



## AAC Publications

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### **Mt. Edgar, West Face, Jiazi, Southeast Ridge, and Other First Ascents**

China, Sichuan, Daxue Shan, Minya Konka Range

**I BECAME AWARE of the Minya Konka massif while looking through Tom Nakamura's book *East of the Himalaya*. I was so attracted to the pictures of the east face of Mt. Edgar that I decided I needed to see these Chinese mountains myself.** On September 25, Fabrizio Dellai, Matteo Faletti, and I, all from Trentino, and three friends from the Aosta Valley, François Cazzanelli, Emrik Favre, and Francesco Ratti, left Italy with the aim of reaching the wild valley of Nanmenganggou and attempting the northeast ridge of Edgar (E-Gongga, 6,618m).

After bureaucratic problems with both the Chinese embassy and our porters, we established base camp at 3,850m and started to acclimatize in the nearby mountains. On October 1, Fabrizio, Matteo, and I climbed a wonderful peak at the end of the eastern extension of the northeast ridge of Edgar, which we named Little Edgar (5,060m). We climbed a rock route on the north-northwest face that we named Buon Compleanno Toni (Happy Birthday Toni, 650m, UIAA VI), as October 1 is my dad's birthday.

Our friends from the Aosta Valley wanted to climb the southwest ridge of Edgar, and Fabrizio, Matteo and I wanted to explore descent options should we reach the summit via the northeast ridge. We therefore all established a route to the glacier plateau below the west face of Edgar, placing a high camp at 5,250m. From there the whole team reached the col at the start of the southwest ridge, from which Emrik, François, and I turned southwest and climbed a snow ridge up to virgin Peak 6,174m (Peak 6,130m, Chinese map), which we named Twenty Shan (29°43'35.94"N, 101°54'8.11"E).

During the descent I kept looking across at the west face of Edgar (this face was attempted in 2011 by Russians, who retreated after 400m, see [AAJ 2012](#)). I had a strange feeling, as if the mountain were calling me. I tried to dismiss it from my mind, as the team had already defined its plan. But the calling was strong. After dinner and heading to my sleeping bag, I instinctively decided to go for the unclimbed west face alone. Shortly after midnight, I headed out, illuminated by the full moon.

On the face, I climbed a series of difficult *goulottes* through steep terrain, with sections of thin and delicate ice. In the final part I had to overcome a section of mixed climbing to reach the ridge, which was laden with powder and snow mushrooms, like you see in Patagonia. Here, I had to use all my strength and concentration. A large snow structure broke away just in front of me and fell into the darkness. I had a bad fright! At 6.15 a.m., still in the dark, I reached the summit. I couldn't believe what I had just done: the first ascent of the face and the third overall of the summit. I tried to maintain full concentration during the descent of the southwest ridge (the 2001 Korean route of the first ascent of Edgar) until I reached base camp, where I celebrated with my friends. Climbed on October 7, the Moon's Power is 1,000m, WI4+ M4+, with thin ice.

Over the next few days we concentrated on smaller peaks that we could access from base camp. These included Pilier Gerard Ottavio (4,903m) by the route Meteopatia (seven pitches plus scrambling, VII, October 9); a traverse of the three summits of the Cresta delle tre Sorelle (Punta Barbara, 5,530m; Punta Elisabetta, 5,740m; Punta Patrizia, 5,852m; UIAA IV M4, October 12 and 14), and Vallee Shan (5,645m, four pitches up to VI+ on the initial rock pillar followed by classic mixed terrain at IV), all by Cazzanelli, Favre, and Ratti. In the meantime, Dellai, Faletti, and I had climbed Tridente Trentino (4,910m, by a steep 500m rock wall at VI+) on the 9th, and Peter Shan (5,645m) and

Leonhard Shan (5,500m), both on the 11th. Most of these peaks lie on the north side of the valley, northeast to southeast of Jiazi. They range from Punta Patrizia at roughly 29°48'7.10"N, 101°54'30.60"E, farther south to Peter Shan and Leonhard Shan at approximately 29°47'16.91"N, 101°54'0.83"E at the base of the east ridge of Jiazi, to Tridente Trentino at approximately 29°46'44.44"N, 101°55'41.20"E, at the near end of the ridge opposite base camp.

Matteo and I then climbed Jiazi (6,540m) via a new route up the southeast ridge. We did this in one long day on October 15. The vertical interval of ascent was 1,600m, but the climbing distance around 3,000m. We named the route the White Line (sections up to 85°). Previous ascents had climbed the south ridge from the west (1982) and west face (2011).

As the weather was still good, we then tried our main objectives. Team Aosta Valley tried the unclimbed northwest ridge of Edgar but were stopped at 6,450m by technical difficulty and very dangerous, unstable snow. They descended with 25 rappels. Fabrizio, Matteo, and I tried the northeast ridge and spent two days getting to 5,840m, above which there appeared to be no safe lines. As the weather was very hot, we retreated on day three.

After these attempts, I needed to free my mind and again have contact with rock, so on the 20th I free soloed an unclimbed rock pillar of 4,850m via a 300m face of steep slabs, naming the route Animal (VII) and the summit Pilastro dei Pensieri.

In the final days of good weather we mixed the party: Emrik, Fabrizio, and Francesco reached the summit of Edgar via the Korean route up the southwest ridge, while François, Matteo, and I climbed the right side of the west face and continued to the summit via the Korean route to produce Colpo Finale (600m to the southwest ridge, WI5 90° M). The cherry on the cake was that we all arrived on the summit together, at 1 p.m. on the 25th. As we climbed the final crest to the top, I could still make out my descent tracks from nearly three weeks ago.

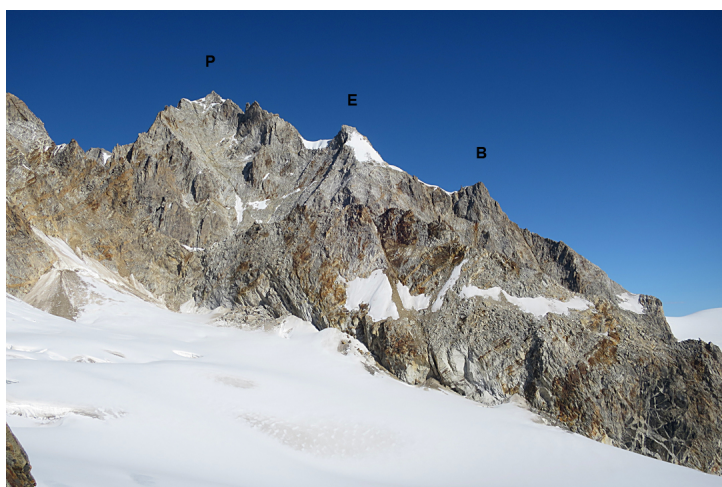
The trip was a great success for us all, but my greatest satisfaction was the solo climb of the west face of Edgar, a difficult psychological ascent where there was just me, the moon, and the mountain—nothing else.

– Tomas Franchini, Italy

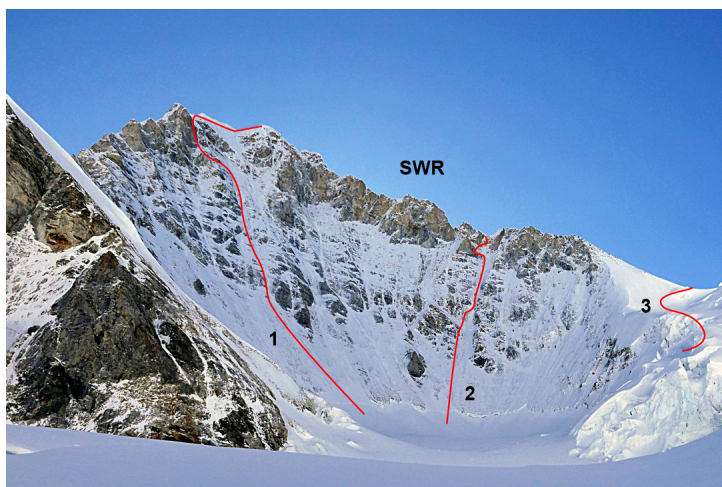
## Images



Seen from the upper Nanmenganggou, Little Edgar (left) with the route of first ascent, Buon Compleanno Toni, via the north-northwest face, and the attempt on the northeast ridge of Mt. Edgar to 5,840m.



The Cresta delle tre Sorelle, seen from the south: (B) Punta Barbara (5,530m), (E) Punta Elisabetta (5,740m), and (P) Punta Patrizia (5,852m). The traverse of this ridge reached the crest from the far side before crossing Barbara, Elisabetta, and Patrizia, and then descending, again on the far side.

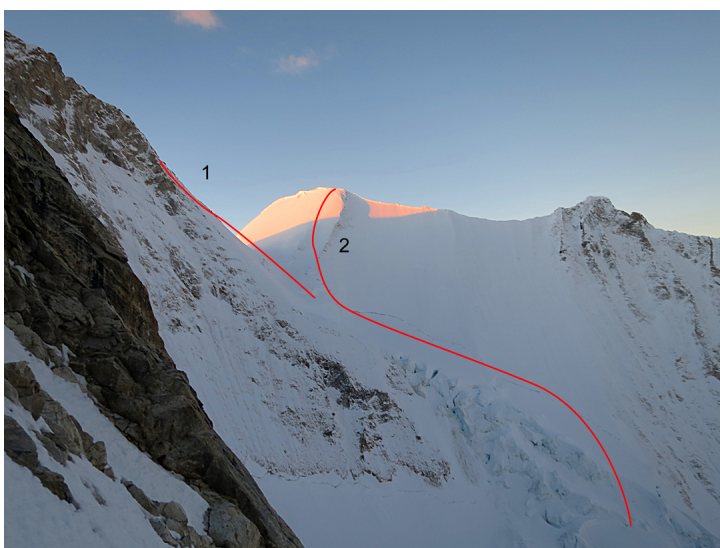


The west face of Mt. Edgar (E-Gongga, 6,618m). (1) The Moon's Power, the solo new route by Tomas Franchini. (2) Colpo Finale (2017). (3) Start of the southwest ridge (SWR), up which both (2) and (3) finish.





Pilier Gerard Ottavio, which lies above the Tridente Trentino, and the route of the first ascent, Meteopatia (VII).

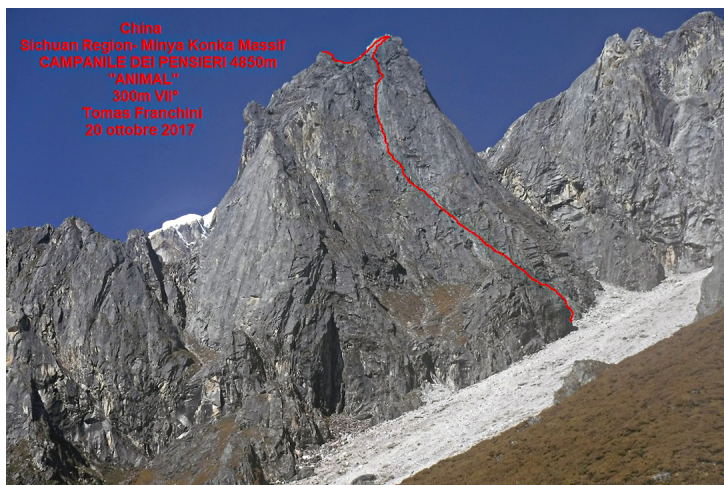


Looking across the west face of Mt. Edgar to the col at the start of (1) the southwest ridge (Korean route, 2001). (2) The route of the 2017 first ascent of Twenty Shan (6,174m).



Vallee Shan and the route of the first ascent. The lower buttress gave four pitches of free climbing up to VI, while rest was IV and mixed.





The Campanile dei Pensieri and the 300m route Animal, soloed for the first ascent by Tomas Franchini.



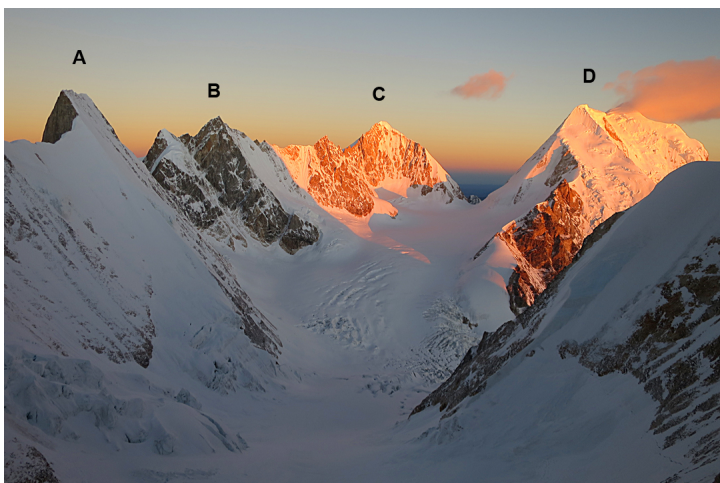
The Tridente Trentino on the north side of the Nanmenganggou and the route of the first ascent. The pointed tower up to the right is Pilier Gerard Ottavio, also climbed in 2017.



François Cazzanelli in the couloir of Colpo Finale, a new route on the west face of Mt. Edgar.



Tomas Franchini on steep ice in the couloir of Colpo Finale, a new route on the west face of Mt. Edgar.



The view to the northwest from partway up the west face of Mt. Edgar. (A) Peak 6,134m, climbed from the south in 2009 by a Russian team. (B) Peak 6,206m (unclimbed). (C) Mt. Grosvenor (6,376m); the 700m east face, seen here, was climbed in 2011 by Russians. (D) Jiazi (6,450m); the first ascensionists (1982) climbed more or less along the left skyline, approaching from the far side.

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