Photo topo of short routes climbed near Xiao Gongga base camp.



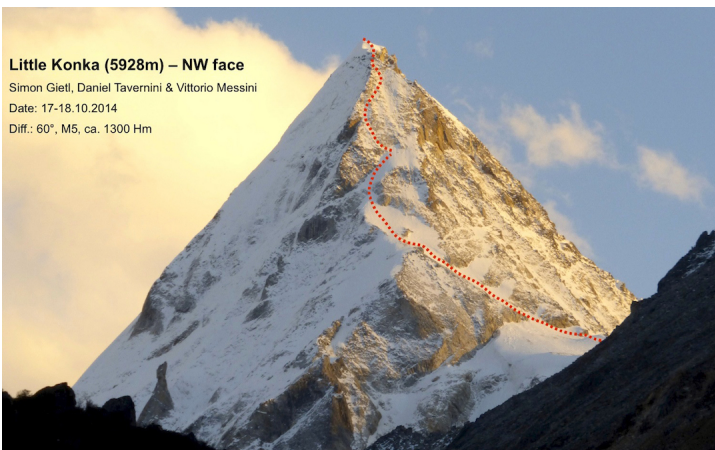
Daniel Tavernini on the final pitch to the summit of Tyrol Shan.



Simon Gietl heading toward the col below the final rock tower of Tyrol Shan.

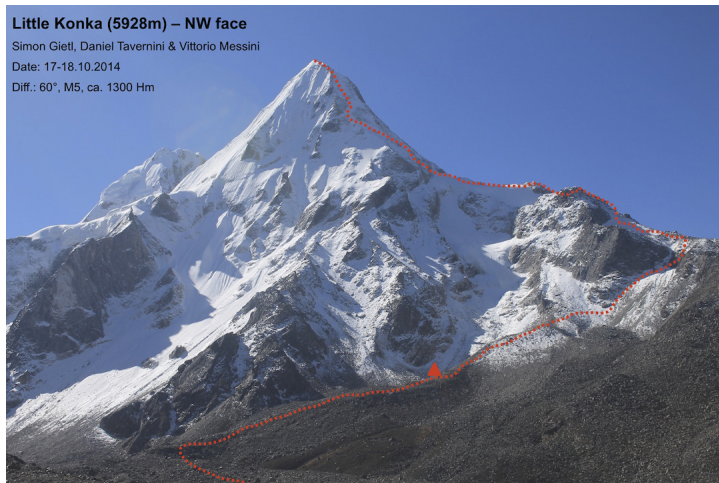


The west face of (A) Stifler's Mom, (B) Tyrol Shan, and (C) Melcyr Shan. (1) 2009 French attempt. (2) You Happy, We Happy. (3) 2014 ascent of Tyrol Shan. (4) Nubiline.



Little Konka (5928m) – NW face
Simon Gietl, Daniel Tavernini & Vittorio Messini
Date: 17-18.10.2014
Diff.: 60°, M5, ca. 1300 Hm

Upper section of the northwest ridge/northwest face of Xiao Gongga.



Xiao Gongga from the north showing the 2014 route on the northwest ridge.

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