

formed. Many routes were spotted but not climbed due to either poor ice conditions or approaches longer than those of other climbs.

In late February, George, Wheelock, and I trekked into Sikkim's West District in search of ice. The west proved to be drier than the north, with only a few climbs spotted along the Yuksum to Gocha La trekking route. Due to poor ice conditions we didn't climb, but we could have fine one to two-pitch climbs earlier in the season. January could prove to be a better month for ice climbing in Sikkim. The remote locations, variety of climbing and cultural diversity of Sikkim make for a truly rewarding trip. There is great potential for further development of ice climbing in this area.

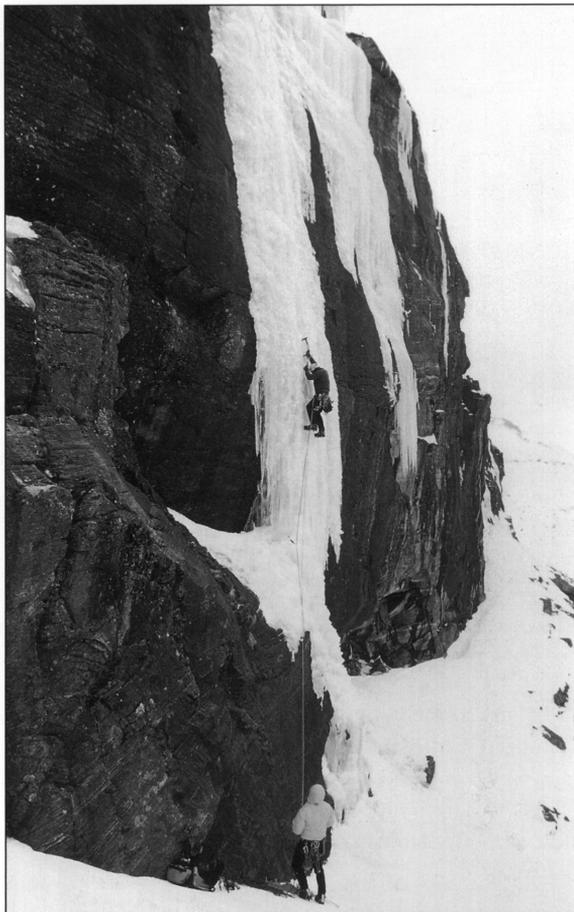
RICHARD DURMAN, AAC

*Ratong Valley, Tieng Kg, new route Merenge Bilinbolonka; and Phori, possible first ascent.* Spanish Basque climbers Garo Azuke and I climbed in western Sikkim during October. Our intended objective

was an ascent of the virgin east face of Kabru South (7,317m, a peak with only one claimed ascent, by an Indian Army expedition in 1994), which is reached from the Ratong Valley. However, first we needed to acclimatize and, we chose the ca 6,000m peak of Tieng Kg. This is an impressive peak, which we think looks like a shorter version of Ama Dablam. It was climbed in 1992 from the southeast by an Indian military expedition.

We chose the elegant 800m-high west face. After two days of difficult and delicate climbing over poor quality rock, snow, and ice, we reached the top of the face and a small subsidiary summit around 200-300m distant and ca 70m lower than the main summit. The intervening ground looked complex and as we were cold and exhausted, we decided to descend from this point, which our altimeter put at 5,960m. We reached the high point on October 3 and named the new route Merenge Bilinbolonka (750m, VI 5+ M6).

We next moved camp to the Ratong Glacier for an attempt on Kabru but discovered that conditions on the proposed route looked bad and the line featured a dangerous icefall. We therefore decided to abandon this idea and instead to make an ascent of nearby Phori Peak



Climbing the Glass Noodle, Sikkim. Richard Durman



The Terma Wall, Sikkim. *Richard Durnan*

(5,837m), a fine pyramid. We began our ascent via the south-southwest face at 1:30 a.m. on October 17. After mostly snow and mixed climbing with some aid, we reached the top at 11:30 a.m. There were no signs of any prior ascent of the granite block forming the summit, from which we had to rappel. We christened the 600m route *Debekatua Debekatzea* (V 4+ M6 A1). Five rappels, each of 70m, put us on the glacier east of the peak and we returned to camp at 6:30 p.m.

This summit is supposed to have been attempted by Indian climbers, one of whom died on the mountain. We found a broken rope 20m below a foresummit of the peak, but nothing in the summit area. We also found a piton about 30m above the glacier during our rappel descent, but surmise that it probably belonged to the military, which uses this glacier for training. Our sirdar and agent in Darjeeling both thought the peak previously unclimbed.

ALAIN ANDRES, *Spain*

## ARUNACHAL PRADESH

*The Bailey Trail, a rare trek in Arunachal Pradesh.* During the month of October a team of three Indians comprising Huzefa Electricwala, Dr. Kamal Limdi, and I trekked in the rarely frequented valleys of Arunachal Pradesh, North East India. We first drove to the northwest corner of the state, visiting the Bum La on the Tibetan border and nearby Zimithang and Lumpho. Just north of Zimithang, where the Thag La Ridge forms the natural border with Tibet, the Dalai Lama crossed on his escape to India in 1959. It was also a dispute about the position of this ridge and the exact alignment of the McMahon Line that precipitated the 1962 Indo-China war,