



AAC Publications

Genyen Massif, Hutsa, Yak Attack and Holographic Jesus; Peak 5,912m, West Face; Sachun, South Ridge (second ascent)

China, Sichuan / Shaluli Shan

On September 17 a multi-national team of three pairs—Tito Arosio and Luca Vallata (Italy), Peter Linney (Ireland) and James Monypenny (U.K.), and Tom Nichols (U.K.) and Rob Partridge (New Zealand)—assembled at Litang, the last outpost in the wild west of the Tibetan Plateau. Heather Swift (U.K.) was poised to join halfway through the trip. We were all linked through Monypenny, our expedition mastermind.

James and Peter had arrived in Litang three weeks earlier and had since been making use of short windows in the monsoon season, which we only realized on arrival ran through August and September, to climb some stunning granite pillars in the Jarjinjabo massif, accessing them from Litang on hired motorbikes.

From Litang it took five hours by 4WD for us all to reach the Rengo monastery, below the sacred peak of Genyen. Our hired horsemen arrived with 250cc “horses,” strapped more than 60kgs to each motorbike, and drove up the narrow, rough, and sometimes steep valley path to establish our base camp at 4,200m. Once again, the Eastern “can do” proved our Western cynicism wrong.

That night we were woken by a magnitude 5.2 earthquake, filling camp with thoughts of being on an exposed section of a climb during an aftershock. We felt aftershocks for a few nights afterward, but nothing during the day. We were now in the tail end of the monsoon season, so the weather was not ideal, but most days had a few hours of clear skies and sunshine.

Our main focus was Hutsa (5,863m, 29°54'2.96"N, 99°37'24.03"E), a peak attempted twice previously by Dave Anderson and partners via a rock route from the south. From advanced base, at 29°53'47.1"N 99°36'51.8"E, we had one day of mixed weather to reconnoiter before a predicted day of zero precipitation, our first window for a summit attempt. We found a steep ice line in a hidden couloir on the southwest face and some more approachable lines accessible from the top of snow cones on the west face. We decided on the right of two obvious options on the west face, the steeper of the two, leading directly to a snow slope that we hoped would take us to the summit ridge.

James, Peter, Tom, and I approached the first pitch as two pairs, but confidence waned in one of each pair, either due to a lack of recent mixed climbing or hypoglycaemic compulsions, which had caused all the Snickers bars to be eaten before even tying in. With no real expectations of summiting, James and I pushed on. We swung leads, with sections of simul-climbing, up the 500m couloir, shying away from leading in blocks as neither of us had really acclimatized.

A snow ramp led to the summit ridge, where four long pitches with some interesting short, steep mixed sections led to the top. From here we could see many unclimbed granite peaks, all of which could only be climbed via steep mixed or rock lines. We rappelled the top four pitches, then a slightly more direct line back into the initial couloir, and returned to advanced base in a round trip of 17 hours. We named the line Yak Attack (800m, Scottish 6 / M5).

Returning to base camp, we rested and witnessed the change of seasons: At dawn on October 1 the

monsoon was clearly over. The wind changed to the north, the summit of Genyen was visible for the rest of our time in the area, and the forecast was good. Tito and Luca had reconnoitered an unclimbed high peak farther up the approach valley to Hutsa. They had left kit to return for a summit attempt in the next weather window.

Now acclimatized, and with a better idea of conditions, the full team's psyche was restored, and we headed back to advanced base in our original pairs. Tom and I failed on our attempt to repeat the line that James and I climbed on Hutsa, but James and Peter made an incredible ascent of the steep ice line in the hidden couloir. They summited long after midnight, returning to camp after almost 30 hours, much to the relief of Heather, who had walked in to meet them. James and Pete gave the line WI6 M6 and named it Holographic Jesus, having purchased a holographic wall hanging of Jesus' Last Supper at the monastery shop.

Meanwhile, Tito and Luca had summited their objective: the unclimbed and unnamed 5,912m peak northeast of Hutsa. They climbed the west face from September 30 to October 2 via a system of snowfields and ridges on the southern side of the wall. (Two bivouacs were needed due to uncertain weather on the first day.) Climbing through several crux rock bands, protected by pitons, they summited and then descended the northern part of the face. Difficulties were rated at D M4 70° snow.

Time was up for Peter, Tito, and Luca. Strapping their bags to porters' bikes, they headed out to Litang, leaving James, Heather, Tom, and myself at base camp. Inspired by the splitter cracks in Dave Anderson's photos, and with a clear weather window for the remainder of the trip, we headed up a huge hanging valley, with an epic boulder field, toward the sharp-beaked Sachun (5,716m). Tom and I made the first attempt, getting to half height on the south ridge (climbed in October 2006 by Dave Anderson and Sarah Hueniken, AAJ 2007). The next day James, Heather, and I followed the same line, leading in blocks, initially through granite cracks then mixed ground and snow slopes, for seven pitches. James took over and climbed six splitter pitches up to British E2, taking us to the snow cap and last spires of the summit. Pulling all the tricks out of the bag, James climbed the final two pitches to *à cheval* the summit spire via some very bold climbing.

Rob Partridge, U.K.

Images



Hutsa's unclimbed east face from the summit of Peak 5,912m.



Peak 5,912m from the southwest, showing the 2016 first ascent of the west face (right) and the descent line on the left skyline.



James Monypenny climbing splitter cracks high on the south ridge of Sachun.



Yak Attack on the west face of Hutsa. Marked to the right is the snow cone leading into the steep couloir of Holographic Jesus.



Peter Linney on belay in the narrow ice line of Holographic Jesus on the southwest face of Hutsa.



The southwest face of Hutsa and the couloir of Holographic Jesus. The right-hand skyline has been attempted by Dave Anderson and partners.



The southwest face of Hutsa, showing the lower section of the hidden ice couloir Holographic Jesus.



Rob Partridge approaching difficult ice runnels on Yak Attack, on the west face of Hutsa.

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