

China

XINJIANG

Kara Tagh, Shipton's Arch. From July 5 to August 15, on the first of my two Year of the Ox expeditions, I visited Xinjiang. Again I embarked on the ultimate challenges of a solo expedition, to get back to a relationship with myself that I can only find while going alone into the wilderness in search of world-class first ascents and moments of *now*. This was my fifth time in the area, and memories told me what to expect in the huge city of Urumqi, filled with Muslim Uygur and Chinese. Xinjiang Province has an entwined collection of signs written in both Arabic and Chinese characters: Chinese and Muslims coexisting.

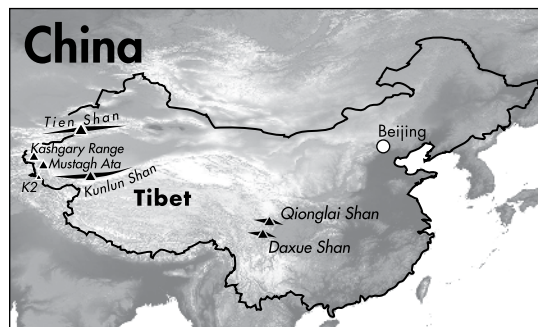
But when I arrived, it was quite different from my previous trips. The streets were not packed with people. Markets of fresh vegetables, kebabs, and fried goodies, which once ruled alleyways, were nonexistent. Instead, Chinese military crowded every corner and street. Camouflaged trucks, several tanks, and even two bi-propeller helicopters were prominent on my way to the hotel. Young soldiers, emanating strict discipline, stood in battle-ready formation, all with machine guns, some with bazookas, and some with hand-combat weapons and large shields.

I had arrived on July 7, the day after a major terror and political battle between the local Uygur and Chinese, when over 600 people were brutally killed in the streets. The Chinese were embarrassed about their lack of control and shut down all communications. The situation changed my plans and military permits, and I canceled my initial goal to climb in an area of grand walls in the western Kokshaal-too, on the Kyrgyzstan border.

My liaison officer, who has helped me plan several expeditions in China, was concerned about my safety. He told me the previous day's terror now ruled the psyche and energy of every person in Urumqi, and likely all of Xinjiang. While in Urumqi, I left my hotel in hopes of finding food in the markets but ended up detained in a military jail and questioned for a day; they thought I was a reporter from *The New York Times*. A couple of days later I left with my Chinese friends for the 1,500km drive to the Kyrgyzstan border.

We passed through 14 military checkpoints; at three where I was questioned, it was not a polite situation. After several days we arrived at the roadhead, a spot I had visited before and just 20km from my potential base camp near dry glaciers. Then, at the last moment the military denied me permission. Devastation. The entire trip that had fueled my psyche for one of the most challenging solo adventures of my life, one for which I had worked for the past year to get the correct permits and paid more money than I will mention, was simply gone. When I politely tried to negotiate, the military officer got pissed off and took my papers. They told me there were terrorists hiding in the mountains, and I had to leave. My liaison officer drove me 1,500km back to Urumqi.

I'm addicted to optimism, so I had to devise a plan B. I knew of a mountain range that is home to Shipton's Arch. I took a 24-hour train from Urumqi to Kashgar, hired locals



to drive me to the mountains, and proceeded to explore. There were steep, big walls up to 900m, made of mud and river stones. In the end I climbed three routes on Shipton's Arch and connecting formations. I repeated, rope solo, the west face of the Arch (5.10, 240m). There were in-situ anchors showing that it had previously been climbed. [The west arm of the Arch was climbed by Americans in 2000. They placed bolt anchors and climbed 180 vertical meters of generally loose conglomerate at 5.6 to reach the summit, for the first known ascent. *AJ 2001*.] I then climbed the northeast face of a connecting summit, most likely a first ascent (5.10 A2, 270m). There were some strange rope-solo shenanigans with a cool chimney/tube. Finally, I climbed the north face of another connecting summit, which proved scary 5.10 A2 (270m) due to the need to overcome mud climbing on my own. These routes, on different walls, led to different summits. But the formations are connected at the base, and I refer to them all as part of Shipton's Arch.

It was a wonderful solo expedition. I plan to go back to the Chinese western Kokshaal-too as soon as permits become available. My chosen area has some of the most amazing untouched granite walls left on the planet, and I know of three formations that have faces at least 1,500m high, all waiting for a first attempt.

MIKE LIBECKI, AAC

TIEN SHAN

Xuelian massif, various ascents. Following exploration of the north side of the Xuelian massif in 2008 (*AJ 2009*), Bruce Normand (Scotland) returned in August 2009 with Americans Jed Brown, Kyle Dempster, and Jared Vilhauer. Goals were the major satellite peaks of Xuelian Main (Xuelian Feng, 6,627m), all of which remained unclimbed. On August 3 Brown and Normand established an advanced base on the side glacier that runs below the northwest face of the Xuelian's west satellite (6,422m). On the 6th they made an acclimatization climb of a 4,000m summit directly north of the west satellite and the following day climbed the west ridge of Xuelian's north satellite (6,472m). A 600m snow couloir (50°) led to the crest, where the team pitched a tent at 5,300m. On the 8th they continued up largely rotten snow and then over the 6,150m fore-peak to reach the summit. They noted that the continuation ridge to Xuelian Main would offer 300m of technical rock climbing, and sported considerable cornice formations.



Seen from north, Shipton's Arch in Kara Tagh, ca 40km northwest of Kashgar. Mike Libecky



6,150m forepeak below 6,472m north satellite of Xuelian. Brown-Normand route follows obvious large snow couloir to reach broader snow slopes of west ridge above narrower section. It then continues up these, along skyline ridge, and over forepeak to (hidden) north satellite. Visible top right is north ridge of Xuelian Feng. *Bruce Normand*



Looking west from Yanamax (6,332m) to main summits of Xuelian Massif. (A) east sub-summit (ca 6,400m). (B) main summit (6,627m). (C) north satellite (6,472m). (D) northeast sub-summit (6,231m). Approximately marked are lines followed by Brown and Normand on east ridge (1) and Dempster and Vilhauer on north face to east ridge (2). Distant peak at far left is Muzart (6,571m). *Bruce Normand*

Muzart Glacier for a further week, climbing a 1,600m ice route up the impressive northwest buttress of Yanamax, stopping on its 6,180m sub-peak (virtually a separate summit), which they named Yanamax II. The route, which took three days and had difficulties up to M4, they named Yanamaniacs.

In the meantime, on the 21st and 22nd, Brown and Normand tackled the west ridge of Xuelian's northeast sub-summit (6,231m). Bad snow conditions, together with knife-edge and rocky sections, made this particularly time-consuming, and that night they pitched camp below a hard rock section at 5,000m. Next day Brown led five tenuous snow-covered slab pitches, and by the time the pair reached 5,400m, it was obvious that the route would require

On the 12th the pair reached the foot of a snow ramp leading to the crest of the east ridge of Xuelian's ca 6,400m east sub-summit. Next day they made a 1,700m push to the top, first climbing the ramp via a very thin ice pitch and a long section of unprotectable snow-covered rock to the crest and then strenuous wading through deep, rotten snow. Once on the ridge they were surprised to meet Dempster and Vilhauer, who had climbed a harder line up the north flank, involving much steep ice and difficult snow-covered rock in the last 500m. The pairs operated largely independently throughout the trip, but on this occasion they all combined forces for the last 800m.

Brown and Normand had planned a one-day round trip, but when the four were hit by bad weather during the descent, they crammed into a small bivouac tent brought by Dempster and Vilhauer. The storm produced the worst weather of the trip, and the tent saved the climbers from possible frostnip. The four climbers descended the Brown-Normand line on the 14th. The American-Scottish pair returned to base camp next day, but Dempster and Vilhauer remained on the upper



(A) Yanamax II (6,180m) and (B) northeast sub-summit of Xuelian (6,231m), seen from west-southwest. Marked are approximate lines of (1) Yanamaniacs and (2) west ridge attempt. *Bruce Normand*



Yanamax II (6,180m, left) and rounded summit of Yanamax (6,332m) from west-northwest. Marked is Yanamaniacs. *Bruce Normand*

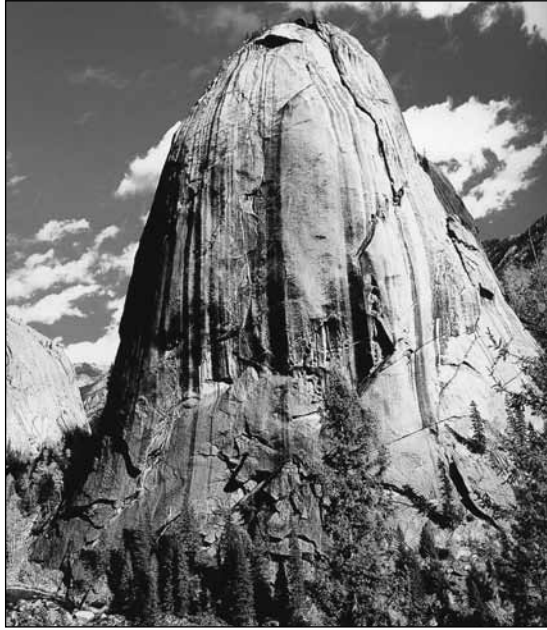
considerably more time than was available. They retreated.

On the 24th Brown, Dempster, and Normand returned to the previously established advanced base below Xuelian's west satellite (6,422m), Vilhauer prudently opting out of further climbing after frostnipping a toe during the Yanamax II ascent. Over the next four-and-a-half days they climbed the fine 2,650m marble prow that separates the north-northwest and north-northeast faces. They descended the west ridge, then the southwest ridge, and finally rappelled onto the southwest face, regaining the west ridge at 5,200m, below its steepest section. Downclimbing the northern flank they reached advanced base that night. Kyle Dempster's account of this route, named *Great White Jade Heist* (5.7 WI5 M6 R), appears earlier in the *Journal*. The three climbers were recipients of one of the 2010 Piolets d'Or.

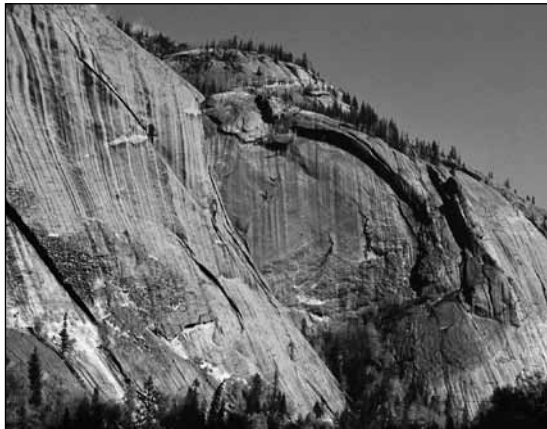
LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *Mountain INFO*

ALTAI

Keketuohai reconnaissance. Keketuohai or Koktokay lies in the southern Altai Range of China's Xinjiang Province, close to the border with Mongolia and 600km north-northeast of Urumqi. For three years I have attempted to travel to the area on the recommendation of non-climbing friends in China. In autumn I was finally successful and discovered a wealth of granite towers and walls that have yet to be visited by rockclimbers. I was told that there are 108 granite peaks here, and I estimate rock faces to reach a height of ca 300m, though I only saw part of the area. These walls are situated along the gorge of the Iyrtish River, and some reach the valley floor. Of all the valleys I have seen during world travels, Keketuohai compares closest to Yosemite, and locals assured me that no one has ever climbed there. Spring and autumn would be the best seasons: summer is just too hot, and in winter the temperatures regularly fall to -40°C and lower; it is one of the coldest places in China. While there is certainly no El Cap or Half Dome, the volume of rock is possibly greater than Yosemite, and there are also many good boulders in the valley bottom.



Divine Bell in Keketuohai National Geological Park. *Dennis Gray*



Granite scenery in Keketuohai. *Dennis Gray*

There are daily flights from Beijing to Urumqi and two scheduled flights a week from Moscow. From Urumqi an express bus, going toward Altai, will drop you off at Fuyun, where it is possible to catch a mini-bus from the Tourist Hotel for the remaining 70km to Keketuohai. Foreigners cannot hire vehicles in Xinjiang.

So why has no one climbed there? Keketuohai is a National Geological Site; visitors are taken part way into the valley on a battery-driven “golf buggy” along a newly constructed road.

The area is populated by Kazakhs, who are building the park infrastructure and visitor access. They are unlikely to allow rock climbing, unless sanctioned by higher authority in Beijing or Urumqi. This may be possible, as Chinese authorities are always interested in creating opportunities that will provide jobs and foreign currency. The Chinese Mountaineering Association is probably not aware of Keketuohai’s climbing potential.

Currently, the situation in Xinjiang is fraught: no internet access and not possible to phone from abroad. Traveling is dangerous, due to ethnic tension between the Uighers and Han Chinese. There were large riots in July and many subsequent ethnic incidents. Al Qaeda has now declared a jihad on the Han Chinese. However,

the local population, Kazakhs, have so far not involved themselves with this problem. Visiting Keketuohai would certainly necessitate one of the party having a basic grasp of Mandarin.

It may be that UIAA representatives could talk with CMA delegates about the possibilities of allowing rock climbing, or it might be that a group of climbers could arrive on spec, make friends with the Kazakhs, and hope that permission to climb was granted. But it’s a long way to travel if the answer is no.

DENNIS GRAY, *Alpine Club*

KUN LUN

Qong Muztagh East (ca 6,976m). In September and October, Diana Borisova, Pavel Demeshchik, Vasiliy Ivanov, Ivan Muzyhnek, Anna Pereverzeva, Sergey Zayko, and I visited the Western Kun Lun, near the northern border of Tibet. It was my fourth expedition to this remote region. The 2003 and 2005 expeditions (*AAJ 2006*) explored the western borders. The 2006 expedition focused on a detailed reconnaissance of the Ustjuntagh Range, which includes Qong Muztagh (*AAJ 2007*). During the 2006 expedition we found another peak with a height comparable to double-summitted Qong Muztagh (6,962m). In 2000 the western summit of Qong Muztagh (6,937m SRTM) was climbed by Japanese (*AAJ 2001*). The eastern or main summit (6,962m) is still unclimbed.

Qong Muztagh lies a little east of the main range, which turns south at Peak 6,817m (SRTM). As a result, Qong Muztagh East, a separate mountain from Qong Muztagh and 700m south of Peak 6,817m, cannot be seen from the north. During our crossing of the Tibetan Plateau southeast of the range in 2006, the summits were hidden, and we failed to see this peak. SRTM data suggests that it is at least 6,946m. Since the difference between this and the heights of the two Qong Muztagh summits is slight, and in view of measurement error, the question as to which of the peaks is highest remained open. Possibly, the highest peak of the region was hidden from sight. This riddle was the focus of our expedition.

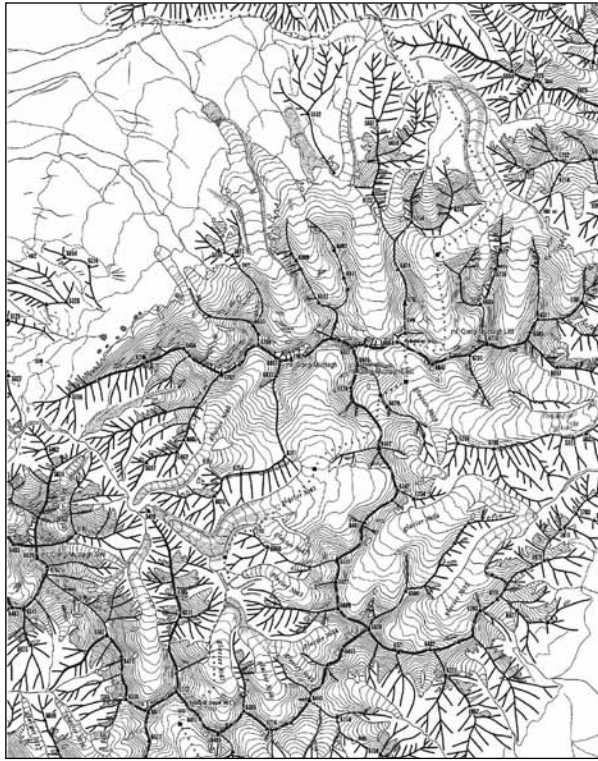
We wanted to go in 2007, but access to the region was restricted because of the massive rescue of a Russian rafting expedition. In 2008 the Beijing Olympics meant that Russian citizens encountered great difficulties getting Chinese visas. In 2009 there were riots in Xinjiang, and the atmosphere was tense when we arrived in Urumqi on September 12. However, we were able



View north-northeast from Pass of Chinese Friends. (A) Qong Muztagh (6,962m). (B) Peak 6,817m. (C) Qong Muztagh East, with route of ascent up southeast ridge. (D) Peak 6,878m. *Otto Chkhetiani*



Looking west from summit of Qong Muztagh East. (A) Peak 6,820m. (B) West top of Qong Muztagh (6,927m). (C) Qong Muztagh (6,962m). (D) Peak 6,670m. *Otto Chkhetiani*



Qong Muztagh and surrounding peaks, prepared in 2010 by Vadim Liapin. Part of Russian traverse, with campsites marked.

to drive across the Taklamakan Desert to Niya (Minfeng), and set off from there in two jeeps.

In 2006 we found that approaches to Qong Muztagh East from the north ran into deep, impassable canyons. The mountain can only be accessed from Tibet or through a ca 6,500m pass in the main range. It seemed that the simplest route of ascent would be either the southwest or southeast ridge.

We followed a mountain road that we discovered in 2006, via Yupal (4,632m) and over the Atyshdavan Pass (5,073m) to the Shor Koul Plain, spectacular but an extremely rough journey. Apparently used primarily by geologists and gold diggers, it follows an old trail from Tibet to Taklamakan oases. Roborovsky, Bogdanovich, and Deasy took this trail in 1890 and '98.

After scouting two valleys of the main range, we realized we'd have to cross the range much farther west than expected. To acclimatize we made a circular trek over six high passes between the Aksou, Koutaz-Dzhilga, and Keriya rivers, the highest pass being at 5,995m. We returned to the site of Baba Khatoun (4,784m) in the upper Keriya valley on September 24.

Our guess proved correct. Going west of Peak 6,150m (map height; 6,283m SRTM), we crossed the Nevidimka (Invisible) Pass, which we measured by GPS as 6,178m, and on the 29th, after traversing 20km-long ice fields, arrived at a barren, gently-sloping Tibetan plain southeast of the range. Next, we crossed the Pass of Chinese Friends (Kitayskikh Drouzey, 6,327m) and descended north to a region unapproachable from the north. From the pass we enjoyed an impressive view of Qong Muztagh and Qong Muztagh East, from which flowed a large crevassed glacier filling the valley. To the right stood Peak 6,878m, another high summit invisible from the north. It dominates the entire range on the Tibetan side and can be seen in a photo published in *AAJ 2007*, where it was incorrectly identified as Peak 6,470m. We dropped to moraines at 5,500m and then headed generally northeast toward our goal.

After passing through an icefall at 5,820m, we continued navigating numerous crevasses, leaving behind the spectacular and steep Peak 6,820m, which towers more than 1,000m above the glacier. At 6,000m we put on our lightweight, homemade snowshoes. Crossing a watershed ridge, we returned to Tibet and, below Qong Muztagh East, gained a 6,610m pass, where we

found hard ice and some rocks, which we used to secure our tents. On the next day, October 5, we waited out a strong wind.

The 6th was our big day. There was no wind and the sky was clear. Crossing a 25-30° ice slope, we climbed onto the southeast ridge at 6,776m. It varied from three to seven meters wide, 30° maximum, so we moved together. However, just before the summit the crest narrowed and became corniced to the north. We belayed, the entire team finally climbing a short 40° pitch to the top. GPS readings ranged from 6,960 to 6,982m (an average of 6,976m, N 35.648990°, E 82.337070°). A barometric altimeter showed an elevation of 7,005m. The panorama was magnificent. Ahead was the double-summited Qong Muztagh. It was difficult to say whether it was higher, so an ascent of that peak is required to answer this question.

Next day we continued northeast and crossed Podnebesnyi (Celestial) Pass (6,541m). Then, after a long descent in snowshoes and crampons through a crevassed glacier with icefalls, we reached grass on October 8. From here we walked long days across the Koumboyan and Khokhlyk passes and the eastern tributary of the Keriya, to the Shor Koul Plain. While waiting for vehicles, we scouted several valleys in the Russian Range to the north. We met our jeeps on the 17th, by the north shore of Lake Shor Koul (4,503m, N 36.140170°, E 82.693630°). This was the end of our expedition, which traveled over 500 km through the Kun Lun, and we were back in Moscow on the 20th.

Unfortunately, there was a misunderstanding with Chinese authorities, who suspected us of being involved in illegal exploration. In our absence they searched our belongings and confiscated nearly all our photos, cameras, maps, and other items. We were told they would be returned in a week, but five months later we have received nothing. The GPS data and photos in this report are from one Garmin Vista HCx and a micro SD card, which by chance were missed.

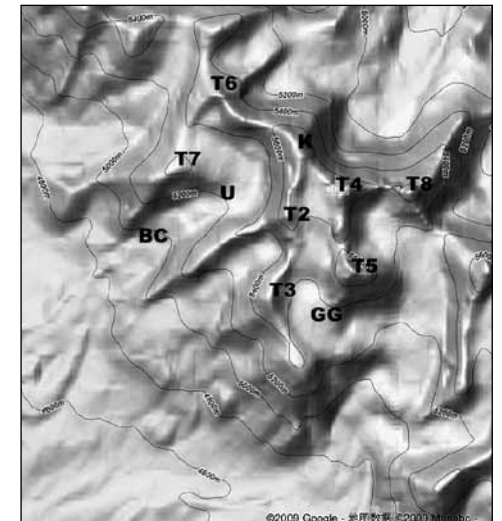
OTTO CHKHETIANI, *Russia*

QINGHAI

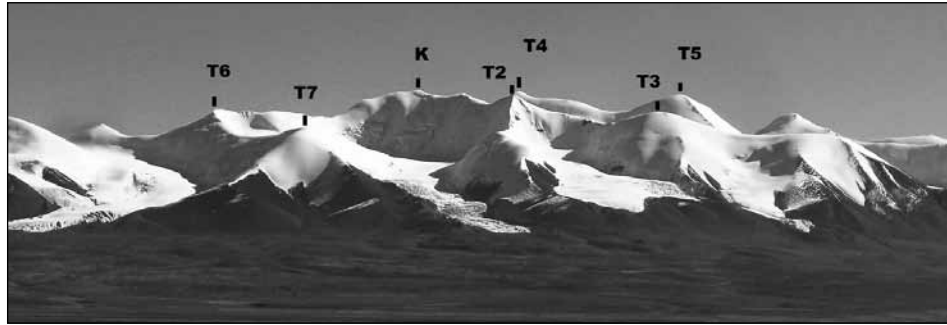
QILIAN MOUNTAINS

Kangze'gyai (ca 5,800m), west face. Kangze'gyai (a.k.a. Tuanjiefeng), the highest peak in the Qilian Mountains, is located in Tianjun County within the Haixi Autonomous Prefecture of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. From the town of Xining it took Li Yong, Yuan Wei, and I three days to reach base camp northeast of Hala Lake. We arrived on October 4. While Yuan remained to take care of camp, Li and I made the first ascent of Kangze'gyai's west face and south ridge in a three-day round trip.

We took neither tent nor fuel, carried only two sleeping bags, one liter of water,



The highest peaks of the Kangze'gyai Group. Hala Lake is just off the map to the left. (BC) 2009 Chinese base camp. (U) Unnamed glacier. (GG) Ganalou Glacier.



Looking northeast at the Kangze'gyai Group across the waters of Hala Lake. (K) is the highest summit Kangze'gyai (Tuanjiefeng): all others marked are unclimbed except T7. *Huang Zonghua*



Kangze'gyai (left) with line of new Chinese route up west face and south ridge. Biviouac sites marked. Summit right of exit onto south ridge is unclimbed (T2 on map). *Huang Zonghua*

clear with no snowfall, but the wind was still strong. At 2 p.m. we reached the summit, where we recorded a GPS height of 5,817m and coordinates N 38°30'22.68", E 97°43'01.98". We descended the unclimbed northwest ridge before cutting back south to the unnamed glacier, reaching base camp at 8 p.m. We named our route Darkness Wall (AI3+).

Kangze'gyai was first climbed in September 1958 by a large Chinese expedition, which approached from the southeast up the Ganalou Glacier. Leader Xu Jing and two others reached the summit on the 14th; Ten climbers followed on the 15th. In August 1999 a Sino-Japanese expedition repeated this route, believing it to be a first ascent. The 35-member expedition comprised seven Japanese and eight Chinese climbers, plus other camp personnel. The only other ascent in this compact range took place in 2008, when Chinese mountaineers Cao Yizhou, Lv Wei-bo, Pu Bai-lei and Zhen Han-bo ascended a peak above the north bank of the unnamed glacier west of Kangze'gyai.

HUANG ZONGHUA, *China*

and a little food. We reached the bottom of the west face on the 5th, a day of fine weather, having climbed an unnamed, crevassed, and seracked glacier. This took longer than expected due to deep snow. By evening, as we approached the bergschrund, the weather was deteriorating, and we dug a snow hole at 5,343m for the night.

Next day the weather was terrible, with strong winds and snow. However, we continued our ascent, climbing directly toward the south ridge. A little below the crest, at 5,756m, we dug a second snow hole. The 7th was relatively

SICHUAN PROVINCE

SHALULI SHAN

Yangmolong (6,066m), attempt. In 2007 Dick Isherwood, Peter Rowat, and I attempted Yangmolong (*AAJ 2008*). In September-October 2009 we returned with Derek Buckle to explore the northern approaches. We traveled up the Sanchu River valley and stayed at lower Sanglong Xi, before setting up base camp on the riverside east of Yangmolong, at an altitude of 4,000m. The local people identified the expedition as a suitable target for extortion, which became more serious following several thefts; binoculars, food, a stove, trekking poles, etc were stolen. The binoculars were eventually "ransomed." The police were summoned but tacitly admitted they were unlikely to obtain statements from the local community. For the duration of our time at base camp the support team slept virtually on top of remaining stores and was forced to hire "camp guards" from among the more law-abiding locals.

After several reconnaissance walks, we realized there was nothing for it but an arduous 1,000m ascent to an advanced base camp on glacial moraine below the east ridge of Yangmolong. A period of prolonged bad weather followed the establishment of this camp, during which we kicked our heels at base camp listening to rain hammering flysheets. When the weather finally cleared, we made several forays onto the flanks of the east ridge. However, we found no line that would offer a safe route to the crest. With time running out, Derek and I established a camp on a col at the head of the glacier cirque and prepared to tackle the shallow ridge and steep face above. However, more unstable weather rolled in, and after two days of abortive alpine starts we decamped to advanced base.

On the one remaining day available for climbing, Derek and I attempted the 5,700m satellite peak to the north, but the upper part of the route proved too difficult in the deteriorating weather. The team evacuated the valley amid more tension and unpleasantness from the locals, including theft of money from the bus driver at the roadhead.

Something had changed significantly in this valley. In 2007 it had been populated by friendly, helpful people, but in 2009 we encountered only a few whom we recognized from



Yangmolong (6,066m, left) and Makara (a.k.a. Central Peak, 6,033m) from the north. Highest point of Yangmolong is just above left arm of seracs/hanging glacier left of center. Dangchezhangla (5,830m) is off picture to right. *Dave Wynne-Jones*



Broad summit ridge of Yangmolong (6,066m) from northeast. Highest point is right of center. *Dave Wynne-Jones*

evidence in the valley, while in 2009 there was a significant presence. No one on the team has any inclination to return. We wish to acknowledge the support given by the Mount Everest Foundation.

DAVE WYNNE-JONES, *Alpine Club*

Yangmolong (6,066m), south face attempt; Dangchezhengla (5,830m), south glacier to southeast face to northeast ridge. Our original plan was to approach Yangmolong from Sanglongxi (pronounced *song-lung-see*, a.k.a. Sanchu) Valley and climb from the east. We arrived in the valley on October 17 and spent the night in the lower village, which has a population of ca 300. The following morning the village secretary took us to a community meeting. The result of our 30-minute “talks”: “You are not allowed to climb Yangmolong.” Our stand-in liaison officer, Chen Li, with Zhang Jian, had a private meeting with village officials, which proved even worse. We were told to leave the valley that day or the villagers could not guarantee our safety. Climbing the mountain brings about ominous events such as bad weather, sickness, and natural disasters. Reasoning with superstitions is impossible.



Summit area of Dangchezhengla. Northeast ridge forms right skyline. (1) Ascent route taken by American-Chinese team. (2) Descent route. Top of high camp tent in lower right. *Jon Otto*

the earlier visit. Perhaps the 2008 disturbances, which resulted in a police house being burned down in a neighboring valley, had some influence. However, there seemed to be only two observable material changes: the illegal logging of virgin forest, which started in 2007, had been shut down by the government, although a new road and electricity pylons had been built to the village as compensation. And during 2007 there had not been a single monk or nun in

We had two options. One was to delay our climb, return to Chengdu, and work through official channels to negotiate access to Sanglongxi Valley, the other was to approach the mountain from Zhongba Valley to the south. We knew the south face of Yangmolong might not offer a feasible line to the summit, but returning to Chengdu would have wasted a lot of money and resources. Approaching from the south seemed worth the risk.

On the 19th we established base camp at 4,700m in the Zhongba Valley, by the northern shores of Lake Yangmogen (pronounced *jong-more-gen*). Here people were friendly, and we were easily able to hire horses. The head lama of a monastery told us that many of the surrounding peaks were sacred, but that nobody felt they should be banned to climbers. After a reconnaissance Tim Boelter, Kang Hua, Lao Wang, Su Rongqin, Yao Zhen, and I set up advanced base at 5,065m on a moraine directly below the south face.

A 600-700m wall of rock, snow, and ice stood between us and the summit. A huge serac stretched across the entire face at mid-height, and the summit ridge had suspicious-looking cornices overhanging our route. On the morning of the 23rd, Tim, Kang Hua, Su Rongqin, and I started up the face. I tried not to notice that large parts had recently calved off and were lying in rubble at its base. I was in front, when a rock exploded 50m above. I quickly took cover but 20 minutes later saw a rock twice the size of a fist shoot down our route. The sun had hit the upper section of the south face, and the cliff 400m above us was coming apart. Disappointed, we descended, knowing that this route was unsafe.

Back on the glacier, we looked at another line, a thin couloir in the center of the face. Su Rongqin and I climbed the 45° cone flowing from the fissure, and I then led an almost vertical section of mixed rock and ice. This was followed by a long 30° snow couloir and a pitch of hollow WI3, running with water. It was getting late so we rappelled.

Next morning four of us jumared back up and continued climbing, but a chunk of ice hit Tim hard on the hand, and a few minutes later ice and rock flew past. The ice above was thin and melting fast. Further climbing was too risky. We retreated from 5,400m dejected, noticing that our first abandoned line was now a waterfall. We had done our best.

Next morning, the 25th, Tim, Su Rongqin, and I walked around to the central glacier leading to the col between Dangchezhengla and Makara (Yangmolong central peak, 6,033m).



Su Rongqin (left) and Jon Otto on summit of Dangchezhengla. Behind lie Makara and then Yangmolong. *Tim Boelter*



Tim Boelter on final section of Dangchezhengla northeast ridge. *Jon Otto*

It was full of crevasses, but they were obvious. We eventually reached a 100m wall of 70° ice, which we climbed to a flat spot at 5,554m, just below the Dangchezhengla-Makara col (5,565m). We camped there for the night.

Next morning we made a long traverse west below the northeast ridge, before climbing 70° snow and ice for 150-200m directly up the southeast face to reach the final section of ridge. We followed this to the summit, the steepest part at 80°. From the top we had a fabulous view of Yangmolong's upper ridge, which looked more challenging than we had imagined. We could also see Everest on the horizon and Namche Barwa to the west. We were the third team to summit this peak and Su Rongjin the first Chinese. We also believe we made a new variant. [In 2002 Japanese reached the Dangchezhengla-Makara col directly and then climbed the right side of the northeast ridge on very steep ice, 11 pitches from col to summit.] We made five 60m rappels directly down the southeast face, regained our traverse line, and followed it back to camp. Continuing down, we made it to base camp at midnight.

JON OTTO, AAC

Editor's note: A history of attempts and ascents in this small massif appears in AAJ 2008, p. 422. However, corrections are necessary. Makara is now reported to have been climbed from the south by Koreans in 2003, likely during an attempt to reach Yangmolong. It was attempted again in March 2007 by a Chinese team (which did not attempt Dangchezhengla, as stated), also likely as part of an attempt on Yangmolong. This attempt was not only unsuccessful but resulted in the death of one of China's most gifted climbers, Liu Xinan. There is now a memorial to him at Yangmogen Lake.

DAXUE SHAN

MINYA KONKA RANGE

Peak ca 6,000m, southwest face, attempt; Jiazi (6,540m), west face, not to summit. In 2008, during an expedition to the Minya Konka Range (AAJ 2009, pp 350-352), Sébastien Moatti and I climbed a nameless summit of 5,200m in the Tshiburongi Valley north of Riuchi Gongga. While making this ascent, I noticed a towering granite wall rising from just beyond the base of the Tshiburongi Glacier. With its image burned into my mind, I returned in 2009 to tackle it with French guides Pierre Labbre, Rémi Sfilio, and Baptiste Rostaing-Puissant.

We established camp on October 3 at the foot of the Tshiburongi moraine. This would be our base for



1,600m west face of Jiazi. (1) Northwest ridge, attempted in 1981 by a British Army expedition that reached 6,100m. (2) West face couloir, climbed to summit ridge in 1982 by Americans Stutzman and Williams. A cornice collapse and dropped sack forced them to abandon the summit and descend east face. (3) 2009 French line, which reached a high point (H) on south ridge: (B) marks bivouac. (4) 2008 French attempt. High point was bivouac at 5,400m, reached after 600m of climbing. (5) South ridge followed by 1982 Americans to make first and only ascent of mountain. *Pascal Trividic*



Pierre Labbre approaching icefall in middle section of west face of Jiazi. *Rémi Sfilio*



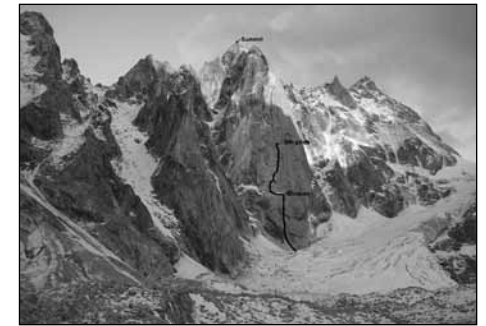
Pierre Labbre on mixed terrain near top of west face of Jiazi. *Rémi Sfilio*

the next 22 days. We then required four days to ferry our technical equipment, including two portaledges, 200m of static line, and food, to the bottom of the face, a 900m vertical wall shaped like a cannon shell and topped by 150m of mixed terrain and ribs leading to a nameless summit of ca 6,000m. It took 3½ days to open the first 400m, where the rock varied from compact to crumbling flakes. During the third night a stone, falling from high above, hit my chest, the first in a series of misfortunes that would end our attempt. Next day a faulty rope maneuver, and the sack containing all our supplies fell to the foot of the wall. This conclusively forced our retreat.

To the high point we had climbed and equipped (one 8mm bolt and piton at each belay) eight pitches: the first three up a wide crack (6b and A2, 180m); a long traverse pitch on mixed ground (5 and M4, 80m), and four steep pitches (6b and A2, 200m).

While I was treated at Kangding's hospital (nothing broken, just a crushed muscle), Pierre and Rémi attempted the west face of Jiazi via a different line from the one we tried in 2008. It took 2½ days to reach the top of this 1,300m-long mixed face. The climb, which resembled the Colton-MacIntyre route on the Grandes Jorasses, followed a series of steep snow slopes, ice gullies, and mixed terrain (TD+, WI5+ and M4). They reached the south ridge and climbed to an altitude of 6,200m, before strong wind and poor snow conditions turned them back. They descended the south ridge to the col between Jiazi and Grosvenor, from where they rappelled the west face for 150m from Abalakovs to reach the glacier. They made two bivouacs; one at around two-thirds height on the face and a second on the col. This is the second route on the west face of Jiazi, yet neither has reached the summit.

PASCAL TRIVIDIC, *France*



Ca 6,000m peak above north bank of Tshiburongi Glacier and line attempted by French. *Pascal Trividic*

Mt. Grosvenor (6,376m), northwest face direct, attempt. Three Korean climbers, Ahn Chi-young, Heo Young-cheol and Yun Young-Joon, from the Wand Alpine Club attempted the northwest face of Grosvenor from March 31 to April 21. They retreated from ca 5,600m in the central couloir that leads directly to the summit. This was the line attempted in spring 2003 by Andy Cave and Mick Fowler, who retreated from a point slightly higher than the Koreans when faced with a loose and protectionless slanting groove choked with powder snow. The mountain was climbed later in the year for its only ascent by Julie-Ann Clyma and Roger Payne, who followed a much shorter line on the far right side of the face to gain the west ridge.

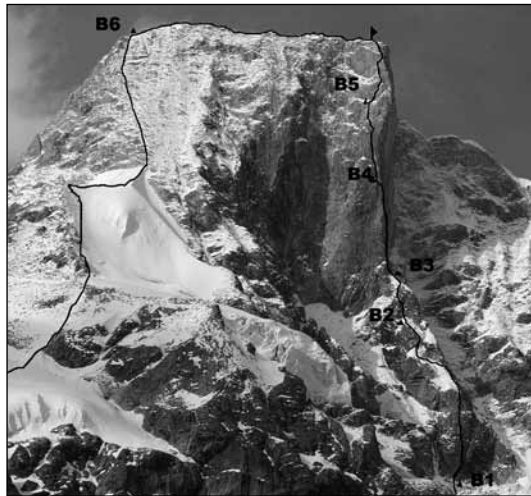


Northwest face of Grosvenor with (1) 2009 Korean attempt, and (2) 2003 Clyma-Payne route to summit. *Wand AC Expedition, supplied by Peter Jensen-choi*

CHRISTINE PAE, KOREA, AND PETER JENSON-CHOI, *Corean Alpine Club and AAC.*

Peak 6,134m, Carte Blanche. Mikhail Mikhailov and I planned to be in Sichuan by mid-March. Our goal was the southeast face of Edgar (E Gongga, 6,618m), a large, steep, mixed granite wall. However, at the last minute the Chinese authorities canceled our permit because of the 50th anniversary celebrations in Tibet. Fortunately, a month later China reopened its doors, and it was not too late to continue with our project. We flew to Chengdu, traveled easily by road to Moxi on the east side of the Minya Konka Range and walked for only three hours with horses up the Yangzigou Valley to an altitude of 3,150m. "Base camp is here," said the horsemen, and, pointing vaguely to the north as they set off for home, added, "and your mountain is somewhere there." We were also told that Koreans had climbed Edgar, when we thought it was still virgin.

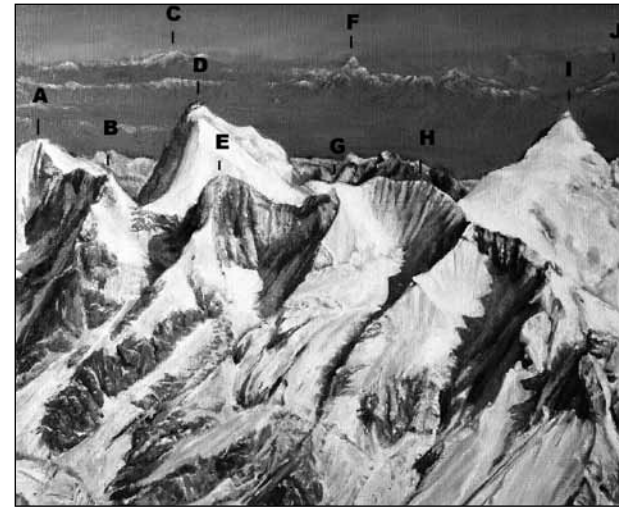
We then had many days of mist and rain. We examined the gorge leading to the foot of the southeast face, but the wall itself remained invisible. We then decided to go for a four-day acclimatization trip up the valley. During this trip, through a brief clearing in the cloud, we saw a beautiful rock wall



Southwest face of Peak 6,134m above upper Yangzigou Valley. Right-hand line, with bivouac sites indicated, marks *Carte Blanche*. Left-hand line, descending from B6, shows descent. *Alexander Ruchkin*



A 360° panorama from top of southwest buttress of Peak 6,134m. (A) Summit ridge of 6,134m. (B) Grosvenor (6,376m). (C) Jiazi (6,540m). (D) Riuchi Gongga (Tshiburongi or Little Konka, 5,928m). (E) Nannemgongou (Nan Men Guen) Valley. In far distance is snow-capped Lamo-She (6,070m). (F) Northwest face of Edgar (6,618m). (G) Peaks 6,130m. (H) Zhong Shan (Sun-Yat-Sen, 6,886m, second highest peak in Minya Konka Range). (I) Minya Konka (7,556m). (J) Daddomain (6,380m). (K) Peak 5,962m (unclimbed). (L) Dogonomba (5,960m, unclimbed). (M) Yangzigou Valley. *Alexander Ruchkin, stitched by Pedro Detjen*



Oil painting of view looking more or less north from summit of Minya Konka. (A) Grosvenor (6,376m, first ascent in 2003 via northwest face to gain southwest ridge—left skyline). (B) Peak 6,206m (unclimbed). (C) Peak 5,603m (N 30°36'15", E 101°54'03"). (D) Jiazi (6,540m; first ascent, in 1982, gained snowy south ridge, facing camera, via west face to left). (E) Peak 6,134m (climbed in 2009). (F) Lotus Flower Mountain (5,704m, N 30°16'07", E 101°57'48"). (G) Peak 6,130m (unclimbed). (H) Peak 6,130m (unclimbed). (I) Edgar (6,618m, climbed in 2001 by snowy west ridge falling toward Peak 6,130m). (J) Part of Lamo-She Massif. *A photo of this painting by Y Tanaka was supplied by Tamotsu Nakamura.*

on the south side of Peak 6,134m that cried out to be climbed. This virgin summit lies northwest of Edgar, close to 6,367m Grosvenor. We decided to waste no more time on a face we hadn't yet seen, on a mountain that may have been climbed, when there were so many virgin peaks. On May 4 we left base camp for the southwest buttress of 6,134m, assuming it was steep enough to shrug off fresh snow.

We camped at 4,200m and during three days of poor weather marked a route to the base of the wall. We started up the lesser-angled lower spur on the 8th and climbed it over three days in about 13 pitches. The rock, generally 70-75°, was often icy, but we climbed the spur free except for about five meters of aid. This led to the headwall, a rounded pillar dividing the south and west faces.

After climbing a couple of pitches on the headwall during the afternoon of the 10th, we completed the remaining nine up this steep buttress from the 11th to 13th. Despite the angle, which fluctuated between 85 and 95°, we climbed mostly free, using rock shoes, at difficulties up to 6b-6c. We climbed more than 90% of the route free, the rest requiring aid in short sections up to A2. We took no bolts and placed no skyhooks but used a full assortment of gear from copperheads to large cams. The rock was not perfect, and there were sections where we had to hold our breath as we made delicate moves around large detached flakes. We used a small tent for bivouacs, though on two nights there was barely room to sit down.

We reached the top of the buttress at 1:35 p.m. on the 13th, spent an hour there, and then followed the sharp and broken ridge to the northwest summit, from where we planned to descend. However, visibility was zero, so we pitched the tent for another night and the next day made 20 rappels down the snowy west face to the glacier. Bad visibility again hampered progress, and we had to spend another night out in the valley before reaching base camp on the 15th. After an absence of 12 days, we were greeted by our much-relieved cook and interpreter. We were very pleased with our 1,100m route (1,250m of climbing), mostly because we were able to climb largely free. We named it Carte Blanche.

ALEXANDER RUCHKIN, *Russia*

Mt. Edgar, tragedy. In late May Colorado residents Jonny Copp, Micah Dash, and Wade Johnson lost their lives in an avalanche below the southeast face of Mt. Edgar (E Gongga, 6,618m). The face was a much talked about objective, which has received wide publicity due to photos published by prolific Japanese explorer Tamotsu Nakamura. With Nick Rosen of Sender Films, who with Johnson hoped to document part of the expedition for a National Geographic TV series, the three established base camp below the mountain in May.

Rosen returned to Colorado, and on May 15 the remaining three left their liaison officer to establish an advanced base camp. They returned to base, having cached gear and food at a suitable site, reported to be five hours above when carrying a heavy load.

On the 20th Copp, Dash, and Johnson moved up toward advanced base. Dash and Copp would attempt the peak, while Johnson remained in camp. Nothing was heard from them after that date. When they failed to return to base camp and then missed their flight home, on June 3, Rosen alerted authorities.

On June 5 Guo Jie and Li Zong Li, of the Sichuan Mountaineering Association, discovered a body at 4,000m on the route between base camp and advanced base. Two days later Ci Luo and Li Fu Qing, of the Chinese Mountaineering Association in Beijing, discovered a second body 300m distant. The rescuers were able to identify the first body as Copp and the second as Johnson. There was no sign of Dash, though rescuers later found some of his gear in the vicinity.

In the meantime four experienced American mountaineers, Eric DeCaria, Nick Martino, Steve Su, and Pete Takeda, who were close friends of the three climbers, had been busy arranging flights and obtaining visas in order to assist with the search. On the 11th they helped the Chinese remove both bodies from avalanche debris in a wide couloir leading toward the face. The search for Dash's body was eventually called off; the area, frequently bombarded by rockfall and avalanche, was deemed too dangerous, and by this time chances of locating Dash or his remains seemed unlikely.

LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *Mountain INFO*

Nyambo Konka (6,114m), east face, attempt. During the last week of April and the first week of May, a four-person New Zealand-American team, comprising Lydia Bradey, Kenny Gasch, Penny Goddard, and I, attempted the east face of Nyambo Konka. This beautiful summit lies just south of Minya Konka. During more than a fortnight of humping loads and climbing, we established two camps in the Bawang River Valley due north of Bawang Lake, then a further

camp in the east face cirque, and one more on the face itself. We climbed the east face and reached the summit (north) ridge, but it was heavily corniced and too dangerous to allow us to reach the top. Descending, we were caught in two substantial snowstorms, the first dropping a foot of snow, the second, two feet.

Two notes: (1) our Liaison Officer, Lenny/Chen Zheng Lin, purportedly of the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Mountaineering Association, made our trip almost impossible, throwing up roadblocks at every opportunity. We advise climbers not to use him; (2) after our close calls with excessive snowfall, and the deaths of Jonny Copp, Micah Dash and Wade Johnson in avalanches just a couple miles away, it is clear that climbing in the Daxue Shan should be attempted only in very late fall or very early spring.

MARK JENKINS, *AAC*

SOUTH OF MINYA KONKA

Ren Zhong Feng (6,079m). On November 28 Martin Ploug and I, from Denmark, made the first ascent of Ren Zhong Feng, a little-known peak that was believed to be one of the few remaining unclimbed 6,000m summits in Sichuan Province.

We established base camp at 3,100m in the Gan Gou Valley northeast of the mountain, and a higher camp at 4,500m.



The northwest face of Nyambo Konka (6,114m). The summit is behind and to the left. The New Zealand-American attempt reached the crest of the north ridge (left skyline) from the far (east) side, off picture to the left. *Pedro Dejen*



The unclimbed north ridge of Nyambo Konka from close to the New Zealand-American exit point from the east face. *Mark Jenkins*



Lydia Bradey and large rucksack high on the east face of Nyambo Konka. *Mark Jenkins*



Northwest face of Ren Zhong Feng. Marked is upper section of Danish route, which climbs hidden east face to crest of north ridge. From point where route joins ridge, it is still 1,500m to summit. *Pedro Defje*

We decided to climb alpine-style up the right side of the east face to gain the north ridge. Our third member, Carsten Cooper-Jensen, opted out, feeling he would slow us. With no prior acclimatization we climbed to 5,200m the first day, in an open gully. We spent the next day resting, to improve acclimatization, and on the following day climbed to a second bivouac, at 5,500m. We spent our third day on the crest of the north ridge, at 5,675m. We had overcome most of the technical difficulties and most of the altitude, but still needed to reach the summit. However, the ridge above was 1½ km long, and often sharp. A storm and bulletproof ice made it a long, tiring climb; we reached the summit at 5:30 p.m. It took 18 hours to climb to the top and return to the bivouac site. Although the summit altitude is officially given as 6,079m, our altimeters and GPS recorded ca 5,800m.



Martin Ploug leads final ice wall on east face to gain crest of north ridge of Ren Zhong Feng. *Kristoffer Szilas*



Looking back along north ridge of Ren Zhong Feng. In background is Minya Konka (7,556m), and to the right: Long Shan (6,684m); Chu I (6,466m); Chu II (6,483m); Zhong Shan (6,886m), and Tai (6,410m). *Kristoffer Szilas*



Martin Ploug on north ridge of Ren Zhong Feng. *Kristoffer Szilas*

Descending during the night, Martin slipped while trying to place an ice screw and fell 30m down the 1,000m west face. Luckily, I managed the classic maneuver of jumping down the east face and thus holding him on the rope. He was battered and bruised but, assisted by painkillers, made it back to our top bivouac. We rested on the 29th, before descending to base camp on the 30th. We graded the 1,300m route, which was free from objective danger, TD M4 WI4.

Logistics went smoothly. Tom Nakamura had been helpful in supplying us with information, and we used the company, Sichuan Earth Expeditions, that he had employed when visiting the area. Unfortunately, we paid the Sichuan Mountaineering Association for a virgin 6,000er and were unable to convince them that we were entitled to a refund, as the peak is likely 200m lower.

KRISTOFFER SZILAS, *Denmark*

Editor's Note: No photographs existed of this peak until autumn 2008, when Japanese explorer Tom Nakamura traveled to the Daxue Shan to inspect an unnamed 6,079m peak south of Minya Konka (AAJ 2009). Nakamura took photographs from the south and northeast and suggested the name Ren Zhong Feng, as the summit lies in the valley north of Ren Zhong Lake. Nakamura's photographs were widely published, resulting in two groups applying for permission to climb Ren Zhong Feng last autumn.

Hungarians Peter Csizmadia, Veronika Mikolovits, Balazs Pechtol, and Katalin Tolnay approached from the northeast via the Gang Gou Valley, setting up base camp at 3,100m and, on October 17, an advanced base at 3,900m. It is thought they then made a reconnaissance up-valley, but they were never seen again. The Sichuan Mountaineering Association organized a rescue party (and later a military helicopter search), and noted that on the 22nd, the last day of contact as indicated by the Hungarians' website, a large avalanche from collapsing seracs swept the upper valley between 5,200m and 5,500m.

The Danes were unaware that Hungarians were already on the mountain until two weeks before leaving Denmark. One week before their departure, they heard that the Hungarians were overdue. After arriving at the Hungarian base camp, the three offered their assistance but didn't go as far as the assumed incident site, which they felt was extremely exposed to serac avalanche.

The Danes' barometric altimeters and GPS recorded a summit height some 200m lower than the generally accurate Chinese PLA maps. However, the German Pedro Detjen, who has visited the region and published Michael Brandtner's fine book on the Minya Konka Group and Tom Nakamura's on the Tibetan "Alps," has checked satellite data, which he considers reliable. (Much work on this has been done by Jonathan de Ferranti; see www.viewfinderpanoramas.org.) Original unprocessed SRTM-Data does not produce a spot height for the summit but records the nearest point as 5,876m. Better, newly processed ASTER-Data shows the summit to be at 5,966m.

QONGLAI SHAN

SIGUNIANG NATIONAL PARK

Siguniang (6,250m), south face, The Free Spirits. From November 23 to 27 Zhou Peng and I climbed the central south face of Siguniang (a.k.a. Yaomei Feng), the main peak of Siguniang Shan (Four Girls Mountains). In December 2008 the Chinese Ultimate Expedition attempted this line using fixed rope and reached 5,600m. Zhou and I were on that expedition. In February 2009 we made another attempt, this time alpine style, reaching 5,950m. Here Zhou was trying to climb the upper part of the icefall right of the central couloir, when it collapsed.

For our third attempt we again climbed alpine style, starting from Rilong on November 23 with sacks weighing less than 15kg. Local porters carried our sacks as high as the traditional base camp at 4,800m. We camped that evening at 5,130m, a short distance below the bergschrund at the foot of the south face. The forecast predicted bad weather on the afternoon of the 26th, and we weren't taking chances. On 24th we crossed the bergschrund and climbed the snow-covered rock buttress that separates the main couloir from a black, steeper, subsidiary rannel to the left. We simul-climbed most of the way to a bivouac at 5,700m, only belaying three pitches, on more difficult rock sections.

On the 25th we began our summit push a little after 8 a.m., climbing over the right side of the rock step between 5,900 and 5,950m. Above, we climbed four mixed pitches of mainly rock, and then breached the cornice onto the windy southwest ridge. The time was 4 p.m. From here we followed the crest to the south summit, arriving at 6:10 p.m. (Siguniang has three summits on a horizontal summit ridge; the south is marked as the highest on the Chinese 1:50,000 military map, courtesy of climber Ma Yihua.)

We planned to descend the route the same day, but the entire face below was threatened by falling debris and too dangerous to rap in the dark. We spent the night in a snow cave dug beneath a cornice at 6,130m. Next day the rock and ice fall got worse, but we descended anyway, reaching our tent at 5,130m and moving it farther from the mountain after we found nearby several pieces of rock that weren't there when we set out. On 27th we slept until 10:30 a.m. and trekked down the glacier and back to Rilong.

The 1,000m route, the first all-Chinese new line on Siguniang, had difficulties of AI3+ and M4. We named it The Free Spirits, which is the name of our climbing partnership.

YAN DONGDONG, *China*

Editor's Note: The Free Spirits marks arguably the first time in mountaineering history that a Chinese pair has made an alpine-style first ascent of a big technical route on home ground, and on a line that had been attempted previously several times.



South Face of Siguniang above Changping Valley. Marked is the Free Spirits, with first and second bivouacs. For other lines on the face see *AAJ* 2007 p.423. Yan Dongdong/Ma Demin Collection.

This line, which is not a straightforward snow/ice gully but a complex mixed affair with steep rock steps, was rumored to have been attempted by Russians some years ago and was definitely attempted by Russians in early October 2009, when the St Petersburg team of Alexey Gorbatenkov and Svetlana Gutsalo climbed alpine style up the buttress slightly right of the couloir before being hit by a big snowstorm, with thunder and lightning, which forced a retreat from 5,800m. Before this, in autumn 2006, guide Philippe Batoux and a "young alpinists" group from the French Alpine Club planned an attempt but found the line dry, with an imposing rock barrier towards the top. Instead they slanted left from its base to reach the upper southwest ridge and the 1992 Japanese Route but did not continue to the summit. The first known serious attempt took place in April 2007, when a Korean team pushed to 5,650m using fixed ropes. But their camp at 5,200m was taken out by avalanche, forcing a retreat.

Chinese Ultimate Expedition members, who attempted the line in dry conditions during December 2008, reaching 5,600m with fixed ropes, were Li Hongxue, Yan Dongdong, Liu Yunfeng, Wang Ting, and Zhou Peng. At about the same time Gu Jie, Luo Biao, and Sun Bin tried a line similar to the French attempt, reaching 5,750m, while Cai Yu, Ji Xing, Peng Xiaolong, Zhang Yusheng, Zhao Jianshan, and Zheng Chaohui attempted the Original 1981 Japanese Route up the southeast ridge, reaching 5,900m.

Siguniang (6,250m), northwest face, Bloody Sunset. Our expedition began as nine Russians from Irkutsk, Moscow, and St Petersburg. However, at base camp Evgeny Korol caught a cold that quickly developed into pulmonary edema, and we had to evacuate him rapidly. The St Petersburg team, Alexey Gorbatenkov and Svetlana Gutsalo, made an alpine-style attempt on a direct route up Siguniang's south face. They followed the buttress to the right of the line later climbed by Chinese, but were hit by a big snowstorm with thunder and lightning and retreated from ca 5,800m.

On October 5 the Irkutsk team of Evgeny Bashkirtsev and Denis Veretenin, with the team of Vladimir Molodozhen from St Petersburg and Valery Shamalo, Denis Sushko, and I from Moscow, started up the northwest buttress. The aim was to climb directly this steep rock pillar right

of the 2002 Fowler-Ramsden route, the Inside Line (ca 1,100m, WI6). While our four-man team took the only obvious crack system that extends the height of the face, the guys from Irkutsk began 100m to the left. [Editor's note: They probably followed the line tried in 2005 by Chad Kellogg, Joe Puryear, and Stoney Richards, the only party to have previously attempted this 900m buttress. The buttress tops out a little below 6,000m, where it joins the right-slanting snow ramp of the Inside Line.]

Over two days both teams completed four pitches but were then hit by the storm that forced the pair on the south face to retreat. Avalanches pounded our portaledge, and we spent all night clearing snow to prevent damage to our shelter. In the morning we saw the Irkutsk pair retreating. They told us by radio that a heavy avalanche had scored a direct hit and broken their portaledge. Bashkirtsev was not belayed and did well to keep himself on the ledge. After that our team of four experienced snow every night, keeping us awake half the time.

This wall gets little sun, less with the frequent bad weather, and the temperature was always below 0°C. The temperature gradient itself was drastic; we felt every 100m of height gained. I've never experienced that before, and wonder if it is connected with Siguniang being 500m higher than neighboring summits. Near the top the cold was fierce (we had no thermometer but I suspect it could have been as low as -30°C). We all got frostbitten toes, though without serious consequence.

Free-climbing was impossible, and we typically made only one pitch a day. It was much slower than planned, but we were so keen to reach the summit that we sacrificed our return



The northwest face of Siguniang. The lower peak to the left is Siguniang North (5,700m). (1) The Inside Line. (2) Bloody Sunset. (3) Southwest ridge (1,900m, 5.11 A2 AI3+ M5, Johnson-Kellogg, 2008). For other lines and past attempts see p. 422, AAJ 2007. Andrey Muryshev



Starting the northwest buttress by the only obvious line running the height of the face. Andrey Muryshev.



On the northwest buttress of Siguniang. Andrey Muryshev

flight tickets to do so. Had the weather been good, the route has enough features for long sections to be free-climbed. But we either had to aid the cracks with pins or clear them of ice so we could use cams. Near half-height we were forced to use skyhooks and the drill on a 100m compact section.

After 14 pitches, with time running out, we moved left to join the Fowler-Ramsden couloir. Life immediately got better; on the first full day in the couloir we climbed four pitches, and on the day after pushed for the summit. However, we had underestimated the amount of climbing remaining. It was delicate, thin ice over rock, and Denis spent three hours on one pitch, taking two falls, one of 15m. We fixed a rope and returned to the portaledge.

Next day, October 21, Denis felt too tired to continue, so only Valery and Vladimir went for the summit, reaching it at 5 p.m. Denis and I followed on the 22nd, then we all descended our route. It is the logical way down, as the buttress is solid and steep, the Fowler-Ramsden couloir is exposed to stonefall in the lower section, and we already had at least one bolt on each belay.

We named our route Bloody Sunset (1,150m, VI A4 90°). It has 14 pitches on rock, and then four steep ice and mixed pitches in the upper couloir to reach the snow/ice ramp, which although steep, proved to be comparatively straightforward. This route was the hardest big-wall effort of my life, and I was pleased when we were awarded first prize in the Russian Championships.

ANDREY MURYSHEV, *Russia*

Wuse Shan, Another Day. On February 10, 2010, Li Lan and I summited Wuse Shan ("Five Colors Mountain," 5,430m) via the south face. The North Face sponsored our climb. The peak had been attempted several times, but we believe our ascent was the first. We named the route Another Day (V 5.9+, 18 pitches). It's serious because of poor rock, especially in the lower limestone folds, and a constant threat of stonefall.

Located between Shuangqiao and Changping Valleys, Wuse got its name because of the many layers of different rock types visible on the peak, especially on the sunny south face. At the bottom there is limestone, above that is shale, and then granite to the summit. The limestone and shale are folded into a striped U, which can be seen from the road a few kilometers down Shuangqiao Valley (a popular ice-climbing area). Geologically, this face must be spectacular.

On February 8 we trekked from Shuangqiao Lodge to the foot of the talus slope beneath the face and set up camp at 4,800m. Leaving at 7:45 next morning, we scrambled up talus for an hour, only to find the limestone above impossible to protect or to climb. Handholds broke into powder in our fingers, so we struck out right, following the U shape for seven pitches of mostly easy 5th- and 4th-class climbing. However, protection was scarce and rockfall frequent. To the left a gap in the folds appeared and we climbed through it to reach more broken, featured shale. Two pitches brought us to a granite buttress. We traversed right along the base, and then scrambled



Striated south face of Wuse Shan. (1) Another Day. (2) Rappel descent. (B1) Bivouac on ascent and (B2) on descent. *Yan Dongdong*



Li Lan on west summit of Wuse Shan. In background is unclimbed Goromity (Riyue Baojing, Treasure Mirror or Left-hand Trumpet Shell, 5,609m). *Yan Dongdong*

up 4th-class rock for two more pitches before bivouacking.

On the 10th we began climbing at 8:15 a.m. The first half pitch was scrambling, but then it was continuous 5.7 until on our fifth pitch of the day, where we cut left onto a spur. The 6th pitch provided the crux of the climb, featuring an exposed traverse followed by 20m of vertical rock leading back to the crest of the spur. Above, a further half pitch led to one of twin summits; another summit to the east looked identical in height to the one we were on and less than a ropelength away. It was past 1:00 p.m., and the other summit looked hard to reach, so we didn't give it a try.

We started down our route at 2 p.m. The ropes stuck on the first rappel, and while Li Lan was prussiking to retrieve them, a piece of rock flew down and hit me close to the left eye, drawing blood. Because of the delay caused by this and the rope jam, we didn't get off the face before nightfall and didn't dare try continuing in the dark. The gas canister was still $\frac{1}{4}$ full, so we bivouacked about a pitch lower than the previous night, where there was snow to melt. (We had used up the bit of snow at the previous spot). The next day we rappelled seven more pitches to the talus. The ropes stuck again, on the penultimate rappel, and because the pitch mostly overhung and one rope end was out of reach, it was more than frustrating. Fortunately, we had dragged down just enough of the other rope that it was possible to sling a horn, tie the rope to the sling, and rap the last 15m on a single strand.

Li Lan is perhaps China's only true female alpinist—the only Chinese woman ready to lead a technical pitch on a high mountain. This was only our second climb together, and I got away with leading all the pitches. We might have simul-climbed some ground and made better time if we had known each other better. The previous month we had failed on a new route up the west side of Chibu (5,430m), a few kilometers north of Wuse. Maybe we'll try to finish it in September, when it should be warm enough to wear rock shoes.

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