



AAC Publications

Daddomain West, First Ascent via Northwest Face

China, Sichuan, Daxue Shan, Minya Konka Range

The top half of Good-bye Happiness on the northwest face of Daddomain West. The west ridge, on the right, was partially followed by New Zealanders in 2004 to make the first ascent of Daddomain (hidden beyond the top of Daddomain West). Photo by Yuikeung Ho

In November, Siyuan (Azuo) Huang, Xiaohua (Charlotte) Yang, and I visited the Minya Konka Range, after Siyuan and I had done a warm-up climb in the Tatsienlu Massif (see report here). From the Moxi Valley, we noticed a clean line with direct access rising straight to the summit of Daddomain West (6,296m), the unclimbed subsidiary summit of Daddomain (6,380m). This line captivated us.

On the 10th, from a base camp at 4,200m in the Moxi Valley to the west, we walked five hours with food and gear up the valley leading to Daddomain, and pitched camp at 4,865m on the glacier. Pleasant weather over the preceding week meant there was little snow on the glacier: Crevasses could be clearly identified, and fortunately none were huge. We stayed the night, observing that there were no signs of avalanche or rockfall on our proposed line up the northwest face.

Next morning we reached the bergschrund at the bottom of the face in one hour. Surmounting this very large obstacle took some time, as the snow was too loose to hold body weight securely. We climbed around the left side at M3. This took us to the couloir in the lower section of the face, where the snow was still unconsolidated but got firmer and more frozen as we continued up. There were also sections of shiny ice.

The weather was excellent, with clear skies. We progressed wherever possible by climbing simultaneously with intermediate protection. Sometimes we belayed, but on the lower half of the route the ice was thin and hollow, with a deep layer of sugar snow beneath. Ice screws were useless, and the rock wasn't much good either, being too loose or brittle. We were unable to place much protection and often had long runouts.

By 6 p.m. we had been looking for a bivouac site for some time, but found no ledge or stance. Finally, we built an anchor at a rock outcrop and dug out a narrow snow ledge for a sitting bivouac at 5,684m.

We started again at 9 a.m., the weather still good. We pitched sections of shiny ice and at 7 p.m. reached a shoulder on the north ridge at 6,200m. The summit was just above, but we decided to stop here, where a large plateau allowed us a lying-down, relaxing bivouac.

We left again at 9 a.m. the following morning (November 13) and made a quick ascent of the remaining two pitches to the top. The snow was soft, and we spent little time on the summit before returning to the shoulder. From there we downclimbed 100m of the northwest face to reach ice, where we placed our first Abalakov rappel anchor. We more or less followed our ascent route downward, shifting right or left on occasions to find better ice for rappel anchors. Lower down, given that neither the rock nor ice was of good quality, finding anchors took a long time. We reached the bottom of the face after 28 rappels, leaving behind 30m of cordelette and a few pieces of gear.

The route was sustained, but apart from the bergschrund had no real crux. We named it Good-bye Happiness (1,400m, D+ WI3 M3 75°) as a memorial to our close friends Ng Ka-Kit and Li Haoxin, who died in an avalanche on Liligo Peak in Pakistan in 2019 (AAJ 2020).

— Yuikeung (Kenneth) Ho, China

Editor's Note: The first ascent of Daddomain took place in 2004 (AAJ 2005), when New Zealanders Jo Kippax and Sean Waters climbed the west ridge. Rather than traverse over Daddomain West to reach the main summit, they dropped into a snow basin on the south side and followed this up to the top, thus leaving the western summit unclimbed.

Images



Siyuan Huang surmounts the bergschrund on the northwest face of Daddomain West.



The top half of Good-bye Happiness on the northwest face of Daddomain West. The west ridge, on the right, was partially followed by New Zealanders in 2004 to make the first ascent of Daddomain (hidden beyond the top of Daddomain West).



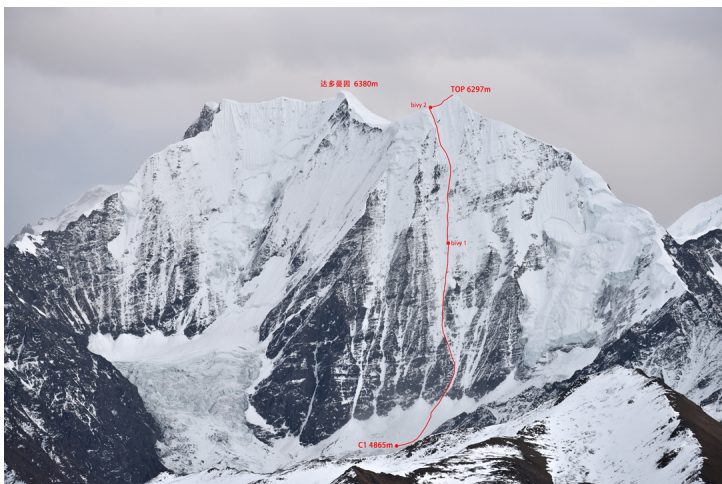
Yuikeung Ho and Xiaohua Yang approach the shoulder on the upper north ridge of Daddomain West during the second day of the climb.



Yuikeung Ho and Xiaohua Yang at the first bivouac on the northwest face of Daddomain West.



From left to right: Siyuan (Azuo) Huang, Yuikeung (Kenneth) Ho, and Xiaohua (Charlotte) Yang at base camp in the Moxi Valley with the northwest side of Daddomain behind.



The northwest face of Daddomain and Daddomain West seen from the approach valley.



Daddomain from the south, showing the 2004 New Zealand route to the main summit, bypassing Daddomain West. The 2020 Chinese route, climbing the northwest face of Daddomain West, is hidden behind the ridge.

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