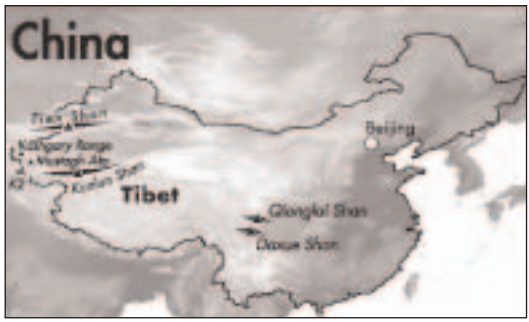
China



Emerging trends among Chinese climbers. China not only has the tallest mountains in the world, it also has some of the most technically challenging, least explored, and most varied. What does this all mean for a burgeoning Chinese middle class that now has economic means, a love of the outdoors, and a desire for a higher quality of life? They have an "infinite" playground of incredible mountains and an immense backcountry to explore.

The Chinese are wasting no time in discovering their mountains and crags. In China, the development of climbing as a recreational sport has grown rapidly in a short period and is steadily gaining steam. In 1995, it is safe to say that all the serious Chinese rock climbers knew each other. Now, climbing and outdoor-enthusiast clubs are springing up at a dizzying rate across the country. It is difficult to judge how many climbers and want-to-be climbers there are presently in China. One thing is clear: the sport is growing exponentially. There are several popular rock climbing areas in the south and north, most major cities have rock gyms, people are starting to pursue alpine climbing, and Chinese are climbing Cho-Oyu, Everest, Mustag-ata, and other peaks throughout all of China and Tibet. ISPO (the giant international sports trade show from Europe) held its first show in China on March 14, 2005. One can now find all essential equipment for climbing, and most major brands have entered the market. It is an exciting time to be a Chinese climber.

This explosion in outdoor sports is clearly being driving by the private sector's new young middle class. Traditionally, the focus among Chinese climbers was on altitude: climbing 7,000m and 8,000m peaks siege or expedition style. Although this mindset is still prevalent, a new trend is developing in alpine climbing: attempting 5,000m-6,000m peaks in a lighter, small-team approach. Chinese climbers are starting to choose a mountain by what the route has to offer, where style counts, and where the challenges of the line are the goal, rather than simply getting to the top any way possible. This is a huge paradigm shift, and very well may be what makes climbing a popular sport in China. Alpine-style climbing is more suitable for the working, middle class climber who has economic constraints and limited vacation time.

However, alpine climbing is still in its infancy. In the past, Chinese overlooked their "shorter" mountains. Foreigners, especially Japanese and Westerners, pioneered many of the hard lines. For example, Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden's award-winning ascent of Mt. Siguniang's north face in 2002, Charlie Fowler's first ascents of unknown peaks in western Sichuan in the mid 1990s, rock routes in the Jarjinjabo massif in the remote Kham region, and Craig Luebben's ice lines in Shuangqiao Valley. We are now just starting to see Chinese climbers attempt new ascents on technically challenging routes and really get into their own backcountry. As a result, the Chinese have to learn a new set of climbing and backcountry techniques and safety skills. The first climbing school dedicated to teaching such skills started two years ago (AAIC—Arete Alpine Instruction Center—I am a co-owner with Ma Yihua, from Chengdu; the website www.aaic.cn is currently only in Chinese, but it will soon be in English also and will offer assistance to foreign visitors). In China, the scope of climbing is expanding along with the

rising number of people coming into the sport.

I see the Chinese climbing scene advancing in several areas: quadruple the number of people going into the mountains during the next two to three years, pursuit of alpine style climbing, and subsequent opening up of new areas and many new routes and peaks. The number of rock climbers will also continue to grow, with sport climbing being prominent. While official standards for guides are now nearly non-existent, the next five years should see a basic development of qualifications. It is safe to say that China's climbing scene is still in a pioneering stage. However, 10 years ago it was no more than a seed. During the next decade I am confident the development of climbing in China will surpass all of our expectations.

JON OTTO, *AAC*

TIEN SHAN

Kashkar, first ascent and traverse. In July a team from Moscow made the first ascent of 6,435m Kashkar (aka Koshkar or Kochkar Bashi), an isolated massif lying in the rarely visited Chinese Tien Shan ca 20km due south of Pobeda. The peak is thought to have been attempted by French in the early 1990s and members of the Moscow party made a reconnaissance in 2002. From a 3,400m base camp on the Chonteren Glacier Alexey Kirienko, David Lehtman, Vladimir Leonenko, Ilya Mikhalev, and Yury Strubtsov spent three days climbing through an ice fall and along a previously unnamed glacier (christened Morenny) to reach the foot of the north ridge of the mountain. The next day, July 11, they climbed up to the first summit on the ridge, Pt 5,550m and camped at 5,400m. The following day they crossed Pt 5,550m, the day after that Pt 5,620m and on the 14th 5,650m. Several days of bad weather pinned them down at 6,000m and at one stage a tent with three occupants was completely buried by avalanche but the summit snow dome was eventually reached on the 21st (from where they were able to contact Moscow by satellite phone). The team continued the traverse by descending the east ridge, a route they had climbed to ca 5,750m in 2002. In one and a half days they reached the Ladybird Glacier and were back at base camp on the 23rd. Climbing in classic style, the team used fixed rope on ca 2,000m of the ascent and 700m of descent, the total length of the route being nearly 14km and Russian 4B/5A. The team admits to being stretched, having taken food and fuel for a maximum of 10 days, rather than the 16 that it took in a round trip from base. They also note at least 20 unclimbed 6,000m peaks on this side of the range.

ANNA PIUNOVA, *mountain.ru, Russia*

KUN LUN SHAN

Kongur Tagh (7,719m), northeast ridge, new route. Kongur Tagh's summit is on China territory close to the border of two big mountain systems, the Pamir and Kun Lun. It is supposed to be the highest mountain of Pamir. In spite of its altitude, Kongur Tagh was unknown till 1900, probably because of its location inside a group of other high peaks. After the first investigation, 56 years passed before the first climb was attempted and 25 more years till four Britons (Peter Boardman, Chris Bonington, Alan Rouse and Joe Tasker) reached the summit in 1981. The summit is on a long ridge, stretching several tens of kilometers from east to west with an average

altitude of about 7,000m. There are a few 7,000m peaks situated in the Ridge: Kongur East Summits 7,246, 7,126, 7,200, and Kongur Tube.

In 2004 there were five attempts to reach the summit. Three expeditions from the north side—from Saint-Petersburg/Riga, Moscow, and Krasnoyarsk (Russia) reached the summit. French and Italian expeditions attempted to make new routes from different directions. From the Saint-Petersburg-Riga expedition, the following people summited: Valery Shamalo, Kirill Korabelnikov and Latvians, Oleg Silin and Valdis Purins. Alexey Gorbatenkov turned back at 7,350m because of frostbite.

Kongur Tagh (7,719m), showing the new Russian route on the northeast ridge. *Alexey Gorbatenkov*

The north slopes of the mountain are not that steep, but extremely avalanche prone. The summit is surrounded with a few belts of hanging glaciers. They turned back many expeditions. Our route is not that difficult, the only technical places are a long ice slope at the altitude 4,900m-5,300m and an icefall around 6,000m. The entire route totally escapes rock climbing. Avalanche danger is more or less permanent on the route, but it is possible to find good places to bivouac. In the very beginning of the expedition our bivouac was blown down from the mountain by a fresh snow avalanche. Fortunately we were out of the tent at the moment and were just a bit covered with snow. This made us more serious about choosing good places for the higher camps. All in all, the climb required a lot of power. Probably because it is a long route with a big rise from base camp to the summit: more then 4,000m. Snowshoes are highly recommended between 4,600m and 6,900m. This saves you a lot of energy while breaking trail.

We suggest our route as the easiest way to reach the summit, but one has to keep avalanche danger in a mind. Our base camp was on green meadow at 3,500m. Kyrgyz nomads inhabit this valley. They were very friendly, and we felt comfortable leaving our stuff in the meadow. By negotiating with local people we had fresh meat, chicken and vegetables. They also provided us with donkeys for travel to BC. A few words about logistics: The best way to reach the northern side of Kongur is to start from Kashgar. This ancient city was a key point on the Silk Road. These days it is a big mix of civilizations. Local tour operators provide necessary permits, visa support, transport, and so on. You can buy most of the food you need here, but we did not find cheese or good sausages. You also can buy gas for the gas stoves here, but it's not that easy to find. Local beer bottles have a non-standard volume 0.63 L, which makes it difficult to calculate the total volume you need.

Alexey Gorbatenkov, *Russia*

Editor's Note: Japanese attempted the big north northeast ridge in 1981 and returned in 1989 to climb it from the East Karayalak Glacier for the second ascent of the mountain. In 1984 a four-man American team climbed the smaller rib of snow and ice to the right and continued direct to meet the upper section of the 1981 British Route on the west ridge at over 7,300m, where they retreated in deep snow. It was this rib that the St. Petersburg team climbed last summer, moving left onto the snow slopes above the lower north north east ridge, then finally reaching the summit from the left.

Later, another Russian team from Krasnoyarsk led by Nikolay Zakharov first appears to have attempted the north northeast spur (Japanese Route) to the left but then gave up and joined a third team from Moscow (led by Jury Hohlov), which was trying a variant to the St Petersburg line. Both teams summited, making the fourth and fifth ascents of Kongur. These two expeditions branched left from the American line at around 6,100m to reach the summit directly via the right side of the broad snow slopes above the lower north-northeast ridge. The Krasnoyarsk Route differed slightly from the Moscow line. The last Russian team of three reached the top on August 23. Despite attempts in 1998, 2000, and 2003, the Original British Route remains unrepeated.

Kongur East (7,300m), ascent to 7,300m and proposed name for highpoint on east ridge of Kongur (7,719m). Kongur is the main summit of the Kun Lun range, in the southwestern part of China. It is a complex massif with a long span of elevations over 7,000m running west to east. The only direct access to the main summit is from the north or the south. From the west or the east, climbing on Kongur tackles difficult and long ridges eventually leading to the top.

Kongur has been climbed only five times. The first attempt took place in 1981 by an English team led by Chris Bonington, which climbed a difficult ridge on the south side without reaching the top. A second effort led another strong party (Bonington, Boardman, Rouse, and Tasker) to the top via the west ridge, which is easily reached from the western slopes via the southwest rib but involves a long stretch at high altitude and a technical section on a sharp rocky ridge just before the summit. The second ascent was made by a Japanese team from the Kyoto Karakoram Club, led by Ryuichi Kotani, which climbed a prominent and difficult ridge in the center of the north face in 1989. In 2004 three separate Russian expeditions climbed from the north, as reported elsewhereSince the south face is huge and bordered by slopes prone to avalanche danger, what remained for us was the east ridge. Thus, during the 100th anniversary celebrations of the Club Alpino Accademico Italiano (1904-2004), an expedition was organized to climb Kongur via the northeast side of the mountain, where a prominent ridge (northeast) leads to an intermediate summit at 5,975 m, which is connected to the upper plateau by another long stretch of ridge (east) ending at an elevation of about 7,204m as marked on the Chinese map. We had a good picture from Daniel Waugh, who trekked a few times around the mountain. From this a relatively safe line was identified, although the first part was not yet clear.

The expedition team included Armando Antola, Donatella Barbera (doctor), Giovanni Ghiglione, Massimo Giuliberti, Carla Marten Canavesio, Claudio Moretto, Ezio Mosca, Beppe Villa, and myself as team leader.

We met our liason officer in Kashgar on July 20 and had a first look at the impressive east ridge of Kongur. What you see from Kashgar is only the upper part of our climb, above 5,800m. Base camp was set on a green valley bordering the Tugralkuluxi Glacier at about 3,850m, on July 22. Operations started immediately. In about one week we placed camp 1 at 4,600m, fixed ropes through the steep (60°) slopes leading to the ridge, and placed camp 2 at 5,600m. Weather condi-

Above the rock step on the east ridge of Kongur. *Mauro Penasa*

tions were strange, with high temperatures during the day, and usually snowfall during the late afternoon and night. The mountain was deeply snow-covered and in general conditions were wet.

A first attempt to reach the first peak at 5,950m was frustrated by bad weather. This waste of time forced us to climb in alpine style from camp 2.

On August 7 we camped at the foot of the east ridge of Kongur at 5,800m after descending the 5,950m peak; the 1,400m upper part of the ridge was impressive. The next two days were passed climbing relatively easy ridge slopes in deep snow, up to a rocky tooth at 6,600m. It took half a day to climb past this difficult section on rotten rock and unconsolidated snow. We could not fix more than one rope on the difficult stretch, thus there was no chance to place a higher camp. On August 11, at 17:00, Giuliberti, Villa, and I were at the end of the ridge, at about 7,300m on a small elevation that we called Kongur East, higher with respect to the point marked 7,204m on the Chinese maps. Having no experience with snow caves and in worsening weather we decided to put an end to our adventure.

This route, although long and challenging, is mostly safe and protected from avalanches. From BC it is 3,600m of vertical gain (due to a 200m loss below point 5,975m) with a much longer development. Unfavorable snow conditions were experienced regardless of the weather: almost every night a 10-20 cm snowfall kept the slopes difficult for climbing, and even during sunny days the snow was never transformed into more comfortable terrain.

From the highest point reached, that is from Kongur East, an additional climbing day would be required to reach the main summit at 7,719m. It is a long stretch (about 3 km), but only 400m have to be gained and snow conditions on the upper and windy part of the ridge are much better. We entitled the route "Ridge of the Centenario CAAI," in commemoration of this important event. We have asked the Xiniang Mountaineering Association to have the name Kongur East added to the official maps.

Mauro Penasa, *Club Alpino Accademico Italiano*

Along the east ridge of Kongur. *Mauro Penasa*

Kara Kunlun, Dolkun Muztag (6,355m), first ascent. The student mountaineering party of Tokai University Alpine Club was the first to climb an unexplored peak (6,355m) in the Kara Kunlun mountains at the westernmost end of the Xinjiang Kunlun in China. The Kara Kunlun mountains are about 15 km southeast of Mustagh Ata (west 75° 11' 18", north 38° 11' 29"). The summit is not visible from the foot of the mountains, so it was nearly unknown until our party reached the summit.

Our party consisted of climbing leader Yuka Komatsu (student), expedition leader Yoshitsugu Deriha, coach Kazuya Hiraide, Dr. Gen Sasao as our party doctor, and six other students (Taku Kojima, Tatsuya Aoki, Seitaro Ageta, Yusuke Hirano, Hidetaka Saruhashi, Satoshi Nomura). After the aptitude test at the Tokai University Medical School hospital, the low-pressure training at our laboratory of Sport Medicine Science, meticulous preparations were finished, and the party left Japan for the Kara Kunlun mountains on July 30.

On August 2, we arrived in the village of Takuman at the foot of the mountains. On August 4, our party completed setting up our base camp at the end of Cocoshir Glacier at an altitude of 4,500m. We set up the first camp on the glacier at 4,900m on August 7, where suddenly the sharp triangular pyramid summit of Kara Kunlun (6,355m) appeared. We started our real climbing of the mountain from this first camp. We went up higher and higher from the moraine on the glacier aiming at the snowy plateau toward the summit of Kara Kunrun. Our party built the second camp on the snowy field at an altitude of 5,600m on August 12.

The route to the summit was extremely difficult. We struggled long and hard, climbing the ice wall of a steep couloir and an ice/snow wall to get to the ridgeline. On August 14, we fixed the rope 600m up to the ridgeline.

At 6:30 a.m. on August 15, the three climbers of our party, Yuka Komatsu, Tatsuya Aoki, and Kazuya Hiraide, started to climb the peak as the first attempt team and fixed the rope 800m

up to the top ridgeline leading to the summit. At 1:10 p.m., they reached the summit after a long and arduous climb. On August 16, the second ascent team, Yoshitsugu Deriha, Taku Kojima, and Hidetaka Saruhashi reached the summit. The weather was changing for the worse and we decided to be satisfied with six climbers in our party gain the top of the peak.

We cleared the second camp in a snowstorm. On August 19, when we got back to the base camp it was covered with thick fresh snow. On August 20 we cleared base camp and began moving down the mountain in heavy snowfall.

Yuka, our climbing leader on this expedition, was the first woman ever to lead a student mountaineering party of Tokai University. She led the entire route. It was an impressive and praiseworthy achievement for a student mountaineering party to reach the summit of an unexplored peak in a greater range of Asia. The main peak of Kara Kunlun mountains had not been named yet, so we named it Dolkun Muztag (Wave of Mountains), whose origin comes from the combination of Dolkun (Wave) and Muztag (Mountain) in the Uighur language.

Yoshitsugu Deriha, *Tokai University Alpine Club*
Adapted from Japanese Alpine News, Tamotsu Nakamura, *Editor*

Qinghai-Tibet Plateau

Qiajajima I (5,930m), first ascent. Qiajajima massif is the highest mountain in the headwaters of the Mekong River on the Qinghai-Tibet plateau. It is located at about N33° 28' and E95° 11' in the most isolated region of the Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province. The massif has two peaks, Qiajajima I (5,930m) and Qiajajima II (5,890m), which are indicated on the topographical map 1:100,000 of the China People's Liberation Army. They remained unexplored because the region had long been closed to foreigners. In 1997 the first special permit was granted to a foreign party, the Niigata Mountaineering Association, for entering the unvisited area and attempting the untrodden peaks. The association sent an expedition and that year succeeded on Qiajajima II, but the highest peak, Qiajajima I, was not scaled due to unexpected frequent onsets of snow in spite of the summer season. In 2004 came another chance. I joined as deputy leader for an expedition to re-challenge Qiajajima I.

One microbus and two jeeps carried all the expedition members from Xining to Hot springs (336km), Yushu (510km) along the Qinghai-Sichuan Highway, then Zadoi (231km), Zaqeg-Zaigela campsite (76km) in five days from July 15 to 20. There we employed six muleteers and pack animals of 18 horses and eight yaks. On July 22 the caravan marched up 10km along the stream to a campsite at 4,444m. On July 23, heavy rainfall, strong wind and increase of river water made us stop. On July 24, we went up 10km along the main stream. A large landslide blocked the trail before it entered a gorge. We were forced to set up Base Camp there at 4,690m. On July 25, as it was not possible to take advantages of yaks and horses from BC, loads were ferried up by porters. The advance base camp (ABC) was built at 4,800m on the riverbank of the upper stream. The Chinese members and muleteers waited at BC until the climbing was over. On July 26 two members went ahead to pave the route. ABC-II was placed at 4,900m, and C1 was built at 5,140m, as ABC was too far away from the wall. Loads were carried to the higher camp. On July 27, C2 was set up at 5,360m at the foot of the wall.

On July 29 an advance party of three members commenced an assault on the summit. As there was no space to pitch a tent, they bivouacked at 5,587m. On July 30, they started climbing in the early morning. After ascending a chimney, they reached the main ridge, where they made a second bivouac at 5,780m. On July 31 the knife-edged main ridge became steeper. They detoured around the ridge to the north side and then reached the summit of Qiajajima I (5,930m) at 15:15. GPS indicated N33° 28' 33" and E95° 11' 33". The summiters were Shin-ichi Abe, Katsutoshi Suzuki, and Miho Kakinuma. On the way down they were again forced to bivouac, at about 5,600m on the wall, roped together. A fierce snowstorm bothered them all the night, dropping 20cm of snow. On August 11 everyone returned to Niigata via Xian.

Expedition members from the Niigata Mountaineering Association: leader: Shin-ichi Abe (57); deputy leaders: Ryoichi Matsuzaka (70), Katsutoshi Suzuki (60); members: Norihiro Asano (64), Shizuo Sugai (52), Tatsuko Anno (58), Miho Kakinuma (25), Yoko Abe (28). Expedition members from the China Qinghai Mountaineering Association: Liaison officer: Lei Wang; cook: Haixin An; driver: Haichou Shou, Teiho Jang; interpreter: Takahiro Kakiuchi (Japanese).

JAN editor's notes: There are three outstanding mountain massifs in the source of the Mekong River. They form a watershed between the main stream of the Mekong River and a large tributary of the upper Yangtze River (Chinese name is Tongtian He). From east to west: 1) Qiajajima and neighboring peaks. 2) Sedari (5,770m) and 5,700m–5,800m peaks ranging to the west, where glaciers are most developed. This massif remains unvisited. No photographs of the mountains have been taken. 3) A massif at the true source of the Mekong River, where some 5,500m peaks were already climbed by a party of the Tokyo University of Agriculture, Japan, in 1994.

RYOICHI MATSUZAKA, *Niigata Mountaineering Association, Japan*
Adapted from Japanese Alpine News, TAMOTSU NAKAMURA, *Editor*

SICHUAN

CHOLA SHAN

Ganzi Tibetan Prefecture, Mt. Chola (6,148m), third ascent; correction to 1988 "Cheru" ascent and altitude. We made the third known successful ascent of Mt. Chola (Lat: 31° 48' 0", Long: 99° 7' 0") on July 22, 2003. Chola is located in western Sichuan province, Ganzi Tibetan Prefecture, Dege County, near the eastern Tibet border. Our team put the first Tibetan on the summit. It was also the second ascent by Chinese and Americans. The summiters were Yihua Ma, Terry Choi, Jin Zhu, Ying Liu, Ping Wang, and me.

We approached the mountain from Xinlu Lake. Our route followed the east glacier to camp 1 at 5,000m. We then followed a steep slope to the right of a sub-peak marked as 5,290m on our map. From our camp 2 at 5,450m (on a large snow plateau) we followed the north slope to the summit. The last 100-plus meters to the summit is along a ridgeline.

We believe we followed the same route as Charlie Fowler's alpine ascent in 1997. He listed Chola as 6,141m high (*AAJ* 1999, ppg. 210-213, and *AAJ* 1998, ppg. 353-357). We have listed it as 6,148m since that is what our GPS read at the summit. The latitude and longitude are

Mt. Chola. *Jon Otto*

the same.

Correction to the joint China-Japanese 1988 climb: This climb is listed in the 1990 *AAJ* article (p. 300) as Mt. Cheru and is recorded as 6,168m (lat: 31° 30' 0", long: 99° 0' 0"). This is the height shown on Chinese topographical maps from the 1970s. This peak is about 500m (direct line) from the peak we summited. Comparing photographs from the China-Japanese 1988 successful ascent, we verified that we summited the same peak. Thus, they actually summited peak 6,148 (Lat: 31° 48' 0", Long: 99° 7' 0"). Peak 6,168 is still unclimbed. From the summit of Mt. Chola we looked across at peak 6,168m. We were unable to tell if it was higher or not. Both are very close in height. The elevations listed on the old topographical maps can be off by 20-30m.

Basically, this mountain has two peaks about the same elevation in close proximity to each other. This is confusing. The ridgeline out to peak 6,168m is much longer and sharper than Mt. Chola's ridge. One would have to climb both peaks with the same GPS unit to verify which is actually higher.

I suggest one name be chosen for this mountain—either Cheru or Chola. Then, each of these two peaks should be differentiated as I and II. Peak I: The peak that has been climbed (Lat: 31° 48' 0", Long: 99° 7' 0"). Peak II: The unclimbed peak listed as 6,168m on Chinese topographical maps from the 1970s (lat: 31° 30' 0", long: 99° 0' 0"). Note: We used a 1:100,000 scale Chinese topographical map from the 1970s.

The best time to climb this mountain is late July through August. During May the heavy spring snows melt rapidly due to warming air temperatures, which leads to unstable conditions. Late autumn should also be a good time but prepare for very cold temperatures.

Our climbing team consisted of: Jon Otto, USA (leader); Ma, Yihua, Beijing/Chengdu (leader); Terry Choi (Cai, Gantang), Hong Kong; Zhu, Jin, Jiangsu, China; Liu, Cong, Guangdong, China; Liu, Ying, Chengdu; Lin, Chao, Chengdu; Wang, Ping, Sichuan (Tibetan); Chen,

Gang, Shaanxi, China; Ding, Yinglu, Shanghai, China.

JON OTTO, *AAC*

SHALULI SHAN

Kham region: Jarjinjabo, Janmo Spire summit block, first ascent. In August Bernie Laforest, Ben Ditto, Jonathan Knight, Steve Cater, and I journeyed to the Jarjinjabo Massif in the Sichuan Province of China. With help from the American climber Jon Otto, we hired a translator and two 4-wheel-drive vehicles. From Chengdu, our drive took us three days over a route that has

Janmo Spire, Jarjinjabo Massif. *Tommy Chandler*

the reputation of being the highest and worst road in the world. The Chinese are on a paving frenzy, however, and the road is quickly being subdued. Our trip was similar to the American team in 2002 (see Pete Athans' feature article in the *AAJ* 2003) in that we traveled first to Litang en route to Zhopu Pasture, the gateway to the Jarjinjabo massif. Our stopover in Litang enabled us to acclimatize, as well as mingle with the Tibetans at the largest horse racing festival in the Kham region.

The dreary rainy weather began to clear as we arrived at our destination, and we quickly started outfitting our high camp and getting acclimatized. Ben and I were psyched for the main wall of Jabo, whereas Jonathan and Bernie were looking to the unclimbed spire atop Janmo, and Steve and Mark simply wanted to climb both formations and explore the surrounding walls.

Over three climbing days Jonathan and Bernie completed three different routes on Janmo Spire that reached a common highpoint. The highpoint positioned them at the base of a summit block, which they began by climbing a short off-width to a ledge. From the ledge they reached the top by delicate face climbing, placing four bolts and one pin on lead from stances and hooks. Their complete route went at IV 5.11R and is reminiscent of a desert tower with a

classic summit block pitch. After this they climbed a new variation to a route on the face of Jabo at III 5.11. Also of note were two excellent single pitches Jonathan put up on and near the base of Jabo, just above our camp.

Ben and I climbed one new route on the lower section of Jabo, which was four pitches at 5.10, and two new routes on the beautiful upper face. The first one of these followed cracks up and left towards the southeast buttress. It didn't quite make the summit, but was still excellent climbing on beautiful rock that went at III 5.10. The second went straight up the face, again with beautiful straight-in hand and finger cracks, and was probably III 5.10+ A1 (a few pulls through a wet section). We also repeated a route Jonathan and Bernie had done on Janmo.

Steve and Mark started out by summiting Jabo via the east ridge and climbing Janmo via a route on the right side. Their first day on Janmo was hampered by funky weather, but on their second attempt they made it to just below the summit block. They then made an attempt on another spire to the west of camp, but bad climbing conditions cut this attempt short.

We would like to express our gratitude to the AAC for supporting this trip through the Lyman-Spitzer climbing grant, as well as our friends and families for the support they gave. Not only did we make some great friends in China, we also came back as better friends than before. We were truly lucky to be able to experience a place as remote and unspoiled as this.

Tommy Chandler, *AAC*

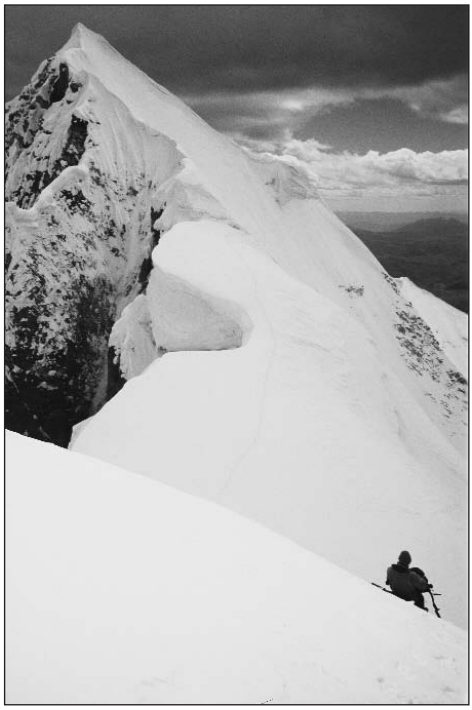
Daxue Shan

Haizi Shan (5,820m), east ridge, north summit ascent and main summit attempt. Known to Tibetans as Ja-ra (King of the mountains), Haizi Shan is a striking peak north of Kangding in a region that was formerly known as East Tibet. It is most easily approached from the north via Danba, allowing a drive up a rough track to base camp in a forested valley at 3,800m. An alternative is to trek in 1-2 days from the roadhead in the Yala valley, reached from Kangding. The north face is featured in Tamotsu Nakamura's article in *AAJ* 2003, page 155.

Dick Isherwood high on the east ridge of Haizi Shan. *Geoff Cohen*

An Alpine Club (UK) expedition —consisting of Richard Isherwood, Martin Scott, Bill Thurston, and me— attempted the peak in spring. Haizi Shan had been attempted a few times before, notably by Neil Carruthers, who reached the lower north summit in fall 2003 (report on www.summitpost.com). We reached base camp on

April 16, rather too early in the season, as the mountain was still plastered in deep soft snow. This made for slow and frustrating progress through thick rhododendrons followed by a twisting moraine ridge. We climbed up to an obvious snow shelf below the east ridge (very clear on Nakamura's photo) and left a gear dump there on the 25th. Poor weather and lack of food then forced us to retreat to base camp for a few days. On our return we camped at the gear dump, and on May 3 we climbed up the east ridge, getting excellent early morning views of the Minya Konka range to the south. The ridge was corniced and icy in places, but not technically difficult. Dick Isherwood and I reached the north summit about 11 a.m. and continued to the saddle below the main summit. We climbed the first of two steep icy steps, but reluctantly turned around before the second in order to avoid an unplanned bivouac. Our high point was less than 200m below the summit. On the descent from the north summit we took the glacier below the east ridge, as Carruthers had done. This necessitated a couple of abseils over short ice walls, and would not have been an attractive ascent route in the prevailing snow conditions.



Looking over at the summit of Haizi Shan from the high-point. *Geoff Cohen*

Haizi Shan offers the possibility of many harder alpine-style routes. The valley around base camp is well populated in springtime by Tibetans collecting caterpillar fungus. We were very well supported at base camp by the staff of Sichuan Adventure travel (Chengdu).

GEOFF COHEN, *AAC*

Mt. Edgar and Xiao Pangwa attempts. During the spring a British expedition comprising Angela Benham, Chris Drinkwater, Titch Kavangh and Andrew Phillips gained permission to attempt Mt. Edgar (aka E Gongga: 6,618m), in the northern sector of the range (J. Huston Edgar was archaeologist with the China Inland Mission in Kangding and was important in the development of historical and topographical knowledge of the area). Unfortunately, due to the prevailing poor weather they were unable to find a safe approach to the mountain.

Until shortly before leaving the UK, the team only knew of one previous attempt on this fine pyramid: in 1982 Stuart Hepburn's British expedition first planned to examine the difficult north side but on finding the approach up the Nan Men Guan Valley impossible due to heavy flooding, macheted a route into the opposite side of the mountain and made attempts on both the south and west faces. Bad weather and poor snow conditions forced them down. However, last spring, just as the British team was about to leave for Chengdu, they learnt of an unreported ascent in 2000 by a Korean expedition, which, it is believed, climbed the mountain via the easi-

er south face. Nonetheless, the British team decided it would keep Edgar as its primary objective and attempt to make the first ascent of the peak from the impressive north side. This would require possibly the first exploration of the upper Nan Men Guen, though the 1981 British Army Expedition had been some way up the valley during their reconnaissance of Jiazi.

After establishing Base Camp on April 2 below the snout of the glacier at 3,400m and two more camps in the valley at 3,800m and 4,200m, bad weather prevented much progress up the approach glacier to the foot of the north face. Finally on the 20th the team decided that the second serac barrier was just too dangerous and retreated, turning instead to two lower unclimbed peaks to the north on the opposite side of the main glacier. These were named Xiao Pangwa (5,630m) and Da Pangwa (5,910m). A 750m-high, east-facing snow couloir led to the crest of a ridge, which in turn ran first north west then north to the first summit, Xiao Pangwa. On the 22nd, Drinkwater, Kavangh, and Phillips reached the crest at 5,400m after climbing the ca 45° couloir through the previous night, then progressed along it to a suitable bivouac site. A little further on the climbing looked much more serious and time-consuming than they had expected and in the next two-three kilometers of ridge there appeared to be no suitable campsite. As the three were already weak and dehydrated, they decided to retreat.

Finding what they believed to be a sheltered site on the edge of the couloir at around 5,200m, they stopped to sit out a rapidly approaching storm. During the evening the site was battered by a shower of rock and ice, one large lump tearing right through the tent. It was a relieved trio that finally reached base camp the following day.

Lindsay Griffin, *Mountain INFO Editor, CLIMB magazine*

Longemain (6,294m) and Daddomain (6,380m), first ascents. The excitement started early on this trip. Originally heading to eastern Tibet, our permits were cancelled the day before we headed to Lhasa from Chengdu. Some parties had evidently annoyed the authorities by climbing illegally in the Nyenqentanghla East area—a warning to us all. Once we managed to get a smile back on our faces we refocused on the Daxue Shan Range in western Sichuan and in particular on the unclimbed peaks of Longemain (6,294m) and Daddomain (6,380m). Unfortunately, no one could supply us with a photo and we had no idea what the mountains even looked like until we woke up one fine morning in basecamp.

Longemain and Daddomain lie just north of the gob smacking pyramid of Gongga Shan (Minya Konka, 7,756m) and their western aspects drain down to the Moxi valley. We walked in from the village of Laoyulian over the Buchi La inr four days and set up base camp in a pleasant grassy meadow at 3,870m in the Moxi Valley. A few days later we established an ABC on the glacier under the icecliff fes-

The west ridge of Daddomain. *Sean Waters*

tooned west face of Longemain. We initially intended to reach the col between the two peaks, but a closer look revealed the prospect of scuttling back and forth under large unstable icecliffs. We changed our focus to the west ridge of Longemain. Access to the ridge was up a long couloir of depressingly unconsolidated snow and from there the route followed the main ridge to the top. We summited on October 20 in three days from ABC, after an earlier acclimatization foray to camp one, and an electrifying episode in which we were both hit by lightening. The route was about Alaskan Grade 4.

The route of Longemain's first ascent. *Sean Waters*

After a recce to check out the northern side of Daddomain we came back to our original ABC and, after sitting out poor weather, headed up a long rotten rock couloir, which boasted a lovely coating of loose snow. That deposited us on the west ridge, which we followed via two camps to a shoulder on Daddomain's subsidiary west peak. Once over that we dropped into a basin that led us around and up to the main summit on the 29th. This route was of similar grade to Longemain, although snow conditions were much more convivial.

The weather was mixed. Early in the trip we had clear mornings with regular afternoon thunderstorms. This gave way to a short period of settled clear weather, which in turn gave way to 10 days of unsettled weather with no discernable pattern. All weather came from the Tibetan Plateau to the west, and by early November had become very cold.

This is a great area with wonderful locals and plenty of new route potential on some big, steep faces. Longemain: 29 deg 39.110 min N, 101 deg 50.241 min E; Daddomain: 29 deg 40.503 min N, 101 deg 50.250 min E.

SEAN WATERS *and* JO KIPPAX, *New Zealand Alpine Club*

QIONGLAI RANGE

Lixian County, Bipeng Valley, Half Ridge Peak (Banji Feng) (5,430m), north face, first ascent. On May 4 our team made the first successful ascent of Half Ridge Peak (Lat: 31° 14' 41.1", Long: 102° 55' 39") via the north face. This is a semi-technical route of snow mixed with some rock (rock useful for placing pro but no actual mixed climbing required) and ice near the summit. We descended via the southwest ridge to the saddle with Peak 5,370m and then down. The climb starts at the ShangHaiZi parking lot in Bipeng valley. From the parking lot, walk back down the road about 400 yards to the first stream. You can clearly see the glacier from this vantage point. Turn right up the valley following the left side of the stream. The trail should be marked. The walk starts through a coniferous forest, which seamlessly melds into a rhododendron forest. At an

Summit Camp on Half Ridge Peak. *Jon Otto*

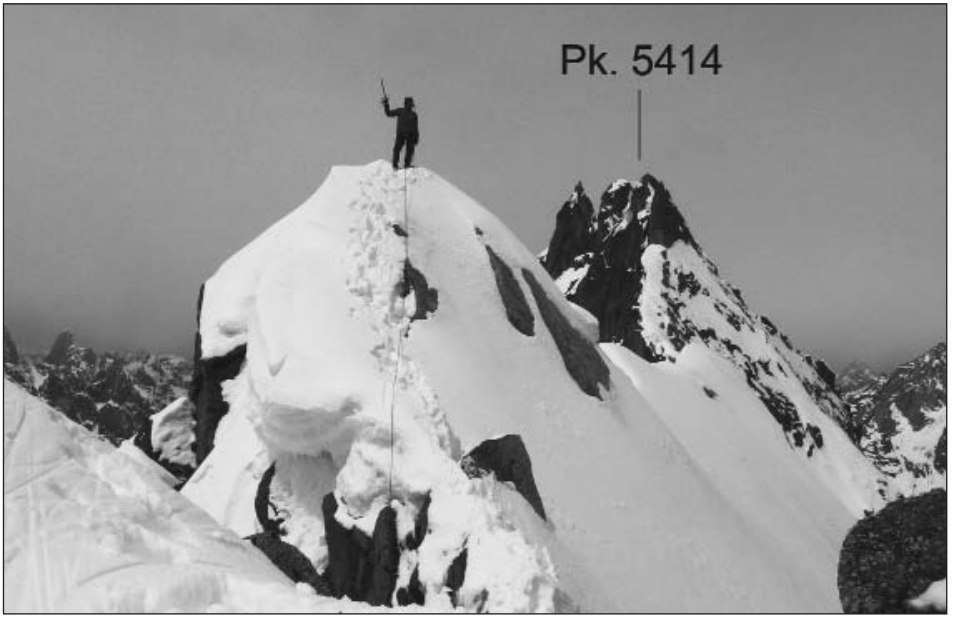
altitude of around 4,050m, you start to get above treeline. The trail meanders up a steep grassy slope to the left, then continues to camp 1 at 4,454m. The next day we trudged south through deep, wet snow and made camp 2 (summit camp) on the glacier at 5,026m. This glacier is split into two parts by a small rocky ridge that starts from the summit and cuts straight down the valley dividing it in half like a backbone. You must cross this backbone to reach camp 2.

On May 4 we went for the summit. On the lower part of the route at the base of the gully there was a short section of chest deep snow. We stayed to the left of the gully to avoid potential avalanches, then followed the rocks around left and up. The steepest section is about half way up the rocks and may reach 45°. Near the summit is ice. The weather became continually worse, and by the time we reached the top visibility had dropped to 200 feet. To date, we have established four routes to the summit. They all start from camp 2 (summit camp) at 5,026m. This climb was run by the Arete Alpine Instruction Center (AAIC), a company I co-run based out of Chengdu. See www.aaic.cn for more information.

The team members were: Jon Otto, USA (leader); Ma, Yihua, Beijing/Chengdu (leader); Su, Rongqin, Chengdu; Ni, Hui, Chengdu; Liu, Qing, Chengdu; Sun, Ping, Beijing.

Jon Otto, *AAC*

Bipeng Valley, Peak 5,370m, first ascent. On April 27 Rongqing Su (China) and I (USA) made the first ascent of Peak 5,370 (so named because it is 5,370m) (Lat: 31° 14' 30", Long: 102° 55' 04"). This may be a sub-peak of Peak 5414.



Su Rongqin on the summit of Peak 5,370m. *Jon Otto*

Our climb started in the ShangHaiZi parking lot of Bipeng valley. We made camp 1 on a grassy field on April 25 at 4,450m. The next day we walked up through deep, wet snow and made camp on the glacier at 5,050m. On April 27, we walked up the glacier to the saddle between Peak 5,414 (to the west) and Half Ridge Peak (to the northeast, 5,430m). From the saddle, we followed the ridgeline west to the summit of Peak 5,370. The last 50m involved climbing up a 50°-60° slope of loose snow on rock near the ridge and a small section of thin ridgeline to the summit, which can only stand one person at a time.

JON OTTO, *AAC*

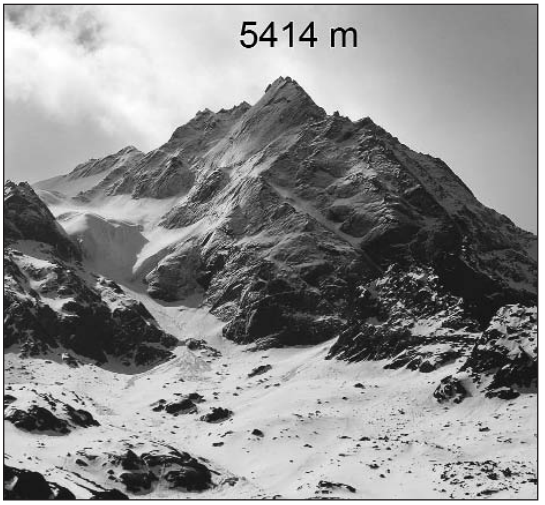
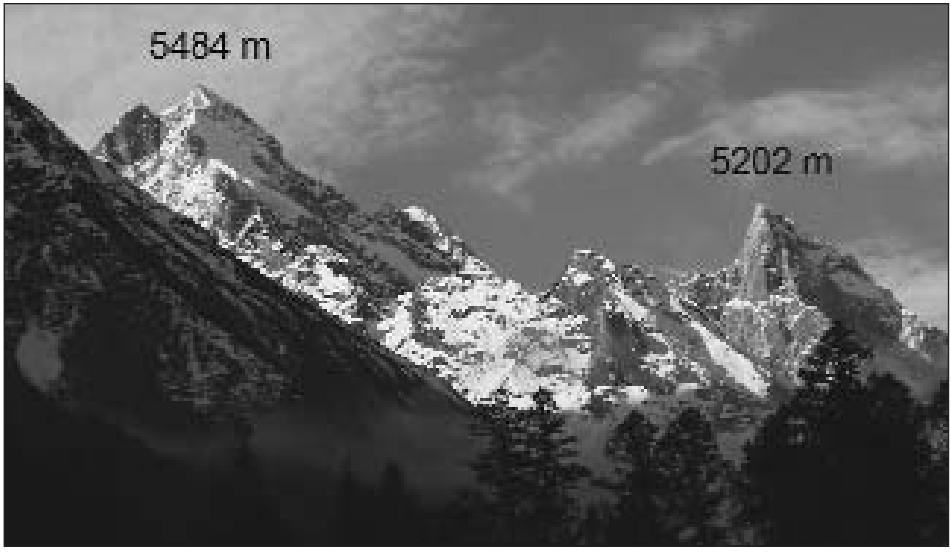


Photo taken from the ShangHaiZi parking lot in the Bipeng Valley; this is the prominent peak on the southeast side of the valley. Unclimbed. *Jon Otto*

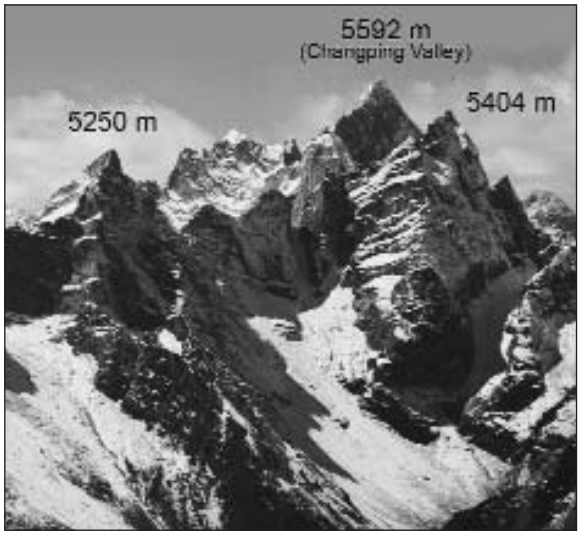
Bipeng Valley Nature Preserve, background information. Bipeng Valley has at least 40 (maybe over 60) unclimbed 5,000+ meter peaks. In 2003 a paved access road was completed into the valley. This makes accessing this cluster of mountains easy and fast. The road ends in the heart of the valley at the ShangHaiZi parking lot (3,560m). There are two buildings, one a welcome center and restaurant, the other



View of south-side peaks in the Bipeng Valley from near the parking lot. Unclimbed. *Jon Otto*

a guesthouse (at present you must pitch your tent on the guesthouse floor). The mountains range in difficulty from walk-ups to glacier climbs to world class vertical walls of rock and ice. The rock is good quality granite or a hard conglomorate.

Bipeng Valley is a Nature Preserve and you must buy an entrance ticket. Climbing is allowed and supported by the Valley's management company, although there are some bureaucratic details. There are certain regulations for climbing in China. My company AAIC works together with the Bipeng Valley's management and the Sichuan Mountaineering Association to encourage favorable policies and trouble-free access into these mountains. AAIC offers information to climbers, guided ascents to the mountains of Sichuan, and can assist with organizing any aspect of your climb into these mountains.



Unclimbed peaks at the head of the Bipeng Valley on the south side. Photo taken from summit camp (5,026m) on Half Ridge Peak. *Jon Otto*

Access: The drive from Chengdu to Bipeng Valley is normally 6-7 hours. A highway will be completed in 2006 that will shorten the driving time by 1-2 hours. The route from Chengdu goes past Dujiangyan, Wenchuan, and Lixian County. If taking the public bus, buy a ticket to Lixian. From Lixian hire a mini-van to drive you up the valley, which takes just over an hour.

Rental vehicles in Chengdu are also convenient and reasonably priced.

Seasonal climbing conditions: It is difficult to say what is the best time to climb in Bipeng Valley. Sichuan is semi-tropical and the weather changes rapidly. During the summer months you get longer stretches of alternating good and bad weather. There is little snow and the glacier is mostly ice. April is general nice but the heavy spring snows do not melt off until June, so snowshoes are recommended. Autumn is generally clear weather, but colder, and there is normally only moderate snow accumulation at the higher elevations.

At the higher elevations snow starts to accumulate in November and by the end of February there can be permanent snow at an elevation of 3,000m. There is a higher risk from avalanches during this period and potentially through May. By the end of winter there is a thick, heavy snowpack. By May the temperatures start to warm rapidly causing the snow to become thick and wet. During this time the snow line varies greatly depending on aspect. On north-facing slopes deep snow can start at 4,000m, while on south facing slopes it may not start until 4,600m.

Thus, there is snow at camp 1 (4,454m) on Half Ridge Peak into May, and the walk to camp 2 (summit camp) requires a lot of postholing. Over the next month or so most of this snow melts and in August this section of the climb is mostly dirt and rock, making the walk to camp 2 much easier and more straightforward. In October, camp 2, again, starts to get a permanent blanket of snow.

JON OTTO, *AAC*

Mt. Siguniang (6,249m), southeast ridge, second ascent. Mt. Siguniang was first summited in August 1981 by a Japanese team via the southeast ridge (*AAJ* 1982). We made the second successful ascent of this route, with six members summiting on November 17 and 18. The approach to this route is via Changping Valley from Rilong town, then up a side valley named GanHaizi to basecamp. The route follows the glacier to a 600m long (450m altitude gain) couloir up the west face of the southeast ridge. The route then continues along the southeast ridge to the summit.

We had attempted this same route in August of 2003. At that time, there was constant rockfall from all sides of the mountain, raining down pillow-size chunks of rock from several hundred meters above. The mountain has two obvious rock strata. The lower layer seems to be granite or a hard conglomerate of excellent quality, while the upper layer is a brownish, fragmenting, at places almost shale-like rock of poor quality. The dividing line between these two rock types is around 5,200m.

After almost being killed by this rockfall below the couloir, we went around the backside to the glacier between Siguniang's main peak and 3rd peak, climbing up 14 pitches on the southeast side of the southeast ridge to an altitude of 5,600m.

The "Pearl Necklace" stretch of Siguniang's southeast ridge, with high camp visible below. *Jon Otto*

It is clear that the mountain conditions have changed since the 1980s. Rockfall during the summer months make the mountain too dangerous. Whether subsequent summers will see as much rockfall as in summer 2003 is hard to say. Judging by that year's quantity of falling rock and reports from previous years, it is safe to say that summers will be unpredictable.

In 2004 we chose to climb the mountain in November, when the route is frozen, there tend to be more days of clear weather, and it is not too cold (though it was pretty cold). The first 15 vertical meters at the bottom of the couloir was good ice. The couloir was mostly snow and ice climbing. We secured the fixed line with pitons on the lower half of the couloir and with ice screws on the remainder of the route. There are no flat spots to put a tent on the entire route. For our high camp we had to shovel the loose snow off a section of the ridge at 5,834m to create a small platform. This platform was no more than five feet wide, just wide enough for a small tent.

Seasonal climbing conditions: I made my first visit to Mt. Siguniang's glacier in late April 1996. At that time there was a heavy, wet snow pack starting around 4,600m. Although April can be nice, the heavy spring snows do not melt off until May or June. During the summer months you get longer stretches of alternating good and bad weather, but due to potential rockfall, I do not suggest attempting Siguniang July through September. Autumn months are good because the weather tends to be clearer and there is only moderate snow accumulation, but there can be heavy winds and it is quite cold. Winter ascents are possible (very, very cold), and from December through spring be especially aware of avalanche danger.

Team members: Cao Jun, China (Leader); Jia Guiting, China. Summiters on November 17: Jon Otto, USA; Ma Yihua, China; Tim Boelter, USA (film maker). Summiters on November 18, all from China: Chen Junchi, Kang Hua, Chen Zigang.

Jon Otto, *AAC*

Siguniang, north face attempt; Siguniang North, attempt; Camel Peaks. The Siguniang Group was visited in May by UK alpinists, Tom Chamberlain, Dave Evans, Dave Hollinger, and Andy Sharpe. This team, which set up Base Camp in the Chang Ping, had as its aims the lengthy unclimbed southwest ridge of Siguniang and the uncompleted line on the north face attempted in 1981 by Jack Tackle and party. However, from the outset the mountains had a largely snowy appearance and the weather allowed no real improvement, being very unsettled throughout their stay.

In order to acclimatize the team turned to the humped Camel Peaks to the north. These are the two peaks on the northern rim of the valley, occupied by Pts 5,202m and 5,484m. They were both climbed from the col between the two summits by Charlie Fowler in 1994. First Chamberlain and Evans climbed Camel West from the gap and subsequently Hollinger and Sharpe climbed West and East peaks from the gap. Both peaks gave straightforward snowy climbing and were thought to be of equal height—around 5,510m. Chamberlain and Evans then attempted Pt 5,672m (dubbed Snow Goose), the next peak north of Signuniang North (5,700m: a subsidiary summit at the base of the north ridge of Siguniang) but retreated in heavy snowfall. They then set out for a fine rock tower on the west side of the valley dubbed Paine Peak, probably corresponding to Pt 5,422m on the map, but were again thwarted by the weather. A final attempt on Snow Goose reached the 5,200m col below the south ridge, then continued up snow on this ridge until a point estimated to be only 150m from this virgin summit. Here,

the slope was so dangerously avalanche prone that the pair had no option but to retreat.

Meanwhile, Hollinger and Sharpe had attempted the north face of Siguniang. They swam up steep unconsolidated snow over granite to reach the crest of the spur tried by the Americans in 1981, then climbed several pitches of Scottish 3-4 mixed before realizing the route was totally out of condition and would prove far too time consuming for the very limited breaks in the weather. A few days later they went around to the col below Snow Goose and attempted the northeast ridge of unclimbed Siguniang North, carrying enough food so that if a fine spell materialized they could continue up the north ridge of Siguniang itself (descended by Fowler and Ramsden in 2002). They took to the right flank of the ridge and climbed about 200m of this 500m line, negotiating wet snow over very shattered rock, before deciding to bail in heavy spindrift. As if on cue a sustained blizzard moved in and accompanied them all the way back to Base. For the more ice/mixed climbing that the area offers, the team feel a return visit earlier in the year, perhaps from January to March when the weather is rumored to be more settled, would prove fruitful.

LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *Mountain INFO Editor, CLIMB magazine*

Siguniang National Park, Suang Qiao Gou Valley: Mi Mi Shan (5,018m), first ascent; Heart of Cow (Niuxim Shan) (4,942m), north face, first ascent. Giant pandas and Chinese acrobats swung the balance. After being inspired by Tomatsu Nakamura's splendid photographs of blank-looking granite and unclimbed walls featured in the Japanese Alpine News, we were inspired to find out more about this magical-looking area. No mega objectives presented themselves, but nevertheless we headed off in search of an Oriental adventure in the Suang Qiao Gou Valley, close to Mt. Siguniang.

Mick Fowler helped out by providing more useful information, as did Tanja and Andrej Grmovsek from Slovenia. With only three weeks to climb, arriving in Chengdu in July was a gamble due to forecasts for heavy rainfall. Our Chinese helper and cook extraordinaire Lenny was enthusiastic as we shopped for provisions playing the pass-the-parcel, guess-what's-in-the-packet game. The bus to Rilong called, and we set off on the six- to seven-hour journey through wooded panda-infested valleys. After visiting the curiously named "Tourist Service Centre" for our permissions and paying an environmental protection fee and park entrance, we set off on the tourist bus up the valley.

On this expedition we climbed two new peaks, one a subsidiary and one a main peak in the Suang Qiao Gou Valley. Setting up base camp at 4,100m, we took equipment to the base of the route near a stunning aquamarine lake and some fine three-pitch E6 climbing leading to the shoulder of Putala Shan. On the walls of a long rock ridge opposite Putala Shan we ascended right of a spur for 9 pitches, 350m at E3/E4 5c, to reach a sub peak we called Mi Mi Shan (5,018m). Should you be feeling particularly brave it may be possible to descend into a notch and then ascend a tricky loose and extremely narrow ridge from here to reach the main summit of 5,400m. We were in no fit condition for that. The granite intermittently formed rubble strewn ledges as we weaved our way up. Behind, the pointy snow-flushed cirque beckoned for another day. Many big walls and spires rise up and extend into the distance, as well as a feast of unclimbed peaks in the 5,200m-5,900m range.

The second objective we went for was "Heart of Cow" (Niuxim Shan), named by the Chinese. According to Lenny a Japanese team had attempted it the year before and reached

Anne Arran enjoying the view of unclimbed walls from the summit of Heart of Cow. *John Arran*

The route of the first ascent of Mi Mi Shan. *John Arran*

approximately half way. Rhododendrons repelled us from attempting the longest face, as swimming and wriggling proved unbearable without a machete. We set up the ABC bivi cave at 4,400m and spent a day hanging out, huddled, freezing, and surrounded by low-lying mist. During the night we recycled our last tea bag three times, unable to sleep without sleeping bags.

A sporting damp British 6a traverse led to a section of beautiful rock. The unclimbed Mt. Hunter and its rotten dark rock lay behind, still shrouded with stubborn cloud, and other unclimbed peaks behind winked at us in view. Just another couple of pitches and we emerged at 6 p.m. on the easy but occasionally narrow summit ridge. We climbed the north face and

ridge to reach the summit. Heart of Cow (4,942m) became for a moment "our" peak and we realised looking at the descent why it had not been climbed before.

Many thanks to the Mount Everest Foundation, BMC and UK Sport for providing some expedition funding.

ANNE ARRAN, *United Kingdom*

Qonglai Shan, Nuixim Shan, northwest side, attempt. Shaluli Shan, Jarjinjabo Massif: Spank Peak (ca 17,500'), south face, attempt; Jarjinjabo, south ridge. Andy Bourne, Misty Tyler, Anitra Accetturo, and I traveled to western Sichuan Province, China on September 20. Our goal was to explore and attempt as many objectives as possible in the Qionglai Range, and later in the Jarjinjabo Massif.

We first went to the town of Rilong, in the Qionglai Range. We attempted to hike up into the Changping Gou to check out options there, but were disenchanted with the approach and our time constraints, not to mention we did not even get a chance to see the peaks through the clouds and rain. Next we drove into the Shuanqiao Gou, which is the next valley to the west of the Changping, to scope options, and faced with a decision on which valley to basecamp in, we decided to stay in the Shuanqiao. Camping next to the locals' roadside food and wares stands, we were treated very cordially, and were able to "eat out" for meals the days we spent in camp. The weather here at this time of year was abysmal. Rain and/or snow every night but one, yet clearing partially every afternoon. This weather pattern resulted in lots of acclimatization hikes and photographing peaks. One attempt was made on the northwest side of Nuixim Shan by Andy, Misty, and Anitra; it ended about 300 feet shy of the summit due to fresh snow and cold temperatures. The monsoon did not seem to end this year, but supposedly this is the time to come.

After returning to Chengdu and regrouping, we went to the Jarjinjabo Massif on the western edge of Sichuan Province. On October 16 we hired a jeep driver in Litang to take us to Zhopu Gompa, on the northern shore of Zhopu Lake. We basecamped upvalley from the gompa and made an attempt on Spank Peak (ca 17,500'). Spank Peak is located on the north side of the Jarjinjabo Massif about two miles up the drainage to the east of the Massif. Andy and I climbed four pitches up the south face, but were turned back as the dihedral pinched out to a bottoming seam. Still, climbing beautiful new ground up to about 5.10b was exhilarating. On October 26 Misty and I as one team and Andy and Anitra as another did two climbs up the east aspect of Jarjinjabo south ridge directly above the Gompa. Our climb topped out on the ridge after about 1,200' of climbing in a beautiful dihedral up to about 5.8. After 800' or so, Andy and Anitra's climb ended in bushwacking and lichened slabs to just below the peak we dubbed "The Asterisk" (a sub peak of Jarjinjabo).

The cold, short days during the month of November kept us from attempting anything higher than 17,000ft. in the Jarjinjabo Massif. Earlier is better. We then parted ways and went to Thailand to sport climb and Yunnan Province to sightsee. A bit of vacation is needed after seven weeks in China.

ERIK JOHNSON, *AAC*

Daxuetang-feng (5,364m), second ascent, new route. Daxuetang-feng is a well-known mountain visible from the road from Chengdu to Balang Pass (south of Rilong and the Siguiniang mas-

Spank Peak, scene of the spanking. *Erik Johnson*

sif). More than 10 Chinese teams have tried to climb this peak. On the 8th of October, five Japanese and one Chinese members of our joint party summited Daxuetang-feng. However, a pennant on the summit established that a Beijing mountaineering team had already reached it. Much to our disappointment, this proved that we were the second party to reach it. However, our route ascended the center of a glacier at a slope of more than 70°, and it will possibly become the standard route for this mountain. Therefore, we consider our climb very meaningful.

The team members of the China-Japan Joint Party: Japanese members from the Hakusan (Matto) Fuuro Mountaineering Club: joint team leader Rentaro Nishijima, assistant team leader Akira Hoshiba, climbing chief Masanori Kawamura, and members Yasunori Tanaka, Toshiaki Tamai, Sachiyo Manizaki, Shigeru Yasuda, and Takashi Suzuki. Chinese members: team leader Li Qing, members He Qin and Feng Yilong, and support staff Gao Yi, Qin Znenglin, and Tang Ping.

Ascent of Daxuetang-feng (October 1-11): We hire 35 porters for a total of 49 members, including 8 Japanese and 6 Chinese. Leaving Dengsheng in fog, we make our way to Yeniugou, a valley beneath Dengshen, cross a bridge and go along the left bank of a river flowing from Daxuetang-feng. A mossy path continues through a forest of conifers, rhododendrons, and bamboo where pandas likely live. After walking more than six hours, we reach Baishuitaizi Plateau (3,600m). The steepness of the place does not justify its designation as a "Plateau." Further up, we see that the north face of Daxuetang-feng is unclimbable due to loose rocks. We then climb along a valley from Ganhaizi, go around to the right where the east face of Daxuetang-feng becomes visible, and establish Base Camp at Heihaizi (4,700m).

The team decides on the ice wall route right in front of BC. The lower part of the ice wall is shaped like the bottom of a funnel. Two pitches are fixed, but snow begins to fall heavily in the afternoon, so we decide to cancel tomorrow's route operation. It snows all the next day. Route operation resumes on October 6 despite new snow accumulation of about 30cm. The fresh snow appears to be holding down falling rocks. Four members extend the route another two pitches from the previous spot. The porters who carried up the last of our loads shout with

joy to see the top member of the operation team appearing from behind a rock after passing a difficult crux. The members return 200m short of the top.

October 7: Through binoculars, Suzuki can be seen standing only with the toe points of his crampons stuck into the ice wall, with almost the entire soles of his boots visible to us at BC. We see him inserting ice screws with one hand. This is quite a risky climb at high altitude and lack of oxygen. We hold our collective breaths as we fear he may not withstand the fatigue in his calves, or the toe points may not hold. We feel a sense of relief as his wheezing voice reaches BC by radio: "Belay removed. Climb on." At about 13:00, the three members of the operation team can be seen from BC standing on the plateau after climbing the 400m ice wall with a slope of 70°. They report by radio: "There are two peaks. We can't tell which is higher. We have time, so we'll climb the right peak today, and climb the left one tomorrow. The left one may need a lot of rope fixing."

The right peak is probably the pyramid-shaped peak seen from Balang Pass, and the left peak is the trapezoid-shaped, snow-capped one peeking on its left. In appearance and on the map, both peaks seem to be 5,364m. The team names the right peak Peak I, the left Peak II, and another peak, which is described as 5,354m on the map (hidden by Peak II) is called Peak III. Peak III is presumed to be the glaciated peak on the right side of Peak I, as seen from Balang Pass.

October 8: The advance team aims for Peak I and proceeds beside the walls of the crevasses and glacier. As the ground is relatively flat, no fixed rope is used. At the head of the glacier a gully 20m long, 1.5m wide, and 70° leads to a col. From there, a narrow 60° ridge of loose rocks crumbles easily with each step, making it impossible to hammer pitons to fix ropes. The Chinese member, He Qin, retires, saying, "It's crazy." At 09:36, Tanaka and Kawamura reach the summit, followed by Suzuki and the Chinese team leader, Li. The summit is only one square meter in size, so all of them cannot stand together. However, it commands a spectacular 360° view. Siguniang-shan and the Ganzi mountains can be seen. They find a relatively new pennant of a Chinese team with "Beijing" printed on it. Nishijima and Hoshiba come up after a while.

As I take in the scene while descending to the col from the summit, I have mixed emotions as the joint team leader. Looking up, I can see the massif snow-capped, trapezoidal Peak II on the left. It may be unclimbed, but there is no time for us to reach it. Satisfied with the second ascent of Peak I by a new route, we descend.

The team left behind a fixed rope in the gully after cutting close to 15m to be used for descent. Also left behind were two pitons on top of the ice wall. By using the 100m rope on those pitons, all the other pitons and ropes were recovered. Although not perfect, the team endeavored to leave the mountain as clean as possible.

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