

YAN DONGDONG

## The Direct South Face of Siguniang

On November 23rd to 27th, 2009, Zhou Peng and I climbed the Central South Face route (M4 AI3+ VI, 1,000m of elevation from bergschrund to the summit) of the 6,250m Siguniang (aka Yaomei Feng), the main peak of the Siguniang Shan (Four Girls Mountains) massif in Sichuan, China.

This route is situated to the right of the Japanese route in 1992. As far as we know, it was the first ascent of the route, which was first attempted by Korean climbers in April, 2007, who pushed to approximately 5,650m with fixed-rope style before their camp at 5,200m was blown out by an avalanche, forcing them to retreat.

In December 2008 the Chinese “Ultimate Expedition” team attempted the same route, reaching 5,600m. Both Zhou and I were on that expedition. In February 2009 we made another attempt to the face in alpine style, reaching 5,950m where the upper part of the ice wall to the right of the central couloir collapsed when Zhou was trying to climb it.

It was our third attempt to the South Face. We chose alpine style again, starting with each of our packs weighing less than 15kg from the nearby Rilong Township on November 23rd. With the help of local porters who carried our packs as high as the traditional base camp (4,800m), we camped at 5,130m that evening, not far from the bergschrund at the foot of the face. Because the forecast told us that the bad weather will be coming in the afternoon of 26th and we weren't taking any chances.

On 24th we crossed the bergschrund and ascended to 5,700m, keeping to the right of the blackened central couloir and simul-climbing most of the way, only belaying for three pitches on more difficult rock sections. Next day we began the summit push at 8:07, went over the right side of the rocky “step” between 5,900 and 5,950m, did four mixed pitches on mainly rock, climbed through the cornice onto the windy Southwest Ridge at around 16:00 (we didn't check the exact time), and reached the southern summit at 18:10. There were three points and the southern-most one appears to be the highest on the Chinese 1:50,000 military map, courtesy of Chinese climber Ma Yihua.

That night we had to sit in a snow cave dug beneath the cornice at 6,130m because the entire face further down was threatened by falling debris, too dangerous to rappel in the dark. Next day on 26th the rock/ice fall got worse but we descended anyway to 5,130m, then moved our tent a little bit further down because we found a several pieces of rock around it that weren't there when we set out. On 27th we slept until 10:30 then trekked down the glacier and back to Rilong.

We named the route “The Free Spirits”, which is also the name of our climbing partnership, since the Koreans didn't give it a name as far as we know. This should be the first route made by all-Chinese team on Siguniang.

Please visit our trip report (only in Chinese) at:  
<http://www.emg.com.cn/showtxt.asp?id1=2&id=161>

**Summary of statistics:**

China, Sichuan, Siguniang Feng (6,250m), the first ascent of the Central South Face “The Free Spirits” (1,000m, AI3+ M4), 23—27 November 2009, Yan Dongdong and Zhou Peng.

**Editor’s Note: Russians on Siguniang**

(1) Alexey Gorbatenkov and Svetlana Gutsalo from St. Petersburg, Russia had made an alpine-style attempt on the South Face of Siguniang a month earlier than Chinese duo. They attempted the buttress to the right of Chinese route and reached c.5,800m before being defeated by a big snow storm on 7—8 October.

(2) Another Russian team, comprised of Evgeny Bashkirtsev and Denis Veretenin from Irkutsk, Vladimir Molodozhen from St. Petersburg, Valery Shamalo, Denis Sushko and Andrey Muryshev from Moscow, made an attempt on the Northwest Face of Siguniang. The Irkutsk pair attempted the line to the right of Fowler-Ramsden route in 2005 (Inside Line, ED+, 1,500m WI6), supposed to be the same line tried by Americans (Chad Kellog, Joe Puryear and Stoney Richards) in 2005 and forced to retreat after two days due to the storm which defeated the pair on the South Face.



The South Face of Siguniang with the Chinese route “Free Spirits” marked.

(3) Meanwhile, remaining four Russians continued their attempt on the Northwest Buttress (100m right of the line of Irkutsk team) using porta-ledge and fixed ropes. They reached the halfway up the buttress on 18 October and traversed to the left to join the crux of Inside Line. The summit was reached by Shamalo and Molodozhen on 21 October and by Sushko and Muryshev on 22. All ropes and waste were removed from the wall.