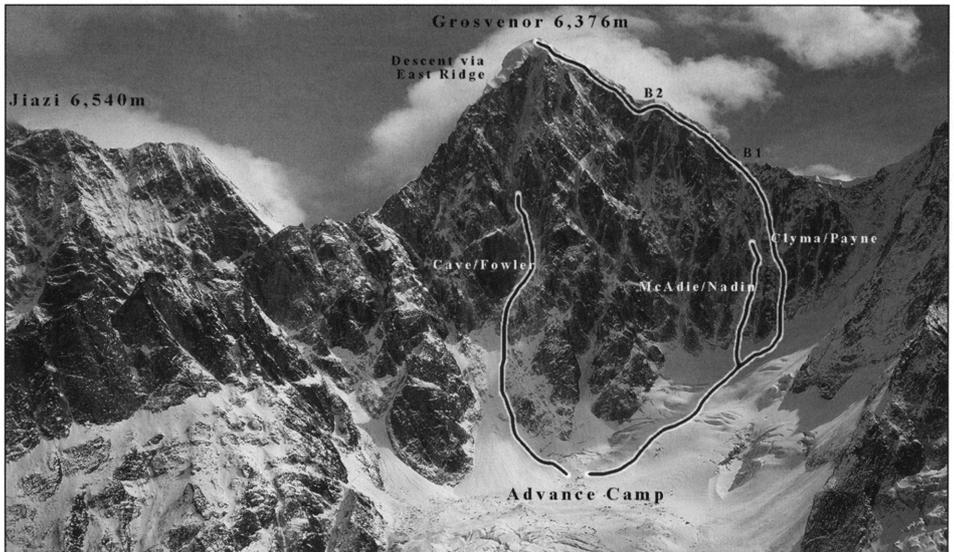


east ridge in 1981. Twenty four roped pitches were required to complete the descent and we were not helped by inclement weather; snowfall and poor visibility. As the glacier appeared covered in avalanche debris from the slopes of Kongur, we took to the west ridge of Karatash, descending an ice slope in 12 pitches to reach the northern tributary of the Koxsel Glacier.

Here, we found only green hills and spent the rest of our time exploring the western sources of the Koxsel glacier, which had not been visited before by any European. The dominating summit in this region is Kongur Tybe and we continued past its heavily-gendarmed north ridge to begin our approach to the north ridge of Aklangam (6,995m). This peak was climbed from the south in 2002 by Andrei Lebedev and party. The northern route looked attractive, making Aklangam one of the most accessible peaks in this region. From an altitude of 5,400m we were once again able to see the northern slopes of Kongur (7,719m). However, a snow storm that night pinned us down for 24 hours at ca 5,700m and after this cleared we were forced to descend in very dangerous avalanche conditions. On September 1, in the village of Gez, our 235km, 31-day unsupported journey ended and we had completed a crossing of the entire southern section of the Chinese Pamirs.

OTTO CHKHETIANI, *Russia*

## DAXUE SHAN



Mt. Grosvenor, showing the two spring 2003 attempts (Cave-Fowler and McAdie-Nadin) and the Clyma-Payne route to the summit. Roger Payne

*Mt. Grosvenor, first ascent.* Our original plan had been to attempt Chomolhari, but we ran into problems when we discovered that a joint exercise was taking place between Chinese and Bhutanese military forces down in Yadong County. Not even Chinese were getting permits to travel to this area. Fortunately we had a good Plan B: to attempt the first ascent of Mt. Grosvenor (6,376m) in the Daxue Shan range of Sichuan. Mick Fowler had attempted it in the

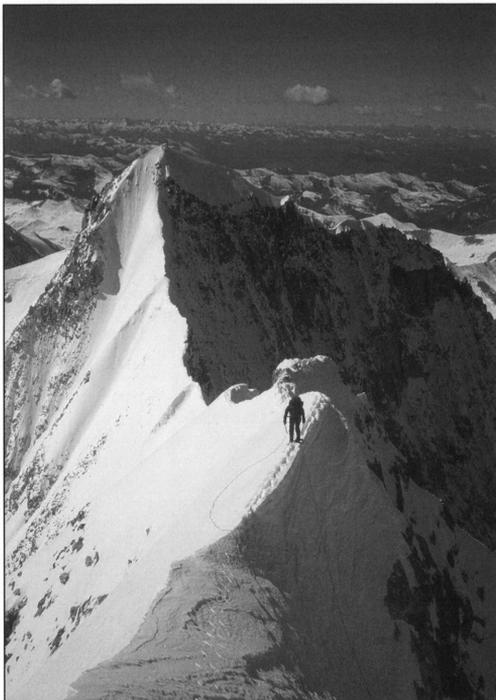
spring, so we had some beta on the approach. We traveled from Chengdu to Kanding, where we were able to sort out most of our provisions before moving to the village of Laoyunin and from there to the foot of the mountain.

The weather was appalling at the start and we had snow every day and most nights for our first 10 days. During this time we acclimatized and shifted gear to below the route. But miraculously, on November 2 the hoped-for good spell came through and we had sunshine and blue skies throughout our ascent. The temperatures were very cold though, and there was a ferocious wind. We made the ascent via the northwest face and west ridge, followed by a traverse down the east ridge to the Grosvenor-Jiazi col. The climbing on the north face was mostly Scottish grade 4-5 on very thin ice and névé with poor protection (no ice screws and very shattered rock on the side walls) and some grade 6 dry-tooling to fill in the blanks. The first day involved 15 pitches with the last three climbed in the dark. Above, we made a sitting bivouac at ca 5,900m on the crest of the ridge.

The first part of the ridge was really loose and both ropes got chopped, with the sheaths almost fully cut through (we repaired them with Elastoplasts). The remainder of the ridge gave fairly straightforward climbing on snow-covered slabs and occasional steeper steps. At the end of the second day we made a very windy camp on a snow shoulder at ca 6,100m, then the following day made it to the summit on easy (30-40°) but heavily-loaded snow slopes: scary! With such poor conditions on the north face we really didn't want to go back down that way, but it was a bit of a leap of faith to start the descent down the east ridge. We had only given it the most cursory of looks during our reconnaissance, but we knew that Americans had climbed Jiazi from the col between Grosvenor and Jiazi, so we figured if we could just get down to that point, there must be a way off.

As it happened, conditions on the south- and east-facing aspects were really good: loads of ice to make Abalakovs. We had another bivouac just below the summit at ca 6,200m, and then the next day made 12 rappels down the flank of the east ridge to a huge plateau. We traversed this and—yippee—found the col. At this point we thought we might make it off in one day, but the couloir below the col was nasty, so we spent the night at ca 5,700m in order to complete the rest of the descent in the morning cold.

There were more rappels and only just enough ice, so it was a real relief to pass the rimaye. Then, it was an extremely painful slog, which took us hours in knee- to thigh-deep



Julie-Ann Clyma on the summit ridge of Mt. Grosvenor.  
Roger Payne



Roger Payne starting up the north face of Grosvenor. *Julie-Ann Clyma*

snow to get back round to the north side. We were forced to make another bivouac and on the final day had to suffer an excruciating climb back UP below the face to collect the gear we had left behind. We were so knackered and the snow was still so deep, that I wondered if we would make it. Anyway, we managed to drag our bodies up there, and made the descent to base camp, arriving at 8 p.m. Phew!

We found access to the Daxue Shan range to be excellent, with locals and officials in Kanding and the Sichuan and Chinese Mountaineering Associations extremely helpful and hospitable. There are other good lines to climb on both the northwest and north faces of Grosvenor. There are also five more virgin 6,000m peaks in the Daxue Shan, and only two ridges have been climbed on the very impressive Minya Konka (7,556m). Late October had heavy snowfall, but November brought clear cold conditions, making ascents on east and south aspects attractive. We were supported by the Alison Chadwick Memorial Fund, Nick Estcourt Award, Mount Everest Foundation, and British Mountaineering Council. A report with relevant logistical information is available by contacting [roger.payne@uiaa.ch](mailto:roger.payne@uiaa.ch).

JULIE-ANN CLYMA *and* ROGER PAYNE, *U.K.*

*Mt. Grosvenor, attempt on northwest face.* In the spring of 2003 Grosvenor (6,367m) was still unclimbed. It has a spectacular northwest face, which we attempted as two separate pairs. Andy Cave and myself tried the central couloir directly below the summit, but were stopped on our third day by a very loose, slanting groove choked with powder snow. It was one of those difficult situations where we could have made more progress but there was no gear and the danger levels had risen to a point that we deemed unacceptable. So, despite the ground easing only 30 meters or so above us, we rappelled. A bolt or two would have solved the problem, but we regard such things as cheating.

Neil McAdie and Simon Nadin tried another line toward the right-hand side of the face. They managed five pitches before rappelling due to extremely heavy spindrift avalanches. I might add that it snowed or rained on every day we were in the region.

MICK FOWLER, *U.K.*

## QIONGLAI RANGE

### SIGUNIANG NATIONAL PARK

*Tan Shan and Putala Shan, first ascents via difficult rock routes.* My wife Tanja Grmovsek and I planned to visit the Qionglai Mountains in the spring of 2003 but due to the outbreak of the SARS virus just a few days before leaving for China we had to postpone to the autumn. In the