

GREATER HIMALAYA

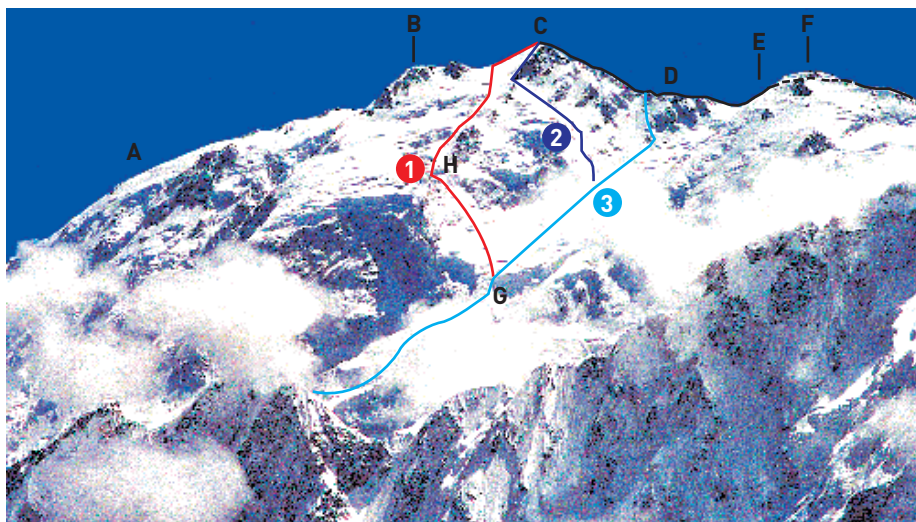
CHINA

This is the first part of a report on China and Tibet, covering significant ascents and attempts from Xinjiang in the west to Sichuan in the east. Although most of the activity recorded here took place during 2005, we also include several highly significant but previously unreported ascents from 2004.

KONGUR MASSIF

Kongur

Not formerly reported in detail are the successes of three expeditions that climbed Kongur (7,719m) from the north during the summer of 2004 and, therefore, made the third, fourth and fifth ascents of this difficult high peak. The first expedition comprised Russian climbers from St Petersburg and Latvians from Riga. This team approached by truck from Kashgar via Gez to the village of Shang Gez and from there took only one day with camels to walk up the East Karalayak Glacier and establish Base Camp (3,600m) on a grassy meadow below the face. Their proposed line was the *North West Face to upper North North East Spur* and the ascent began with an icy glacial tongue at 4,000m. While the route is generally not steep and for the most part has little in the way of technical difficulties, there is a short aid section through a serac barrier at c6,100m and avalanche danger throughout most of the climb. Snowshoes proved very useful in the middle section. The summit attempt was made on the 9th August by Alexey Gorbatenkov, Kirill Korabelnikov and Valery Shamalo (St Petersburg) with Valdis Purins and Oleg Silin (Riga). The five left their high camp (7,200m) at 8.30am in strong winds. Very



The North West Face of Kongur (7,719m) seen from c5,400m on the North East Ridge of Aklagam. (A) The unclimbed North East Ridge. (B) Dongbai Peak - Kongur North East (7,625m: also climbed by the 1981 British team). (C) Kongur Main (7,719m), (D) South West Ridge [Boardman/Bonington/Rouse/Tasker, 1981]. (E) Karalayak a.k.a. Junction Peak (7,254m: hidden in this view). (F) Pt 7,126m. (G) c6,000m. (H) c6,800m. (1) Moscow Express [Kulbachenko, 18th August 2004: Kagan/Legkikh/Medvedev/Odohorvsky/Petrov, 19th August; Arkhipov/Filatov/Mikhailitsin from Krasnoyask, 23rd August: 3,700m: 6A]. (2) Russian-Latvian Route [Korabelnikov/Shamalo - St Petersburg with Purins/Silin - Riga, 9th August 2004: 3,700m: 6A]. (3) American attempt on North West Face to South West Ridge, which reached 7,300m (Morse/Wade, 1983). ANNA PIUNOVA/WWW.MOUNTAIN.RU

quickly Gorbatenkov became very cold and decided to turn back. The others continued on avalanche prone slopes and reached the top at 3.30pm. All were back in Base Camp the following day, having made a new route, the third ascent of the mountain and the first for 15 years.

The second team comprised six climbers from the Moscow Aviation Institute and the Moscow Federation of Mountaineering and Rock-Climbing; Vladislav Kagan, Victor Kulbachenko, Vladimir Legkikh, Andrey Medvedev, Vyacheslav Odohorvsky (leader) and Andrey Petrov. They followed the previous route into the snow basin at 6,100m but then immediately cut up left to the *North North East Spur*, which they followed to the top. All six climbers reached the summit over the 18th and 19th August.

The third expedition came from



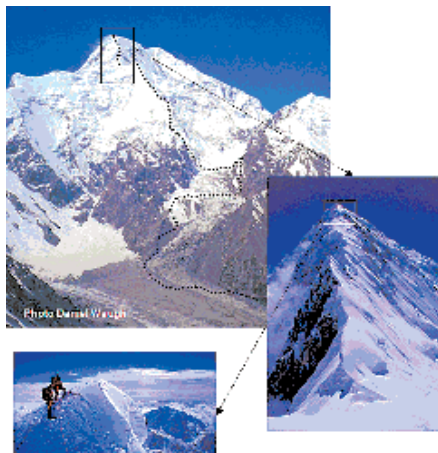
The 19th August 2004. At 7,700m on the North East Ridge of Kongur just below the summit after the first ascent of the North West Face to North North East Spur - Moscow Express. VYACHESLAV ODOHORVSKY - ANNA PIUNOVA/WWW.MOUNTAIN.RU

Krasnoyask and originally planned to climb the North East Ridge. Once there they were put off by its great length and little height gain in the upper reaches, so decided to throw in their lot with the Moscow climbers and help with the same route. V Arkhipov, S Filatov and A Mikhailitsin from the seven-member team reached the summit on the 23rd August. The three previous nights had been spent at 6,800m, 7,100m and 7,250m

The first ascent of Kongur by Pete Boardman, Chris Bonington, Al Rouse and Joe Tasker in 1981 via the *South West Rib and West Ridge* followed a thorough reconnaissance the previous year of all sides of the mountain. From a 5,440m peak in front of the North Face, Bonington and Michael Ward discovered that routes on this flank were longer, steeper and objectively more dangerous than those from the south. However, because the British were already in place on the south flank, a Japanese expedition, which also had designs on the mountain in 1981, moved to the opposite

The north flank of the Kongur Massif seen from above the moraine of the East Karalayok Glacier. (A) Dongbai Peak - Kongur North East (7,625m: first climbed by the 1981 British team from the main summit). (B) Kongur Main (7,719m), (C) c7,300m - high point of the 1983 American North West Face attempt. (D) Karalayak a.k.a. Junction Peak (7,254m: hidden in this view). (E) Pt 7,126m South West Ridge. (F) Col c6,800m on the South West Ridge reached from the far side on the 1981 ascent. (G) Pt 7,281m and (H) the East Karalayak Glacier. (1) North North East Ridge - Japanese Route [Enomoto/Hori/Muto/Nakato/Sudo/Takahashi/Tomoda/ Yasuda/Yoshimura, 1989]. (2) Russian-Latvian Route [Korabelnikov/Shamalo - St Petersburg with Purins/Silin - Riga, 9th August 2004: 3,700m: 6A]. (3) American attempt on North West Face to South West Ridge, which reached 7,300m (Morse/Wade, 1983). (4) South West Ridge - Original Route [Boardman/Bonington/Rouse/Tasker, 1981]. ANNA PIUNOVA/WWW.MOUNTAIN.RU





A montage from the first ascent of Kongur East. The top photo looks southwest over the Kurgankol Glacier to the summit of Kongur (7,719m) and shows the route taken on the first ascent of Kongur East (c7,300m) in 2004 by Italians. The top of the first section of the route (break in the dashed line) is Pt 5,924m. The middle photo shows the North East Ridge above the plateau beyond Pt 5,924m, while the photo lower left is taken above the 6,600m rock tooth. The far right skyline is the upper North North East Ridge climbed by Japanese in 1989. MAURO PENASA COLLECTION

side. While most of the team tried unsuccessfully to climb the long North East Ridge, three members made a daring Alpine style attempt of the huge *North North East Spur*. They disappeared in a week of bad weather. Japanese returned to this side in 1989 and made the second ascent of Kongur via the *North North East Spur*. Starting from the East Karalayak Glacier, the team fixed all the difficult, rocky, lower section to a height of c6,200m (Camp 3), from where nine climbers made an Alpine style push to the summit with two bivouacs on route. No evidence was found of the missing climbers from 1981.

In 1983, the four-man American team of Dick Morse, Ed Newville, Ian Wade (ex-UK) and Matt Wells climbed the smaller rib of snow and ice right of the Spur and continued into the bowl above, directly below the col at the start of the final ridge climbed by the British team two years previous. The route was threatened from all sides by avalanche but after establishing two camps in the bowl, Morse and Wade persevered to join the summit ridge left of the col at point over 7,300m. Deep snow, which had plagued their ascent throughout, was also covering the ridge and the two climbers, who were already weak, realised they were moving far too slowly to reach the summit on the following day. It was this rib that the Russians climbed in 2004, two of the teams branching left from the American line at c6,000m while the third continued to around 6,700m before reaching the summit more directly. All three ascents were graded 6A on the Russian scale. Despite at least three attempts, the Original British Route remains unrepeatable.

Kongur East

In July-August 2004, the year of the 100th Anniversary of the Club Alpino Accademico Italiano (CAAI), nine climbers from the club, Armando Antola, Donatella Barbera (doctor), Giovanni Ghiglione, Massimo Giuliberti, Carla Marten Canavesio, Claudio Moretto, Ezio Mosca, Mauro Penasa and Bepe Villa, made a serious attempt on the long *North East Ridge* of Kongur. Base Camp was established in the Kurgankol, the next valley east of Karalayak, at 3,850m. The long ridge separating the Kurgankol from the Karalayak runs south over Pt 4,957m (Russian Map) before dropping to a depression and then rising again in the form of a long snow and ice spur, leading to the crest of the North East Ridge at Pt 5,924m. The team reached the snowy depression via the flanks of an icefall, then fixed rope on the 60° slope leading to the crest of the spur and established Camp 2 at c5,600m. Bad weather frustrated their efforts and afternoon precipitation (10-20cm) most days meant the mountain remained deeply covered in wet snow. As time began to run out the decision was made to make an Alpine style push from Camp 2. On the 7th August six members of the team had crossed Pt 5,924 and descended the far side to camp a little below 5,800m at the start of the long upper section of the North East Ridge. From there two members waited in support, while Giuliberti, Moretto, Penasa and Villa pushed on up easy slopes of deep snow and after two days reached a rock tooth at c6,600m. This took half a day to cross (rotten rock and unconsolidated snow). At around 5pm on the 11th August Giuliberti, Penasa and Villa reached a small elevation of c7,300m, a little beyond Pt 7,204m as marked on the Chinese Map. They named this point Kongur East and as they had no experience of snow caving and

the weather was looking grim, decided to retreat. The continuation to the main summit is around three kilometres and 400m of ascent, but as it is most likely to be wind-blown, the Italians feel it would only take one day. Their route was named *Centenario CAAI Ridge* and the climbers approached the Xingxiang Mountaineering Association to ask if the name Kongur East could be added to official maps.

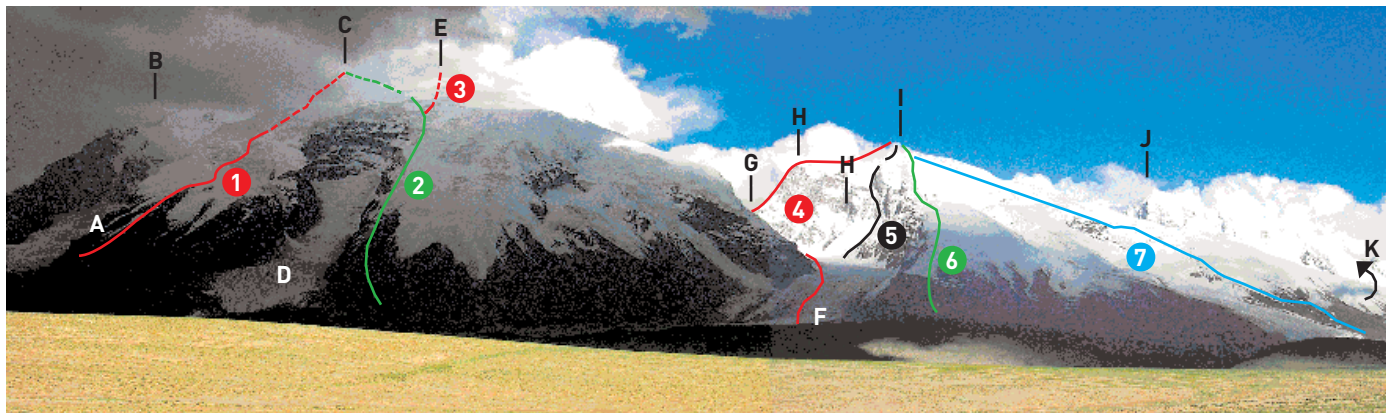
Muztagh Ata

As usual, there was plenty of activity on this now very popular and technically easy high peak. However, unlike recent years there were several parties attempting to do something rather more innovative. On the 24th August, Alexey Gorbatenkov and Valery Shamalo from St Petersburg reached the summit after having made the first ascent of the *South Ridge*. Well-acclimatized from their ascent of a new route on Koskulak (see below), the pair set out from the standard Muztagh Ata Base Camp and reached the 6,081m col at the head of the Kalaxong Glacier in one day (this high col marks the start of both Muztagh's South Ridge and Koskulak's difficult North East Ridge). The next day they climbed to 6,800m and on the following had reached 7,200m, just below the saddle between Kalaxong (7,277m) and Muztagh Ata's Main Summit (7,546m).

To that point the route had involved snow climbing almost throughout, though at two points the Russians climbed rocky sections, as it appeared to be easier to progress on the rock rather than break trail through difficult snow. Next day they passed below the summit of Kalaxong and reached the top of Muztagh Ata, their biggest problem having been cold temperatures and a strong wind, giving the feeling that autumn had already arrived. They descended the old *Classic*

The South Ridge of Muztagh Ata (7,546m) seen from the summit plateau of Koskulak at c7,000m. The route of the first ascent by the St Petersburg team is marked. On the second ascent less than two weeks later a Russian party also climbed the summit of Kalaxong. ALEXEY GORBATENKOV





The Muztagh Ata Massif from the west. (A) Kmatolja Glacier. (B) Kuksay (Muztagh Ata North Peak; 7,184m). (C) Muztagh Ata (7,546m). (D) Kartamak Glacier. (E) Kalaxong (7,277m). (F) Kalaxong Glacier. (G) Col 6,081m. (H) Pt 6,956m. (I) Koskulak (7,028m). (J) Pt 6,849m. (K) Koskulak Glacier. (1) Normal Route (West Ridge) to Muztagh Ata as used today (first ascent possibly by Ned Gillette's 1980 American ski expedition on the third known ascent of the mountain). (2) Original Route to Muztagh Ata (Soviet-Chinese Expedition, 1956). (3) West Ridge of Kalaxong (most likely first ascent route). (4) North East Ridge (Mashenin/Sinyushin/Tarnovsky/Volkov/Vorobev from the Moscow Aviation Institute expedition, August 2005). (5) North Face (Gorbatenkov/Shamalo, St Petersburg, August 2005). (6) West Ridge (Fishkis/Komarov/Novik, Moscow expedition, August 2005). (7) South West Ridge (Odokhovskiy/Petrov, Moscow Aviation Institute, August 2005). ANDREY ERSHOV

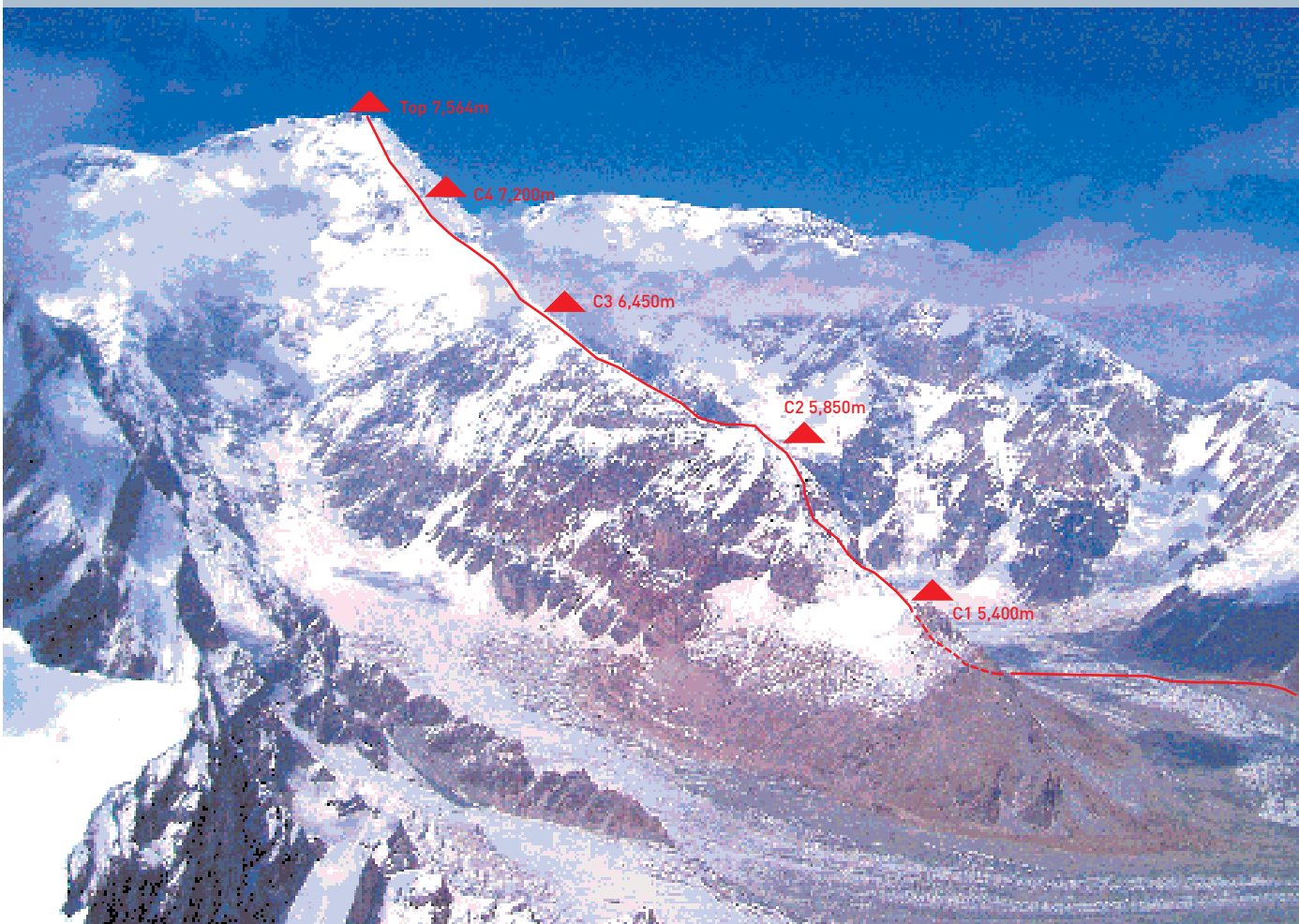
1956 Route to complete an elegant Alpine style traverse (for an explanation of Muztagh Ata 'normal' routes see the Kalaxong entry below). Visibility was far from perfect but it was easy to follow the trail, which was, perhaps surprisingly considering it is no longer the normal route, well-marked with red flags. The South Ridge was repeated in early September (see below), the three member Russian party

this time including Kalaxong in their ascent.

On the opposite and far more remote east side of the mountain, 26-year old Mr Kazuya Hiraide and his partner 33-year old Ms Kei Taniguchi made the second ascent of the *South East Ridge*. This elegant line above the so-called Potterfield Glacier, a subsidiary of the great Kuksay that drains the whole of the eastern flank of the Muztagh Ata Massif, was first climbed in

July 2000 by Americans, Walter Keller, Dan Mazur and Jon Otto in an eight-day Alpine style push, after they had first climbed the Normal Route. Gaining the crest of the ridge involved a 40-80° exposed rocky buttress dubbed the Arrowhead. Ploughing through deep snow on generally non-technical terrain, the team eventually established the last camp 100m below the top. Otto reached the summit first, having

The South East Ridge of Muztagh Ata (7,546m) rising above the Kuksay Glacier. The line shows the route and camps of the 2005 Japanese Alpine style second ascent. The rounded top to the left of the main summit is Kalaxong (7,277m), while Kuksay (Muztagh Ata North Peak: 7,184m) is the lower rounded snow peak immediately right. KAZUYA HIRAIDE COLLECTION



finished the route via a near-vertical 10m rock wall but then had to descend to assist a severely altitude-affected Mazur. All three made it over the summit and descended to an abandoned tent at c7,100m by nightfall.

Hiraide and Tanaguchi also initially acclimatized on the Normal Route and on the 29th August reached Base Camp at 3,900m on the Kuksay Glacier. An Advanced Base Camp was established at 4,500m on the 31st and then subsequently four high camps made on the ridge as the two made their Alpine style push: Camp 1 (5,400m) on the 1st September; Camp 2 (5,850m); Camp 3 (6,450m) and Camp 4 (7,200m). On the 5th September the pair reached the summit at 3.30pm. From there they descended the Normal Route on the far side of the mountain as far as 6,800m (normal site for Camp 3). On the 6th they reached the standard Base Camp. Hiraide had carried skis all the way up the South East Ridge and was able to use them to descend the West Flank. The pair then travelled to India where they climbed a new route on Shivling, which will be reported in a future INFO.

Elsewhere on the mountain many teams climbed or attempted the *Normal Route*. Jon Otto's commercial expedition that put Norwegians, Espen Bjertness and his son Marius, on the summit in mid July, repeated the *Original 1956 Route*. At 15 years of age, Marius Bjertness becomes the youngest person to have reached the top. Otto has now climbed the mountain five times

Kalaxong

The first ascent of the *South Ridge* of Kalaxong (a.k.a. Muztagh Ata South Peak: 7,277m) was made on the 4th September by three members of Andrey Lebedev's Russian expedition. They followed in the wake of a St Petersburg team that continued beneath the final slopes of Kalaxong to the summit of Muztagh Ata (see above). The three successful summiteers were Dmitry Chijik, Vladimir Kagan and Petr Yudin.

This summit can be reached by an easy detour from the Original Route up Muztagh Ata, a route that is rarely followed today (climbed by the Sino-Russian expedition of 1956 but nearly completed in 1947 by Shipton and Tilman). In the early 1980s the Chinese moved Muztagh Ata Base Camp some distance further north and opened a new and more direct line to the summit, which has since become the established Normal Route. Who made the first ascent of Kalaxong is unclear, though it may well have been Shipton and Tilman. In more recent times there are unconfirmed reports of a Chinese ascent in 2000, when the team became badly lost on the descent.

Koskulak

Separated from the main bulk of Muztagh Ata by the Kalaxong Glacier, the far south summit of Muztagh is generally referred to

as Koskulak (7,028m) and until 2005 remained the last unclimbed 7,000m peak in the Pamir. In July, four separate Russian expeditions established Base Camps at c4,700m on the west side of the massif. Andrey Ershov, leading a 23-member expedition represented by countries including Austria, America, Denmark, Korea, South Africa, Spain and Japan, attempted the *South West Ridge*. This expedition placed Camp 1 at 5,257m, Camp 2 at 6,024m and reached an eventual high point of 6,400m on the 10th August before bad weather with heavy snowfall forced them down.

The second expedition comprised three climbers from Moscow, Leonid Fishkis, Dmitry Komarov and Alexander Novik, who established Base Camp below the *West Ridge* on the 29th July. They then placed Camp 1 at 5,200m on the last scree slopes below the snow line, and Camp 2 at 5,900m, just below the point where the ridge narrows. This was later re-established at 6,200m. On the 10th they broke trail through deep snow for 12 hours and by 8pm had reached a point estimated to be c100m from the eastern end of the summit plateau. To the left (north) they saw a high point with three sharp cornice formations, which they reached but went no further due to encroaching darkness and misty conditions. They descended to their camp in three hours and have been credited with the first ascent of the summit. Later, they attempted the South Ridge of Muztagh Ata, as reported elsewhere.

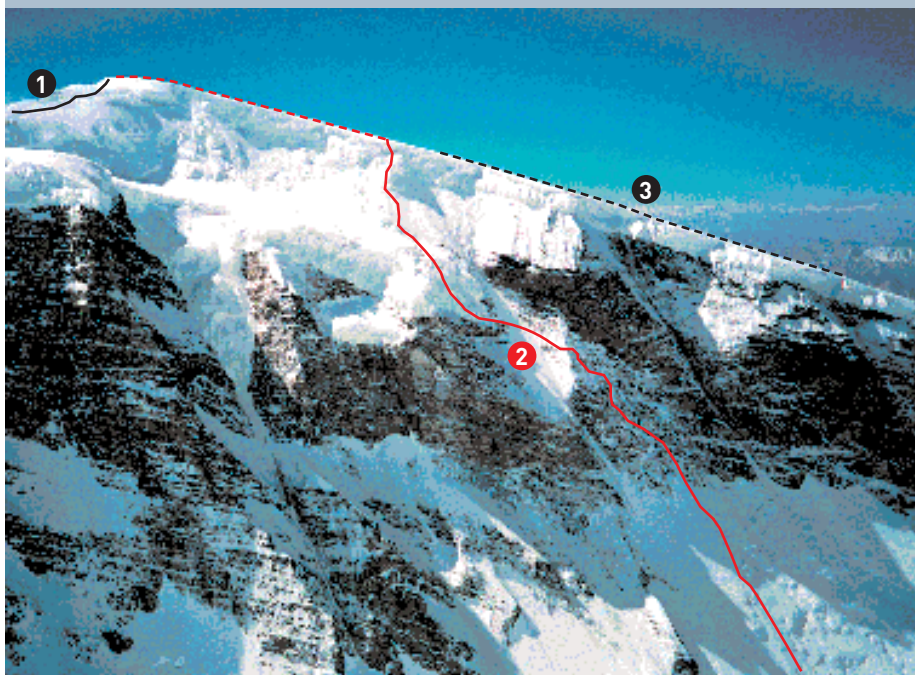
The third expedition, from the Moscow Aviation Institute (they climb mountains as well as making airplanes) and led by Michael Volkov wanted to climb the more

difficult *North East Ridge* from the 6,081m Col at the head of the Kalaxong Glacier. For acclimatization seven members of this expedition first repeated the *West Ridge* on the 12th August and on the 19th it appears that two of these, Vyacheslav Odokhovskiy and Andrey Petrov made the first ascent of the *South West Ridge* from a top camp thought to be at c6,400m. All then concentrated their efforts on the very steep and difficult first section of the North East Ridge leading to Pt 6,956m. They eventually fixed all this section above the col and on the 26th August Andrey Mashenin, Nikolay Sinyushin, Igor Tarnovsky, Volkov and Alexander Vorobev and followed the broad easy slopes of the upper ridge to the summit, which they reached at 9pm.

The fourth expedition comprised just two climbers, Alexey Gorbatenkov and Valery Shamalo from St Petersburg. They operated from the standard Muztagh Ata Base Camp and had little contact with other Russian teams. The pair planned to climb the *North Face*, which rises steeply above the Kalaxong Glacier and has three distinct sections; the initial snow slopes, a difficult rock barrier and the upper steep snow slopes leading to a large cornice and summit plateau. Although it was obvious that the main technical difficulties would be found on the rock barrier, it was not at all clear from below how, or even if, the capping cornice could be climbed.

The initial snow slopes above the Kalaxong Glacier proved deep and required a lot of physical energy rather than any technical skills. Gorbatenkov and Shamalo spent two nights out in this section, sheltering in crevasses. The rock barrier had an angle from 60-90° and the main

The North Face of Koskulak (7,028m) seen from the South Ridge of Muztagh Ata. (1) The upper section of the North East Ridge (Mashenin/Sinyushin/Tarnovsky/Volkov/Vorobev from the Moscow Aviation Institute expedition, August 2005). (2) North Face (Gorbatenkov/Shamalo, St Petersburg, August 2005). (3) West Ridge (Fishkis/Komarov/Novik, Moscow expedition, August 2005). ALEXEY GORBATENKOV



difficulties proved to be thin ice/snow cover, which made climbing precarious and finding good belays difficult. Due to a lack of decent ledges, the pair was forced to make three consecutive sitting bivouacs before reaching the steep snow slopes and scattered rock outcrops above. This barrier could certainly be climbed faster but the two Russians were not properly acclimatized and had to resort to hauling the leader's rucksack. The last camp was made on the final slopes, where the pair enjoyed their first properly comfortable night. On the following day, the 17th August, more strenuous snow ploughing, which resulted in progress of barely 100m an hour, led to the cornice. This took two hours to aid using two snow anchors and some ice gear. Once above, it took only one hour to cross the remaining 300m of large snow plateau to the summit.

This was a very logical and direct Alpine style ascent of a difficult face. The two climbers admit they were lucky with the weather, which was fairly stable and quite mild at night, allowing some comfort, even on the sitting bivouacs.

The nine 7,000m Pamir-Kun Lun peaks, which lie in both the former Soviet Union and Chinese Sinkiang, are as follows (first ascent dates included): Kongur (7,719m: 1981), Kongur -Tube (7,795m: 1956), Muztagh Ata (7,546m: 1956), Pik Communism (7,495m: 1933), Kuksay (7,184: 1981), Pik Lenin (7,134m: 1928), Pik Korzhenevskaya (7,105m: 1953), Koskulak (7,028m: 2005) and Aklangam (7,004m: 2002 - some references quote 6,995m).

KARA KUN LUN Dolkun Muztagh

On the 15th August 2004, Tatsuya Aoki, Kazuya Hiraide and Ms Yuka Komatsu made the first ascent of the highest summit in the Kara Kun Lun, a small and little known massif lying 15km southeast of Muztagh Ata. This peak lies in the southeast corner of the Kokosel (a.k.a. Cocoshir) Glacier, directly opposite the southeast flanks of previously climbed Pts 6,841m and 6,740m, themselves facing Koskulak across the Koskulak Glacier to the north.

The Japanese expedition approached via the village of Takuman and established Base Camp at 4,500m on the Kokosel to the west of the mountain. However, it wasn't until they reached the site of Camp 1 at 4,900m that the elegant white pyramid of Pt 6,355m came into view. The team reached a snowy plateau in the upper glacier basin at 5,600m (Camp 2), then fixed ropes up a steep couloir for 600m to the upper *South West Ridge*. The first summit party fixed more rope on the ridge so three more members could reach the summit the next day. The peak was named Dolkun Muztagh using the local Uighur dialect, in which *dolkun* means wave and *muztagh* mountain.

Yume Muztagh

On the 1st August 2005, Toshio Itoh, Hiromitsu Izutani, Toshikazu Kurimoto and Eizo Maeda, comprising a four-member expedition from Kyoto University Alpine Club with an average age of 61, made the first ascent of a previously unnamed 6,345m

peak in the Aksai Chin mountains of the Kun Lun. The team approached along the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway from Kashgar via Yecheng (on the southwestern edge of the Taklimakan Desert) to the Lingzi Thang Plains, where they made their 'Base Camp' in the truck stop of Dahongliutan (4,265m). Their goal, the highest amongst a group of 6,000m mountains, lay 16km northeast at N 35° 41', E 79° 41' and was not visible from the road. A reconnaissance expedition in 2004 had chosen this objective for its real exploratory nature combined with straightforward access and lack of any real technical difficulty.

From an Advance Base at 5,440m, Camp 1 was placed on the shoulder of a scree-covered ridge at 5,800m. Above, a mixture of snow and rock led over a small top of 6,100m to a col on the far side at 6,010m, and the site for Camp 2. The following day the four Japanese climbed the snow-covered, corniced crest to its junction with the *North Ridge*, from where a gentle plateau extended to the summit - a broad snow dome. The mountain was christened Yume Muztagh, a name later approved by the Kashgar Mountaineering Association: *yume* means dreams in Japanese, while as already mentioned, *muztagh* is a snow or ice-covered mountain in the local language of Uighur.

Western Kun Lun Traverse and exploration of West Yurung Glacier

In September 2005, a Russian team comprising Boris Malakhov, Michael Bertov, Otto Chkhetiani, Paul Demeshchik and Sergey Zajko made a committing, unsupported crossing of the Western Kun Lun from northeast to southwest. Using the southern Taklimakan road to reach Keria (Yutian on Chinese maps), they then travelled south 75km to the village of Polu, where they began their journey on foot. For the next month they didn't meet a single person.

Shortly after crossing a 5,140m pass to reach the Goubailyk Valley, surrounded by a ring of 6,000m peaks and smaller volcanic cones, they climbed the 4,904m volcano, Achik-Shan, which erupted in May 1951. They then travelled down the left bank of the Yurung Kash (White Jade River), before ascending the Western Yurung Glacier, badly fractured in its lower reaches. This area is some distance to the west of Qong Muztagh, a pointed 6,962m snow peak climbed by Japanese in 2000. Towing their equipment on plastic sledges through 60cm of unconsolidated snow, the Russians reached the upper reaches of the Western Yurung and the northern flanks of its high snowy peaks. The highest of these, Pt 6,903, they attempted to c6,500m. Above this point avalanche prone slopes forced them to abandon the ascent. Their journey subsequently took them through a 6,360m col between two unclimbed peaks of

The enigmatic mountains of the Aksai Chin. Rarely seen from such close proximity and even more rarely visited by mountaineers, these high, non-technical peaks form part of the Kun Lun, a range of mountains that in its widest sense runs almost 4,000km eastwards from the Pamir along the northern edge of the Tibetan Plateau. In this view, from N 34° 53' 43.3", E 80° 38' 21.6", alongside an unnamed river flowing from the lake of Godza Tso to the inland lake/depression of Aksai Chin, the range is seen from the southwest. The highest peak, the double-summited Aksai Chin (7,167m on the 2001 Chinese 1:100,000 topographic map, where it is named Kun Lun Goddess) has been climbed once. In 1986 a Japanese expedition led by K Hayasaka travelled from Kashgar to a Base Camp beside the Litang River at 5,720m. They then ferried loads across the intervening 25km and up the Zongfeng Glacier to below the South East Ridge (right skyline). After placing Camp 2 at 6,194m on the glacial slopes below the ridge, they climbed to the crest of the ridge at 6,687m (Camp 3) between Goddess South East (6,703m) and the Main (South) Summit. The South East Ridge was followed to the upper South Ridge, which led easily to the top. The summit was reached on the 16th August by T Baba, S Kobayashi, S Nakakshima, Y Numano and M Sato. The Northern Summit is named Doufeng (6,957m). Many other peaks visible in this picture are above 6,400m and almost certainly unclimbed. OTTO CHKHETIANI





Heading south up the West Yurung Glacier during the 2005 Russian traverse through the Kun Lun/Aksai Chin. The snow-capped high peak on the right is the unnamed and unclimbed Pt 6,599m. Big rucksacks and light plastic sledges were essential for this unsupported crossing. OTTO CHKHETIANI

6,775m and 6,840m and then down towards the Lingzu Thang Plains via the East Chongce Glacier, just south of the highest peak in this enigmatic mountain chain often referred to as the Aksai-Chin. On the 7th October, having travelled unsupported for 28 days over a distance of c400km, they reached the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway.

The Russians used the 1:200,000 Russian maps from 1976, which appear to be the most reliable for place names in the region (they have the best correspondence with local names). They also took 1999-2000 Landsat images and the 2001 Chinese topographic map 1: 100,000 Kun Lun Goddess. Altitudes used in this report are from the new Chinese map. Altitudes on the Russian maps were on average 140-170m lower than equivalent GPS readings in the northern part of the range and 60-100m lower in the south.

SICHUAN DAXUE SHAN Haizi Shan

On the now much-coveted but still unclimbed Haizi Shan (a.k.a. Ja-ra or Yala, the King of the Mountains: 5,833m) an attempt by a China based group on the previously unvisited *West South West Ridge*, failed just 200m below the summit. After obtaining a permit from the Ganzi Prefecture Mountaineering Association in Kangding, three members of the Arête Alpine Instruction Centre, Chinese climbers Chen Cheng and Ma Yihua plus American Jon Otto (now a Chengdu resident and co-director of AAIC) approached the mountain from the north, as have previous expeditions. However, until last year all other parties appear to have concentrated on the East Ridge, the most obvious and seemingly easiest route to the summit.

The American-Chinese team established Base Camp on the 21st October at c4,050m,

and by the 26th (with assistance from three other AAIC guides) were camped at c5,000m on the lower West South West Ridge. In the meantime a two-day storm had deposited a thick layer of unconsolidated snow on the primarily rocky ridge above, where initially the crest was stepped and composed of solid granite, with a horizontal section generally followed by a steep rock face. Wind and blowing snow plagued the entire ascent and the route proved time-consuming. On many pitches the leader had to climb without a 'sack, then either haul it or fix the rope and descend to carry it up. The first night was spent in a half-erected tent on a small ledge at c5,250m and the next day the team only managed to climb 147 vertical metres. The following morning they avoided the crest by a snow slope on the right, but when forced back to the ridge were surprised to find it changed in character; narrower, steeper and composed of large unstable blocks.

On the 29th they continued, often progressing by gingerly crawling along the crest or climbing difficult rock (with aid) in boots and crampons. The last camp was sited at a little over 5,500m and by the afternoon of the following day, with obviously looser rock above, the three realized they would not make the summit via this route. A decision was taken to rappel into the gully on the left. This would not only provide a camp site for the night but could hopefully be down-climbed to a point where it met several other couloirs. A more suitable gully would then be followed directly to the summit ridge.

Once committed to the rappel, a storm began to build and the climbers simply elected to continue on down. Concentration was so great that an earthquake measuring 4.7 on the Richter Scale and with an epicentre just 20km away, passed

unnoticed. After a sustained 15-hour descent all three were back in Base Camp at 8am the following morning, after five days on the ridge. To their high point the climb was rated Alpine TD, 5.10 and A0.

The American-Chinese team was the second expedition to attempt the mountain in 2005. Before their arrival, a British team, which was thwarted from gaining Gongkala (see below), later managed negotiate a permit change to Haizi Shan. One of the members, Dick Isherwood, had attempted the *North Flank to East Ridge* in spring 2004. Unfortunately, this time the weather was very poor and on the 10th October the climbers were forced to retreat in a 30cm of new snow from the bottom of the northern glaciers at only 4,800m.

SHALULI SHAN Xiashe

On the 13th October, Pat Deavoll from New Zealand and Karen McNeill from Canada made the first ascent of 5,833m Xiashe, a fine rock and snow peak approximately 10km north of the 4,695m Haizi Shan Pass on the Sichuan-Tibet Highway. The pair travelled by vehicle from Chengdu to a Base Camp at 4,200m, a little above the Zhopu Pasture to the north of the mountain. The Pasture has been visited several times in the last few years by American teams climbing on the rock towers of the Jarjinjabo Massif immediately to the north. The *North Face* of Xiashe via a direct snow/ice line to the summit, the original goal of the New Zealand-Canadian team, looked rather dry on first inspection, so the pair decided to change plans and attempt the more rocky *North East Ridge*.

On the 8th, while waiting for the ridge to dry after a weather front had dumped 60cm of fresh snow, a three-member British team also arrived to climb Xiashe. This immediately prompted the two women into action, though at this stage they felt their best option was to climb from the south via the upper *South West Ridge*. Leaving on the 10th, they made several carries up valley to 4,800m, then spent the next two days double carrying through deep, north-facing snow to establish a camp at a c5,300m col on the ridge.

Leaving their tent at 1am on the 13th, Deavoll and McNeill descended the far side of the ridge for 300m to reach a glacier on the *South Face*. They then climbed the snowy face using snowshoes to regain the crest of the *South West Ridge* at 5am. The summit was reached three and a half hours later and their camp regained at 2.30pm. Until 2005 this peak had not received any official attempt but rumours of an unauthorized visit proved correct when it was recently learnt that a Korean team had tried the mountain unsuccessfully in the late 1990s.

Later, the two made an attempt on the highest peak of the **Jarjinjabo Massif**, Pt



The North Face of 5,833m Xiashe seen from the North East Ridge of Pt 5,690m. The red line shows the route followed by British climbers Douglas and Tunstall in October 2005 (c950m: pitches of Scottish 5 mixed). The white dashed line shows their descent (South West Ridge to South Face then back over to the North Flank), which simply reversed the route followed by Deavoll and McNeill earlier the same month for the first ascent of the mountain. The unclimbed North East Ridge forms the left skyline. TOM PRENTICE

5,812m (referred to as Jarjinjabo), which lies towards the northwestern end of the range. By the 21st they had ferried gear up to a camp at 5,100m at the foot of the glacier on the south east flank of this broad-summitted, yet striking, rock and ice mountain. Unfortunately, a storm moved in, there was heavy snowfall, and the two women were confined to their tent for the next 50 hours. When the weather eventually cleared, their allotted time in the area, and their food, had all but run out and the only option was retreat.

The same day that the two women reached the summit of Xiashe, British climbers Ed Douglas and Duncan Tunstall

left Base Camp in the Zhopu Valley for an attempt on the *North Face*. That night they bivouacked at 4,500m on the moraine below the face. On the following day they climbed an easy snow slope to a 10m step of Scottish 3 giving access to a long, rightwards-leading ramp that took them into the base of the couloir running the entire length of the face. Reaching this point (c5,200m), in unconsolidated snow, took most of the day and the pair stopped at 4.30pm to excavate an uncomfortable bivouac. Next morning they set off trailing the ropes but the angle soon steepened from 45-50° to something more like 70° with much Scottish 3/4. As snow cover

became less and even more unconsolidated, they opted to break out left to reach a mixed spur. This gave steep climbing on rotten rock with pitches of Scottish 4 and 5 mixed. Dusk fell when the two were 150m from the top but they continued to bivouac at the right edge of the summit serac barrier. Next morning was cloudy and a couple of pitches up to Scottish 4/5 led through the cornice to the summit ridge, where the steps of the New Zealand-Canadian pair were clearly visible. Five minutes later they were on top. After a quick inspection of the East Ridge, they chose to follow the women's track downwards, reaching Base Camp on the following day.

In the meantime the third member of this expedition, Tom Prentice, who had elected not to go on the face, had made an attempt on the long *North East Ridge* of neighbouring **Pt 5,690m**, which lies immediately northwest of Xiashe. From a camp at 4,600m he soloed deep snow over boulders to gain the snow-covered crest, then continued up until stopped by a prominent gendarme, where a western spur reaches the main ridge at c5,300m. Loose ground, the lack of a rope and diminishing daylight all combined to force a retreat. Above the gendarme, a long snow ridge appeared to lead all the way to the summit. There were excellent views of Xiashe and Prentice felt the route would prove relatively straightforward for a couple of roped climbers.

Xiashe (5,833m) in the Shaluli Shan, seen after fresh snowfall during the approach from the Zhopu Valley to the north. The long unclimbed North East Ridge, rocky in its lower section, falls left from the summit towards the valley. The upper part of the North Face, climbed by a British party last year, is visible to the right. The route of the first ascent, also last year, follows the hidden valley to the right in front of the North Face and reaches a col on the South West (right skyline) Ridge. From there it descends on the far side and climbs back up the South Face to reach the upper section of the ridge some distance right of the summit. The small peak in the left background is probably Pt 5,328m and unclimbed. KAREN MCNEILL



The team found this a region of strong Tibetan nomadic culture, which is threatened by plans for a new village on the grassland. In addition, the presence of a silver mine and proposed upgrade of the service road will likely damage both the way of life and the area's considerable natural appeal.

Pt 5,160m

South of Xiashe, between the Sichuan-Tibet Highway and the Genyen Massif (6,204m), lies a small area of virtually unknown mountains at the west edge of the Litang High Plateau. The highest peak is 5,870m and unnamed. In October 2005 a Japanese party became the first foreigners to visit this area since the travels of Brigadier George Pereira in 1923. After trekking to the hidden glacier lake, Tsonahou Tso (c4,300m), which lies just northeast of the main group of peaks, Shigeru Aoki and six friends climbed a minor summit of 5,160m via the north flank. From the top they were able to study all the surrounding, heavily-fluted, snow peaks, which could prove interesting goals for future mountaineers.

GONGKALA SHAN

As reported in *The Scene*, *Climb 10*, a British expedition comprising Toto Gronlund, Dick Isherwood, Dave Wynne-Jones and Peter Rowat was prevented from attempting the two highest peaks, Kawarani I and II (5,992m and 5,928m), in the small Gongkala Range by a delegation of local monks. After examining both the north and south sides of the massif, the team opted to approach from the south via the gorge of the Yalung Jiang River to the village of Khur Chong. From there it appeared possible to reach glaciers leading to a c5,500m col between Kawarani I and II, from where there seemed to be routes to both virgin summits.

The climbers established Base Camp at 4,200m with much co-operation from the very friendly villagers and monks at the local monastery. Several days later, shortly after they had completed carrying loads to a high camp at 4,800m, a group of 40 monks, who had previously blessed the expedition, marched up the hillside and insisted it left the area. It appears the monks had now changed their minds after experiencing two fierce thunderstorms, which they blamed entirely on the climbers. After a long and unproductive discussion, during which distinctly non-pacifist attitudes were repeatedly displayed, the clearly outnumbered climbers had no alternative but to go down.

The British group, which received a mountaineering permit from Kangding, were the first outsiders to visit these mountains and a problem could have arisen due to the relative independence of local government from central control. However, there was also fragmentary evidence that

the expedition simply got into the middle of an inopportune feud between monastery and village.

QIONGLAI RANGE - SIGUNIANG SHAN

The Siguniang National Park was again very popular in 2005, though notably most climbers were there in the autumn for potential rock-climbing. This is quite an extensive region of largely unclimbed 5,000m summits, but it is only the western sector, penetrated by three valleys, the Bipeng from the north and Shuangqiao and Changping from the south, which has seen any real mountaineering exploration. In the main this is due to the perceived quality of potential climbing in the western area, more information on this sector, lack of serious bureaucracy and recently constructed tourist roads, which make access from Lixian in the north or Rilong in the south considerably easier.

Bipeng Valley Introduction

The Bipeng Gou (valley) flows northeast from the watershed ridge separating it from the more well-known, parallel valleys of the Shuangqiao Gou and Changping Gou to the south. A recently constructed tarmac road runs south from Lixian up the valley to the Shanghaizi car park at 3,560m (c1 hour drive). The valley has at least 40 unclimbed peaks over 5,000m and is a nature reserve, so requires an entrance ticket. Perhaps not surprisingly, the first foreigner to travel through and photograph the valley seems to have been Tamotsu Nakamura in 1998, The

Japanese explorer crossed from the Bipeng to the Changping via the 4,644m pass just west of 5,202m Jiang Jun Feng. However, the first recorded climbing was not until 2004.

Climbing History

In late April 2004 Jon Otto, an American living in Chengdu and co-director of the Arête Alpine Instruction Centre (AAIC), made the first ascent of **Pt 5,370m**, which is the lower East Summit of Pt 5,414m, the prominent unclimbed rocky peak to the southeast of the car park, from which it is clearly visible. With Su Rongqin, also from Chengdu, he placed two camps, at 4,450m and 5,050m, before ascending the glacier to the col between 5,414m and 5,370m. The pair then climbed the *East Ridge* of the latter, with a final section of 50-60° unconsolidated snow over rock.

Otto was back with a larger team in early May to make the first ascent of **Banji Feng** (a.k.a. Half Ridge Peak; 5,430m) via the *North Face*. The peak lies up a side valley east of the Bipeng just below the car park. Deep snow led to a camp on the glacier below the peak at c5,000m, from where Otto and co-leader Ma Yihua, together with Ni Hui, Sun Ping, Liu Qing and Su Rongqin battled chest-deep snow at the base of the north-facing gully before climbing rocks on the left (45° maximum) to the top.

In mid September 2005, the valley was again visited by Americans: Tommy Chandler, Chris Chitty, Pat Goodman and Ari Menitove. These four camped further

Siguniang from the northwest. (A) Siguniang North (5,700m: unclimbed) and (B) Siguniang (6,250m). (1) The route attempted in May 2004 by Dave Hollinger and Andy Sharpe to gain (2) the North East Ridge. (3) The line of a thin ice runnel, which was inspected but not attempted by the 2004 British expedition. (4) The North Ridge of Siguniang, descended by Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden after their successful ascent of (5) the spectacular ice couloir of the 2002 Fowler-Ramsden line. (6) The North West Buttress and high point (four pitches up the wall) attempted in 2005 by Americans, Janousek, Kellogg, Puryear, Richards and Saddler. (7) North West Face: the solid line shows the 2004 Hollinger-Sharpe attempt and high point (c5,200m); the 1981 American attempt on this line reached a point some 200m higher. The dashed line shows the proposed route. (8) The unclimbed South West Ridge. JOE PURYEAR



up valley from the car park, close to the path leading over to the Changping Valley. From there they hoped to attempt the striking *North East Face* of **Jiang Jun Feng** (5,202m). The weather was poor but during a short break on the 28th September, Chandler and Goodman made the first ascent of **Jiang Jun Feng** via the 900m *North West Buttress*. This is a low-angled rib left of a huge scree slope and was climbed unroped without putting on climbing shoes. There were a few steps of 5.7.

Chitty and Menitove attempted the North East Face but only managed five pitches (sections of 5.10 and 5.11 interspersed with some loose rock and incipient features) before being driven down by bad weather. The route looked feasible but would need a bigger aid rack than they were carrying. Continuous bad weather prevented any more serious climbing.

Correction

In *Climb 2* (April 2005) we reported ascents of both Camel Peaks (first climbed by Charlie Fowler in 1994) by a British party. Heights were quoted as 5,202m and 5,484m. In fact 5,484m is a double-summitted peak (the Camel Peaks) with both tops roughly the same height. Pt 5,202m is of course Jiang Jun Feng. On the 1:50,000 Chinese People's Liberation Army Map Pt 5,484m represents West Camel Peak (a.k.a. Luotou).

Changping Valley Siguniang

In September 2005, Americans, Jay Janousek, Chad Kellogg, Joe Puryear, Stoney Richards and Paul Saddler attempted a new route on the *North West Face* of Siguniang (6,250m) up the steep buttress just right of the spectacular ice couloir climbed by Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden in 2002. The 900m wall tops out below the capping seracs at around 6,000m. The team climbed the initial four pitches of a corner system that appeared to offer the least objective danger, then bad weather moved in and three members spent the next nine days in a portaledge at the base of the route (c5,100m) until they realized they should make more productive use of their limited remaining time. On their descent the American climbers met a group of Russians who implied they were reconnoitring the wall for a future winter attempt.

The Angry Wife and Daogou

After their retreat described above, Kellogg, Puryear and Richards walked up through the Chiwen Gorge, below and immediately north of Celestial Peak on the opposite side of the Changping Gou from Siguniang. As the weather began to improve, they spied an attractive north-facing rock ridge higher up the valley. The climb started at 4,500m



The South Face of Daogou (5,466m), which stands close to the Shuangqiao-Changping watershed in the Siguniang National Park. The first ascent, via the line marked, was made in October 2005 by Americans, Chad Kellogg, Joe Puryear and Stoney Richards: *Salvage Op* (650m: 5.10d). JOE PURYEAR

and led to a previously unclimbed and unnamed summit, which they dubbed **The Angry Wife** (5,005m). The fourth and crux pitch of *Raindog Arête* involved thin moss-filled cracks at 5.10c. The three descended the *East Face* in nine long rappels, leaving a few pegs and nuts.

The following day they reached the top of the Chiwen and crossed a pass towards the Shuangqiao Gou. Heading north around the western flanks of 5,466m Chibu, they saw the three stunning rock towers of **Daogou**. The highest, which had been attempted previously from the north by an American party, looked extremely challenging. On the 13th October the three reached the base of the peak right of the prominent central pillar in the middle of the *South Face*. From a scree-filled amphitheatre they discovered a direct line towards the right edge of the wall. After a tricky start the middle section was quite easy but the headwall gave sustained 5.10 climbing above 5,000m. However, the technical crux was the summit block. Puryear led this via a serious of horrifying off-widths and chimneys. The psychological crux came right at the end

with a sloping mantelshelf 20m above the last piece of protection. All three climbers stood on the 5,466m summit just before dusk. Seventeen rappels from single pegs or nuts were made to the base of the route, which was named *Salvage Op* (650m: 5.10d).

Chiwen

Canadian women Katherine Fraser, Katy Holm and Aidan Oloman made the first ascent of this 5,250m peak north of Celestial. The trio approached up the Changping in mid September 2005 and then turned west into the second valley north of Celestial Peak (a.k.a. Po'nyu, 5,413m). This is the next valley north of the one visited by the Americans mentioned above. After carrying loads to a high camp and sitting through four days of rain, they climbed the peak from the north in 10 long pitches. Part of the 400m route was scrambling but the crux was 5.9.

Chibu

After their ascent of Chiwen and a failed attempt on the Little Prince (see below) the three Canadian women made the first



Chiwen (5,250m) seen from the west. Canadian women Katherine Fraser, Katy Holm and Aidan Oloman made the first ascent of this peak in September 2005 via the route marked on the North Ridge (5.9).
KATHERINE FRASER

Shuangqiao Valley Putala Shan

From the 28th June to the 19th July 2005, the well-known Japanese mountaineer, Yasushi Yamanoi, made the first ascent, solo, of a big wall route on the *North Face* of Putala Shan (5,428m). Yamanoi had attempted this face the previous year in an attempt to get back into high standard climbing after his unfortunate accident in 2002. In that year he lost a total of five fingers on both hands and all of the toes on his right foot as a result of bad weather during a bold Alpine style ascent and descent of the Slovenian Route on the North Face of 7,952m Gyachung Kang (a Nepal-Tibet border peak between Everest and Cho Oyu).

The most northerly of the triple-summitted Putala Shan is the highest point and before last year had received only one ascent: at the end of September 2003 Andrej and Tanja Grmovsek climbed the West Face via the 800m Dalai Lama (1,300m of climbing: 22 pitches: VIII-). Yamanoi, together with his wife (who was also badly frostbitten on Gyachung Kang), a cook and an interpreter, established Base Camp in the Shuangqiao Valley at 3,700m. After carrying equipment to the foot of the wall at c4,500m, he spent a week in poor weather fixing the first 300m, finding the granite to be generally very sound. His chosen line followed a huge right-facing corner and

ascent of Chibu (5,466m), the most compelling peak in the valley, via the *East Face*. In a long day they climbed 14 pitches of sustained 5.9 to 5.10+, linking steep gendarmes up the left side of the face. The granite was good and cracks continuous. They rappelled the route in the dark.

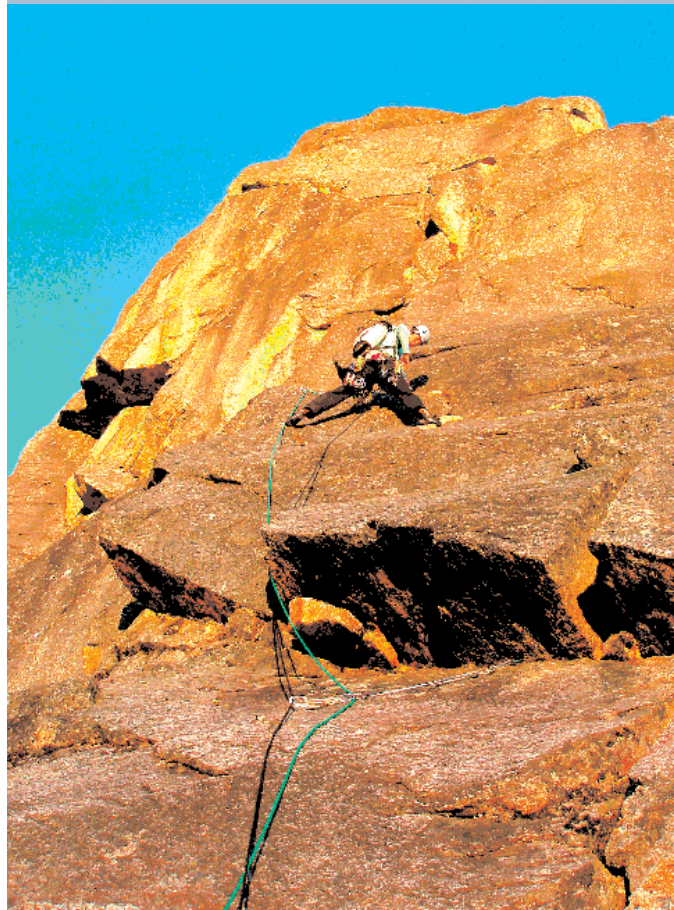
The Little Prince

Before climbing Chibu the Canadians attempted a relatively short, 5006m peak to

the southeast, on the ridge connecting Chibu with Chiwen. They originally christened it the Little Guy but after they were defeated three times, upgraded its name to the Little Prince. After sitting through another snowstorm they finally summited this peak, approaching more from the south, via a 300m route at 5.10+. Sadly, Aidan Oloman was killed by an avalanche in interior British Columbia in January 2006.

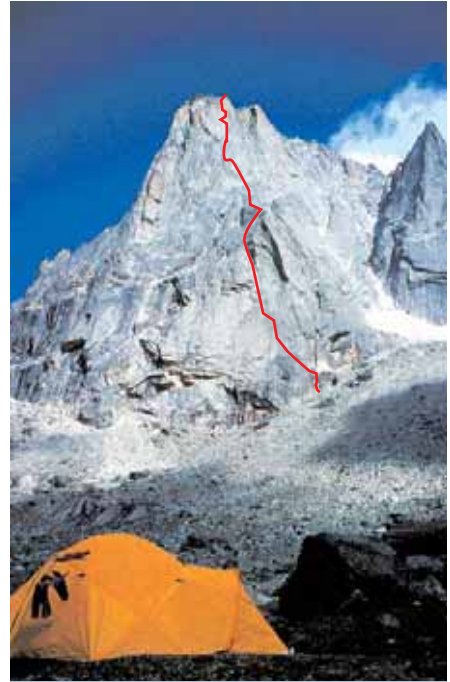
Aidan Oloman on the East Face of Chibu (5,466m) during the first ascent. In the background is the north side of the spectacular rocky pyramid, Celestial Peak (Tibetan name, Po'nyu: Chinese name Shen Shan: 5,413m). This has received two ascents. In 1983 Bill Lahr, Eric Perlman and Alan Steck climbed the South West Face at 5.10c, then in 1985 Keith Brown soloed the South East Ridge (23 pitches). The hidden but deep valley to the left is the Changping. KATHERINE FRASER

Katy Holm leading the second pitch of the East Face of Chibu (5,466m) during the first ascent of the mountain. KATHERINE FRASER





Katherine Fraser in the second valley north of Celestial Peak. Level with her and to the left are unclimbed granite walls on the south side of the valley. The two major peaks in the background are the wonderfully named Left-Hand Side Trumpet Shell (5,609m) and Right-Hand Side Trumpet Shell (5,583m), which lie southwest across the valley from Celestial Peak and are currently believed to be unclimbed. KATHERINE FRASER



The south face of Eagle Rock (the c5,300m South Summit of Putala Shan), showing the route followed on the first ascent; I Hate Camping (Dürr/Looser/Ruggli, 2005: 700m: 21 pitches: 7a and A3). LUKAS DURR

falling ice proved a constant problem.

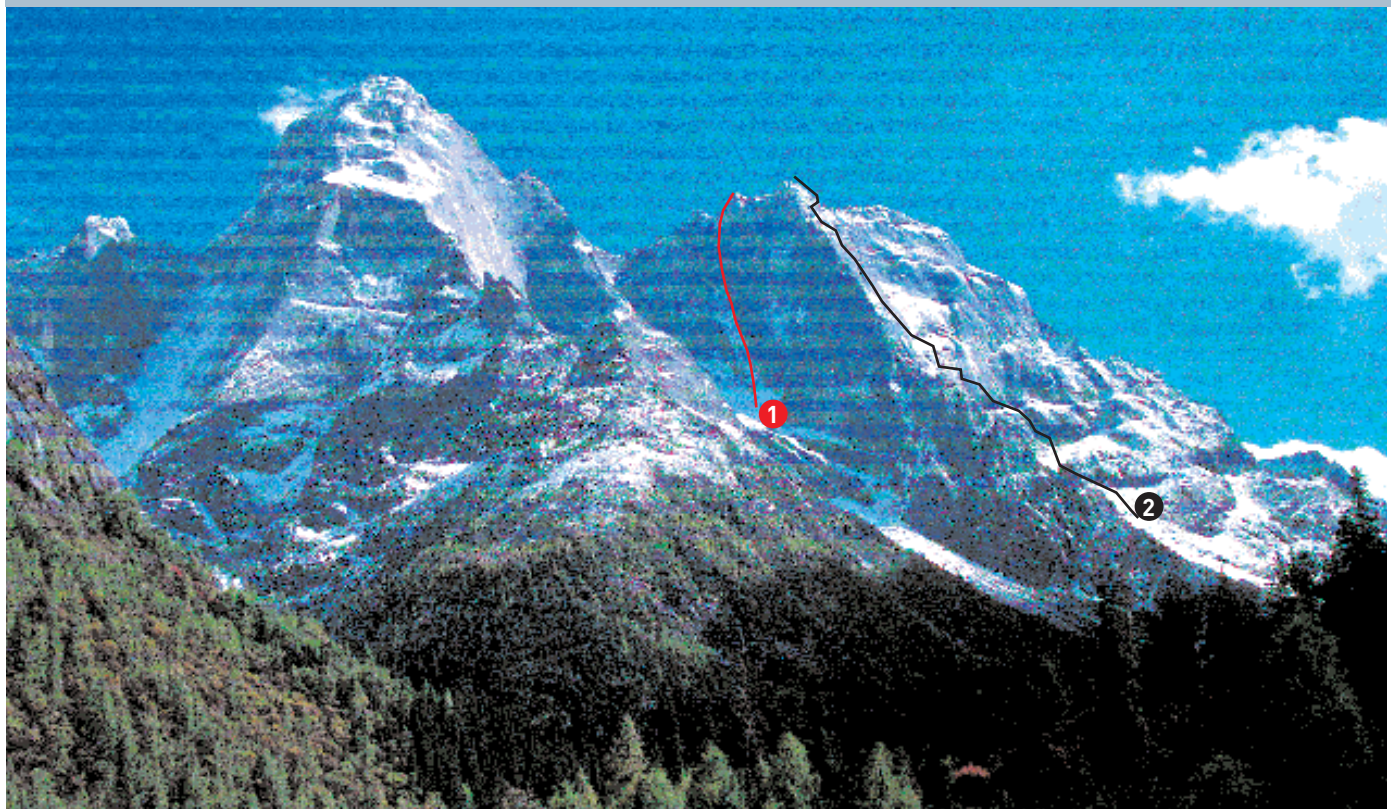
On the 13th July he began a capsule style ascent with a portaledge, finding that, in the main, ice-covered rock prevented much free climbing. Higher up the wall expanding flakes slowed his progress to about one pitch a day, and as his clothing, sleeping bag and equipment got wetter (the route received no sun) he began to

suffer slight frostnip in hands and feet. On the 19th, after seven days on the wall, he reached the *East Ridge* at 5,350m and chose not to continue back right to the summit. Two days were needed to rappel and strip the route. The new 850m line was named *Jiayou* (Chinese for 'come on' or 'do your best') and had 18 pitches up to 5.8 and A3+.

Eagle Rock

Eagle Rock is the c5,300m south summit of Putala Shan and its characteristic beak-like formation is clearly seen from the road in the Shuangqiao Gou (see Andrej Grmovsek's excellent picture in *Climb 2* page 92). It presents an obvious challenge, which was taken up in October 2005 when the Swiss team of Lukas Dürr, Christof

Seen from the northwest across the Shuangqiao Valley the unclimbed Pt 5,592m (left) and Putala Shan (5,428m). (1) Putala Shan North Face - Jiayou (Yamanoi, solo, 2005: 850m: 18 pitches: 5.8 and A3+: not to summit). (2) West Face to summit - Dalai Lama (Grmovsek/Grmovsek, 2003: 800m: 22 pitches: VIII-). ANDREJ GRMOVSEK





Pakla Shan (4,600m: left) and Shuangqiao Peak (5,100m) seen from the south side of a hanging valley above and east of the Shuangqiao Gou. (1) South East Face of Pakla Shan - For Sanja and Adele (Cujic/Matkovic, 2005: 450m: 6b). (2) South Face of Shuangqiao - Kingdom of Heaven (Cujic/Matkovic, 2005: 780m of climbing: 6c+). BORIS CUJIC

West Face of Tan Shan, climbing it via a 450m diedre system with difficulties up to F6a+. They rappelled the same route, placing two bolts for anchors.

Pakla Shan

After waiting through a long period of bad weather, Cujic and Matkovic returned to their high camp in the side valley and climbed a small peak directly opposite their previous route on Tan Shan. The rock was wet in parts but their route on the *South East Face* took only four hours and led to a previously

Looser and Martin Ruggli made the first ascent via the *South Face*, a steep rock wall not visible from the valley.

In common with other visitors, they had to deal with a mixture of snow, rain and clouds, with only a few spells of sunshine. From a high camp southeast of the wall at 4,500m, they fixed the first 240m (eight pitches), then after four days of bad weather set off on the 12th October for a capsule ascent. On that day they jumared their ropes and continued climbing to the top of pitch 13, where they managed to erect a small tent. The following day they fixed three 60m ropes on the headwall and the day after that reached the summit, their sixth day of climbing, in total, on the face. Overnight accommodation was obviously far from perfect as they named the 700m route, *I Hate Camping*. It had 21 pitches with difficulties up to F7a and A3. Thirteen bolts were placed. The morning after their ascent they packed the tent and stripped the route. The Swiss report that although there is considerable scope for future climbing on this east side of the Shuangqiao, in their opinion there are many big compact faces distinctly lacking in features. Now, only the middle summit of Putala Shan remains unclimbed.

Tan Shan

Croatians, Boris Cujic and Ivica Matkovic, spent from mid-September to mid-October 2005 in the Shuangqiao Gou (two bridges valley), west of the Changping. From a Base Camp in the main valley they first chose to visit a side valley to the east, a little to the north of where in 2003, Slovenians, Andrej and Tanja Grmovsek, had made the first ascent of Tan Shan

(4,943m) via the South Face (*Don't Fly Away*: 450m: 11 pitches: VIII/VIII+ obl: see *Climb* 2). The Croatians established a high camp in this valley about three hours above the road and then chose the untouched *North*

unclimbed 4,600m summit that they named Pakla Shan, after their own famous climbing ground, Paklenica. The 450m route was named *For Sanja and Adela* (their two wives) and had difficulties up to F6b.

Boris Cujic high on Kingdom of Heaven (780m of climbing: 6c+), South Face of Shuangqiao Peak (5,100m). Below and to the right, with the obvious smooth slabby wall, is Pakla Shan (4,600m), also climbed by Croatians, Cujic and Matkovic. The new road up the Shuangqiao Valley is clearly visible far below. BORIS CUJIC COLLECTION



Shuangqiao Peak

The day after their ascent of Pakla Shan the weather turned beautiful and the two Croatians set off for their main goal of the expedition, the unclimbed Shuangqiao Peak (5,100m), which rises impressively on the north side of the narrow side valley, behind and right of Pakla Shan. They followed a relatively direct line up the lower *South Face* but made a big deviation right in the upper section. Although the initial rock was poor, it was excellent higher up. After 780m of climbing and difficulties up to F6c+ they reached the summit, naming their line *Kingdom of Heaven* (supposedly the ancient Chinese name for Sichuan) however, it seems possible that this peak was climbed by Italians in 2000 and named Wong Shan. The two Croatians report great potential for long, hard big wall routes but like most other visitors note that rain or snow is a very regular occurrence.

INFO: Tommy Chandler/Otto Chkhetiani/Boris Cujic/Pat Deavoll/Ed Douglas/Lukas Dürr/Andrey Ershov/Katherine Fraser/Alexey Gorbatenkov/Kazuya Hiraide/Dick Isherwood/Karen McNeill/Tamotsu Nakamura and the Japanese Alpine News/Mauro Penasa/Anna Piunova/Joe Puryear and the reference sources of the *American Alpine Journal*, the *Alpine Club Himalayan Database* and the *Himalayan Journal*