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Xiao Gongga (Little Konka), North and Northeast Faces, Fu Yao

China, Sichuan, Daxue Shan, Minya Konka Range

In October 2022, Wang Yongpeng and Zhang Xinyi (China) climbed a new route on the north and northeast faces of Xiao Gongga (a.k.a. Tshiburongi or Little Konka, 5,928m).

The two set up camp at 4,500m, north of the peak, near the entrance to the Xiao Gongga/Tshiburongi Glacier. On October 20, they left this camp at 8:30 a.m. in clear but windy weather. After a couple of hours of approach, they climbed three pitches up the lower section of the north face before turning left toward the northeast face. The climbing involved snow-covered rock, where protection was difficult to place.

After reaching the glacial plateau, Zhang broke trail to the bergschrund, where, at 5 p.m. and at an altitude of 5,450m, the two dug one meter down in deep snow to create a bivouac site.

Next day they began at 6 a.m., climbing a thinly snow-covered ice slope on the steep northeast face. At mid-day they reached the crux at around 5,800m: a rock wall covered with minimal snow or just a few millimeters of ice. It was Wang's lead, and he opted to smoke a cigarette while weighing the options before the scary lead.

One hundred meters from the top of the face, the difficulty eased, though there was arduous work through thigh-deep snow to reach the summit at just after 4 p.m. The two descended the northwest ridge, finally reaching their camp on the glacier at 1 p.m. on the 23rd. They named the route Fu Yao (D M4 AI3 70°).

Before this ascent, Xiao Gongga had probably been climbed around ten times. Between mid-October and late November 2022, there were at least five ascents (of which two were new routes), and in 2023 it was climbed multiple times by guides with clients. In the last few years, there has been a surge of guided ascents in the Minya Konka Range, notably on peaks such as Reddomain, Longemain, and Taishan.

— Lindsay Griffin, with information from Zhu Leibo and 8264.com

Images



Xiao Gongga, showing (1) Fu Yao (2023) on the north and northeast faces and (2) Russian Style (2022) on the north face. The northwest ridge, descended in 2023, is the right skyline.



Fu Yao on the north and northeast faces of Xiao Gongga. The right skyline is the northwest ridge. The original ascent in 1981 took a gully just beyond the left skyline.



Starting the northeast face of Xiao Gongga, above the glacier plateau.



On the upper northeast face of Xiao Gongga during the first ascent of Fu Yao in 2022.

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