

Middle East

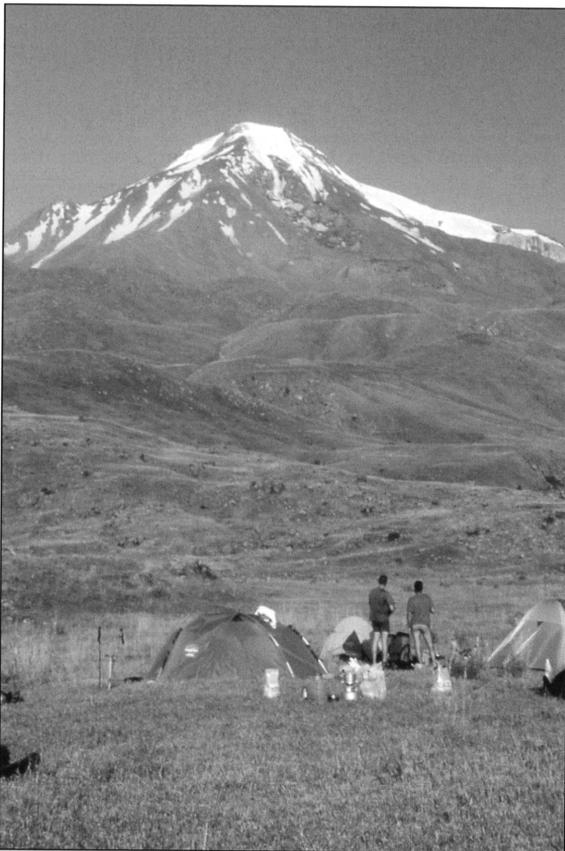
TURKEY

Mt. Ararat, northeast rib/face. On July 27, a group of climbers from five countries made an ascent of the northeast flank of Mt. Ararat

(16,940') near the borders of Armenia and Iran in northeast Turkey. The team was comprised of Marcelo Buraglia (Columbia), Khoo Swee Chiou (Singapore), Tunc Findik (Turkey), David D. Keaton (US), Nasuh Maruhki (Turkey), Ricardo Torres Nava (Mexico), and Fernando Gonzales Rubio (Columbia). One of the expedition goals was to help raise awareness and support for several charities including the Babu Chiri School in Nepal and the Istanbul-based AKUT search and rescue team. The ascent alternated between a rib of funky rock and a series of snowfields. A short section of 50-degree ice led to the summit icecap and the east summit, which was traversed to reach the main top. The line, vexed by rockfall, may not have seen a previous ascent. Western

climbers have typically been restricted to the mountain's southern route, but the lesser known northern approaches offer new route possibilities including the unclimbed and horrific looking Ahora Gorge. A more detailed report can be found at www.holy-landexpeditions.com.

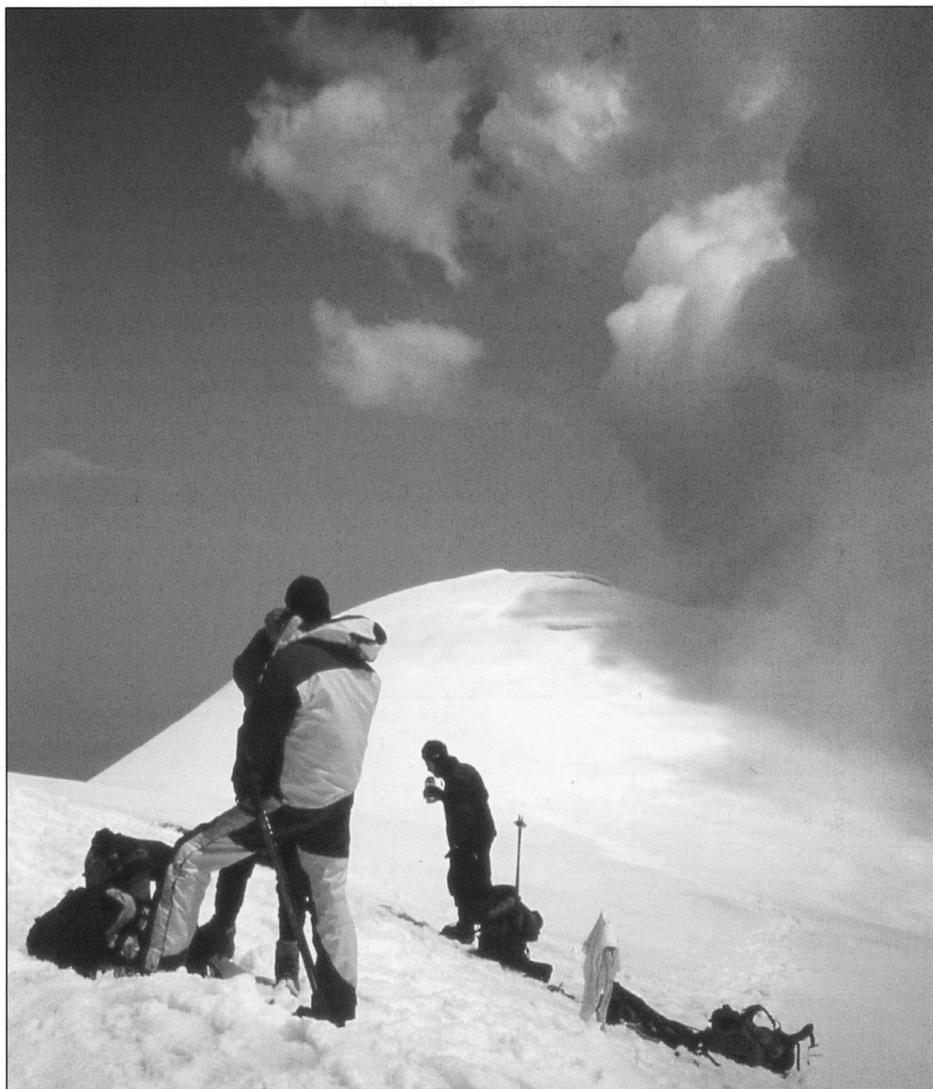
DAVID D. KEATON



Mt. Ararat from the northeast. The climbing route follows snowfields on the rib descending leftward from the summit. *David D. Keaton*

IRAN

Alam Kuh, north wall, new route, second winter ascent of the face, and historical reporting. A joint team comprising members from two Iranian clubs (Arash Group and Damavand Club) led by Mohammad Mousavinejad, spent 16 days in February opening a new route. Anjoman, named after the newly (2000) formed Anjoman Kuhnavardi Iran (The Iranian Alpine Club), is the first new route to be climbed on the north face of Alam Kuh during the winter. Alam Kuh (4850m) is the



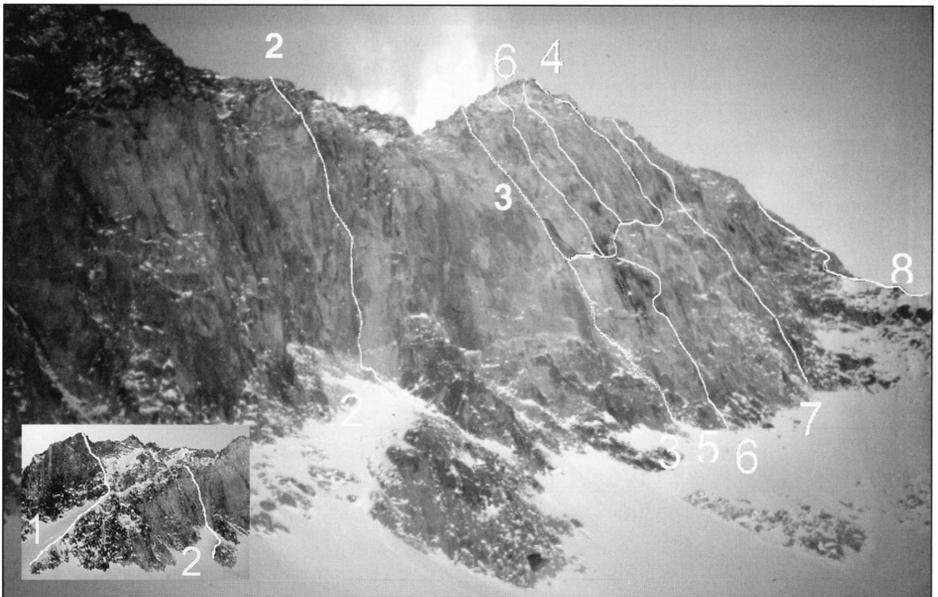
The summit of Mt. Ararat in eastern Turkey following a rare ascent from the northeast. *David D. Keaton*

third highest summit in Iran (after Damavand, 5671m, and Salavan, 4900m) but its 500- to 600-meter granite north face is undoubtedly the most prestigious in the country.

Alam Kuh was probably first climbed by the Bornmuller brothers (two German botanists) in 1902 via the easy south flank. The second ascent was made in 1933 by the British explorer and mountaineer, Sir Douglas Busk, via the east ridge (Siah Sang). The first ascent from the north came in 1936 when Gorter and Steinauer climbed the north ridge, separating the north and northwest faces. In 1951 Jalil Katibei and Mohammad Ali Tafreshi climbed the north wall of peak Shakhak. That was very astonishing in those days. This route has not been repeated yet, though some climbs of the easier ground to the right of the route have been done.

To the left of it (not seen in the photo) on the same day Naser Fallah, Ali Asghar Ordookhani, and Mehdi Sedghi Nejad climbed the steep snow slopes of the face between peak Shakhak and peak Siah Sang. This route probably has not been repeated. The first route on the true north face of Alam Kuh was first climbed in 1964 by German, Herman Rost and Iranian, Amir Alai. Two years later Blassier, Fresafond, Parat, and Valencot from a French expedition climbed a second route on the north face and in 1969 the Poles, Dobek, Wroz, and Waligora, added a third. The early 70s saw a spate of new routes on the previously unclimbed northwest face (Italians in 1970, Poles in 1971 and the first all-Iranian route in 1973). Poles returned to the north face in 1973, when Stama and others climbed the Great Roof. After the Islamic Revolution in 1978 the mountain was left for a while to Iranians. In 1983 a team led by the late A Azizi completed the first Iranian route on the north face, while over three years from 1982-84 Asgari, Babai, Mohammadi and others put up the Arash Route. From 1988 to 1991 several short routes and important variants were established by Iranian climbers. However, 1991 was notable for the first winter ascent of the north face.

Attempts at a winter ascent go back to 1974 (Poles). From 1980 to 1991 a handful of Iranian climbers tried the wall and all failed. One was killed and a number suffered frostbite. The main difficulty is the cold, with temperatures down to -40°C at night and -20°C during the day. Powder snow avalanches also provide regular problems. In winter of 1991 another large Iranian team tried the wall, only to complete three pitches of the Arash route in 20 days on the mountain. One member, Ishkhan Ebrahimi, suffered severe frostbite, which resulted in the amputation of all his toes and some of his fingers. However, in this large team there remained one determined climber. Mohammad Nouri wanted to climb the wall at any cost. He eventually



The north face of Alam Kuh in winter, Iran. Routes: (1) Katibei-Tafreshi, 1951, on Shakhak, was remarkable for its time; (2) Anjoman, 2001; (3) Rhost-Amiralai, 1964; (4) French, 1966; (5) Arash, 1982-1984; (6) Polish, 1973; (7) Polish, 1969; (8) German pillar, 1936. *Ramin Shojaei*

soloed the Arash route in four days. Since then several alpinists have attempted the face but failed...until the winter of 2001.

On February 6 the team (comprising Mohammad Moosavi Nejad—leader, Ramin Shojaei—technical leader, Ara Megerdichian, Esmail Motehayer Pasand, Kazem Faridian, Mohammad Nouri—cameraman, Ali Parsai, Abbas Aghasi, Abbas Mohammadi, Mahyar Pour Abdollah, Afshin Lahouri, Mehdi Broumand, Omid Amohammadi, and Ali Haji Saeed) reached Alamchal, the cwm below the face. While the others erected a hut below the face, Megerdichian and I started fixing the first pitch below the Golesang, the névé at the base of the wall. The following day I fixed another 200 meters of rope to the base of the wall.

The next day Faridian, belayed by Megerdichian, took the lead on the first pitch of the main wall. Near the start he fell on rock that was not so steep and injured his ankle. After carrying him down to Roodbarak in one and a half days, three team members, along with five new ones, came back. Meanwhile Megerdichian and I had stayed behind and led the first two pitches on the main wall.

A further pitch and a half were climbed over the 13th and 14th, after which it snowed for two days. Five members left. With Nouri filming, Megerdichian and I continued climbing over the next few days and on the 20th I completed the fifth pitch to reach the less steep, loose summit rock band. I placed the Iranian flag at the high point and then climbed down 10 meters to install a safe belay. That day we cleaned pitches four and five but due to snowfall left the remainder to be cleared on the following weekend. Our route Anjoman was graded VI A3 5.8

While we were on the wall Mohammadi and Nouri took two days off to repeat their 1990 first winter ascents of the Haft Khanha peaks (ca 4700m). They were away from Alamchal camp for two days and climbed three peaks. At the same time Amohammadi and Saeed climbed the nearby Shaneh Kuh and Miansechal peaks (4300m).

RAMIN SHOJAEI, *Iran*

Africa

EGYPT

Red Sea Mountains, an historical overview and recent first ascents. Following the discovery of an old book by G.W. Murray entitled *Dare Me To The Desert* (1967), in which the author describes his explorations of Egypt's Red Sea Mountains in the 1920s and 30s, Di Taylor and I decided to follow in his footsteps. Delving into archives revealed that Murray was a Director of the Egyptian Desert Survey in the early decades of the last century. He was

also a respected member of the Alpine Club and the Royal Geographical Society, the latter awarding him their Founder's Medal. He served as an officer in the Northern Red Sea Patrol in the 1914-18 war and was awarded the Military Cross. Not only did he obviously know his

